

Bridge Theory for the Practitioners

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44. Ruff and Sluff Illusions

Ruff and Sluff is considered the cardinal sin in Bridge. Many Bridge players think like this: If I ever give a ruff and a sluff, I will be the talk of the town. Next time I am in a Bridge tournament, I can see them pointing at me; I can hear them whispering: Amit is such a weak player --- you know what he did in the last tournament?

In this column I will give you examples when Ruff and Sluff (R&S) is the correct defense. There are two types of situations when R&S is the right thing to do: 1) Giving declarer a useless R&S rather than a finesse that he cannot take otherwise and 2) setting up a trump trick by doing so.

I. R&S Type 1 --- giving declarer a useless R&S

Example 1.

| | | | | | |
|---------------|-----|-------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| Dummy: | K J | T 5 3 | A 8 6 3 | A 8 7 2 | |
| | | | | | Your hand: |
| | | | | | A Q 6 |
| | | | | | J 9 7 6 |
| | | | | | Q J T |
| | | | | | J 9 5 |

The contract is 5D.

- Trick 1. Partner leads the 5 of S and you win the S-Q
- Trick 2. You play the A of S which declarer ruffs. **Declarer started with 1 spade.**
- Trick 3. Declarer cashes A of D
- Trick 4. Declarer cashes the K of D. Partner shows out. **Declarer started with 5 diamonds.**
- Trick 5-7. Declarer plays A, K, Q of H. Partner follows all three times. **Declarer started with 3 hearts. Hence he started with 4 clubs.**
- Trick 8. Declarer plays a D to your Queen. What do you return?

Returning a C might give him the contract. For example the C suit might look like

| | | |
|-----|---------|-------|
| | A 8 7 2 | |
| Q 3 | | J 9 5 |
| | K T 6 4 | |

But playing another heart although gives a ruff and a sluff cannot allow the contract to make as declarer started with 4 clubs.

II. R&S Type II--- Creating a trump trick for Defense

Dummy: A K Q 5 A K 8 7 J 4 9 4 3

Your hand:

4 3 2
T 9
K Q 9 7 3 2
A T

Auction goes:

| | | | |
|----|---|----|----|
| 2D | X | 3D | P |
| P | X | p | 4C |

All pass. **Amit's rule: If the opponents want to play in Gerber (4C) or Derber (4D; this word is my invention), let them.**

- Trick 1. You lead the K of D which holds. Partner plays the T (attitude for A).
- Trick 2. You continue with the Q of D which holds. It is clear that partner has the A of D and declarer is out of Ds. How do you continue?
- Trick 3. Two things should catch your attention. The T of trumps that you have and the major suit strength in dummy. **So continue with D and give a ruff and a sluff. R&S type2.**

When declarer next plays trump, **win declarer's K with the Ace and play a 4th D.** Partner ruffs with the J and your T becomes the setting trick.

References:

Example 1 is from *Official Encyclopedia of Bridge* published by ACBL.

Example 2 is taken from "The Deadly Defence Quiz Book" by W. Izdebski, R. Krzemien, and Ron Klinger.