

The last trump *by Derrick Browne*

When there is only one trump remaining in a defender's hand, and it is the boss (top) trump, declarer's normal strategy is to stop drawing trumps. You cannot stop their top trump from winning, so why waste your own trumps in the attempt? Another reason to turn your attention elsewhere is to save a tempo – by keeping the lead, you can immediately embark on your next course of action.

	NORTH		
	S A85		
	H 85		
	D Q54		
	C 87543		
WEST		EAST	
S Q97		S J3	
H JT942		H KQ73	
D J97		D T86	
C KJ		C QT96	
	SOUTH		
	S KT642		
	H A6		
	D AK32		
	C A2		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass	1S
Pass	2S	Pass	4S
All pass			

Against 4S, West leads the HJ, top of a sequence, driving out the HA. Declarer cashes the SA and SK, but there is still one trump out, the SQ. What next?

Their queen is now the top trump. Abandon that suit in favour of the long diamonds. The break there is a friendly 3-3 so the fourth round of diamonds comes good.

Whether or not West ruffs that last diamond, the heart loser should be discarded from the North hand, for an overtrick. Note that it would be wrong to discard a club from North, because that would not eliminate the loser in that suit.

The following hand, from a recent club game, is more complicated:

NORTH
S 5
H AQ
D AKQJ9852
C A4
SOUTH
S AT874
H JT9875
D 4
C K

Slam in diamonds is easy, but one South declared 6H. After winning the club lead with the king, he finessed to the HQ and cashed the HA, with both opponents following low. What next?

The only outstanding trump is the HK so declarer, following the usual maxim of "leave the boss trump out", started cashing dummy's club and diamond winners to discard spade losers from hand. Unfortunately, the third round of diamonds was ruffed, leaving declarer with one remaining spade loser and no way to get back to dummy's diamond winners.

This was one deal where declarer needed to flout normal principles. At trick four, lead the CA from dummy and ruff it! Then lead another trump, drawing out the HK. Whatever the defenders lead back, declarer can win and run dummy's diamonds. Slam dunk.