

**TEST YOUR  
BRIDGE TECHNIQUE**

# ELIMINATION PLAYS

*David Bird • Tim Bourke*

♠ AK  
♥ QJ96  
♦ A76  
♣ 10852

♠ J led

♠ 64  
♥ AK1083  
♦ KQ  
♣ A763

# HOW TO PERFORM AN ELIMINATION PLAY

When you are playing in a suit contract, it often happens that you have one ‘problem suit’. What do we mean by that? It’s a suit where you would like to avoid a potential loser. Look at these holdings for example:

1) $\spadesuit$ A Q 6	2) $\heartsuit$ Q 7 2	3) $\clubsuit$ A J 3																											
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$\spadesuit$ 8 5 3	$\heartsuit$ K 5 4	$\clubsuit$ 10 6 2																											

Suppose you have to play combination (1) yourself. To avoid a second loser, you would have to finesse the  $\spadesuit$  Q — a play that has only a 50% chance of success. Wouldn’t it be great if you could force your right-hand opponent (RHO) to lead the suit? With a diamond coming into dummy’s tenace, you would be assured of two diamond tricks.

If you have to play holding (2) yourself, your chances of avoiding two losers are slim. You would have to lead towards one honor of the other, hoping to find the defender in second seat with a singleton or doubleton ace. Now suppose that you can force a particular defender to lead the suit for you. Your chance soars to 50%! If the defender happens to hold the  $\heartsuit$  A, you can run his lead to one honor and then lead successfully towards the other honor for a second trick.

What are your prospects of making two spade tricks in (3)? You would need to find LHO with a singleton or doubleton honor, or with both honors. However, if the defenders have to play the suit, and will be forced to continue it if they win the first round, you are assured of two tricks. If East wins the first round with the queen, for example, he will have to lead back into dummy’s A-J tenace.

As you see, your chances in a suit are often much better if you can force the defenders to make the first play in the suit. How can you do this? By using **elimination play**! You start by drawing trumps and eliminating one or two of the side suits. What does ‘eliminate’ mean? There are two basic meanings of the term. It can mean that you remove all the cards of a suit from your hand and the dummy. The defenders will not then be able to play the suit without giving you a ruff-and-sluff. The other meaning is that you remove all the cards that the defenders hold in a specific suit. Again this will stop them from playing that suit, of course. Once you have prevented the defenders from playing safely on any other suit, you throw them in and force them to make the first play in your ‘problem suit’.

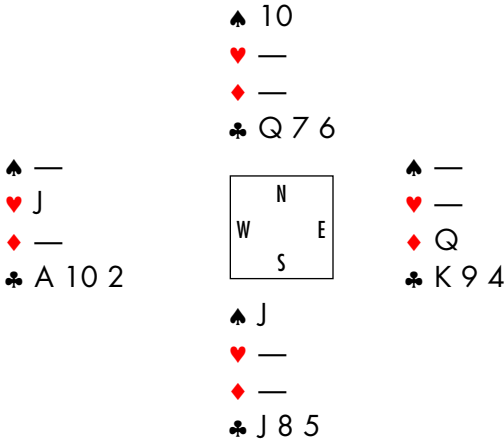
It’s time to see a full-deal example of this technique.

	♠ K 10 5 2 ♥ K 9 3 ♦ K 8 4 ♣ Q 7 6										
♠ 9 8 3 ♥ Q J 10 4 ♦ J 9 3 ♣ A 10 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 4 ♥ 8 7 6 2 ♦ Q 10 7 5 ♣ K 9 4 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A Q J 7 6 ♥ A 5 ♦ A 6 2 ♣ J 8 5										

West leads the ♥Q against 4♠ and you pause to make a plan. In the long-trump (South) hand you have one loser in diamonds and three potential losers in clubs. You cannot do anything about the diamond loser. Clubs is the ‘problem suit’. If you play the suit yourself, your best chance will be to lead towards one honor and then lead towards the other honor. You will succeed only when the ♣A and the ♣K lie in the same hand (or when your first lead draws a singleton honor from the next player). If instead you can force the defenders to make

the first play in clubs, you are sure to score a trick there. Either they will have to lead one of these cards or they will have to play the ace or king in third seat. In both cases your queen and jack will then be equals against the remaining high honor. You will score the one club trick that you need.

By using ‘elimination play’ on this deal you can force the defenders to play a club for you. You win the heart lead with the ace and draw trumps in three rounds. You then play a heart to the king and ruff a heart. You have ‘eliminated hearts’ by removing all the hearts in both your own hand and the dummy. You then cash the two top diamonds and lead a low diamond. The third round of diamonds achieves two objectives. You ‘eliminate diamonds’, by removing all the diamonds in your own hand and the dummy. At the same time you also throw a defender in. These cards will remain:



It makes no difference which defender won the third round of diamonds. They will either have to make the first play in clubs, giving you a trick in the suit, or concede a ruff-and-sluff by playing a red suit. In the latter case you will throw a club from one hand and ruff in the other hand. This will leave you with only two club losers, since you will be able to ruff the third round of clubs. Game made, either way!

# Problem 1 [To Solution](#)

♠ A 8 5  
♥ K 9 7 3  
♦ K Q J  
♣ 7 4 3

♥2 led

♠ Q 6 4  
♥ A Q J 10 4  
♦ 6 5 2  
♣ A Q

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
1♠	2♠	pass	4♥
all pass			

How will you play your game on a trump lead?

# Problem 2 [To Solution](#)

♠ A K  
♥ Q J 9 6  
♦ A 7 6  
♣ 10 8 5 2

♠J led

♠ 6 4  
♥ A K 10 8 3  
♦ K Q  
♣ A 7 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
pass	3NT*	pass	4♣
pass	4♦	pass	4♥
pass	4♠	pass	6♥
all pass			

How will you play 6♥ when West leads the ♠J?

## Problem 3

[To Solution](#)

♠ Q 9 6  
♥ A 6 5 3  
♦ 7 4  
♣ 10 7 6 2

♥K led

♠ A K J 10 8 2  
♥ 10  
♦ A 8  
♣ A K Q 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
2♥	pass	pass	2♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♣
pass	4♥	pass	5♣
pass	6♠	all pass	

How will you play your slam on the lead of the ♥K?

## Problem 4

[To Solution](#)

♠ J 9 7 5  
♥ 10 8 3  
♦ K 10 2  
♣ K 4 2

♣Q led

♠ A K Q 6 4  
♥ J 7 4  
♦ A J 4  
♣ A 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	2♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

A simple auction carries you to 4♠. What plan will you make? (Trumps will break 3-1.)

To Problem ..... SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 1

<p>♠ K J 9 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ A 10 7 3 ♣ K J 9</p>	<p>♠ A 8 5 ♥ K 9 7 3 ♦ K Q J ♣ 7 4 3</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ 10 7 ♥ 8 6 5 ♦ 9 8 4 ♣ 10 8 6 5 2</p>
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WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1 ♠	2 ♠	pass	1 ♥
all pass			4 ♥

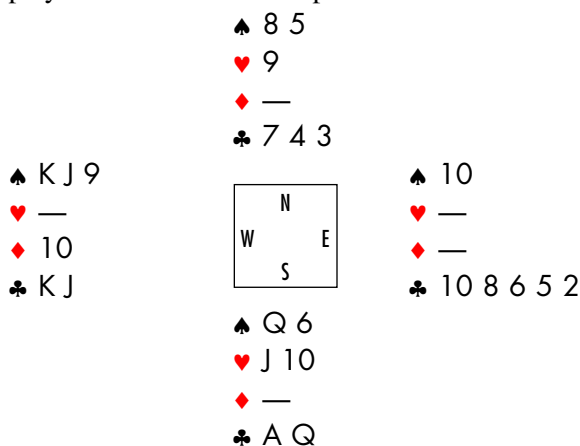
North's 2♠ cuebid shows a sound raise to at least 3♥. West leads a trump against your heart game. You win and draw trumps in two further rounds. What next?

The ♠K almost certainly lies over your ♠Q. There is a fair chance that West holds the ♣K too. Since you still hold trumps in both hands, it is natural to think of elimination play. You can knock out the ♦A and eliminate that suit. What will then be the best play in the black suits, to guard against any lie of the cards?

The solution is to play ace and another spade. West will have to win your ♠Q with the ♠K on the second round. After cashing a second spade winner, he will be forced to play a club or give you a ruff-and-sluff.

Let's see how the play goes. After drawing trumps you play a diamond. West rises with the ace and exits safely with another

diamond. You cash a third round of diamonds, eliminating the suit. You then play the ♠A to leave this position:



With the preparatory work at an end, you play a spade to the queen. West wins with the king and can cash a second spade. He will then have to give you a trick. A spade or a diamond return would concede a ruff-and-sluff, allowing you to ruff in the dummy and discard the ♣Q from your hand. If instead he returns a club, this will be into your A-Q tenace. Ten tricks either way! Isn't elimination play fun?



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## TEST YOUR ELIMINATION PLAY!

This book is designed to accompany *Eliminations and Throw-ins*, Book 4 in the *Bridge Technique* series.

Why should you want to polish your elimination play technique? There are two very good reasons. The first is that it is a relatively easy play to perform. Often you will not even need to keep track of which cards have been played! The second reason is that the opportunities to use this technique, or to defend against it, will arise in nearly every bridge session you play. So the rewards to be gained are considerable.

The basic principles of elimination play are straightforward, but applying them is not always so easy. Rest assured that some serious challenges await you in these pages!



**DAVID BIRD** has written more than fifty previous books, including the award-winning *Bridge Technique* series (with Marc Smith). A regular contributor to many bridge magazines, he lives near Southampton, England.



**TIM BOURKE** is a world-renowned collector of interesting bridge hands, whose previous books include *Countdown to Winning Bridge* (with Marc Smith) and *Saints & Sinners* (with David Bird). He lives in Canberra, Australia.

