

The Loser On Loser Play



By Kitty Cooper

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When playing a trump contract, start by counting both your winners and losers and making a plan. Sometimes discarding a known loser on a trick where you expect to get over-ruffed is the winning line of play. I always used to know when I'd missed one of these because dummy (my late husband) would sarcastically ask, "No losers to pitch, dear?"

The classic example is that one opponent has a long suit, cashes the AK, and then plays another when both his partner and you or dummy can ruff. For example, you, South, arrive in 4♠ on the following hand after RHO overcalled your partner's 1NT with 2♥. West leads the ♥8 and East cashes the ♥AK while West follows with the ♥2. What do you do when East plays a third round of hearts?

Dummy (North)

♠AK108

♥543

♦QJ4

♣AK4

♠Q7632

♥Q6

♦AK9

♣952

You know that West is out of spades, so if you're going to ruff the heart you have to ruff high so that he can't overruff. But if spades don't split 2-2, you have created a fourth loser (a trump) to go with the AK of hearts and your third club (since you have nowhere to discard it). But if you throw a small club from your hand on the third round of hearts nothing bad can happen since dummy will be out of hearts on the next round; If East plays another heart and West ruffs you can simply overruff in dummy. Since you no longer have a club to lose later, you will make your contract. By playing a loser (small club) on a loser (the third heart) you turned two potential losers into just one. This is called a loser on loser play.

Here is the full hand. As you can see, ruffing the heart with your queen would have created a spade loser, since East's ♠J would be high after you drew two rounds of trump.

♠AK108

♥543

♦QJ4

♣AK4

♠9

♥82

♠J54

♥AKJ1097

♦108753

♣J8763

♠Q7632

♥Q6

♦AK9

♣952

♦62

♣Q10

This article was co-authored by Kitty's husband, the late Steve Cooper, and previously appeared in the District 17 newsletter. ♣