

**TEST YOUR
BRIDGE TECHNIQUE**

ENDPLAYS AND COUPS

David Bird • Tim Bourke

♠ K 10 7
♥ A K 6 3
♦ A Q J
♣ Q 3 2

♥ Q led

♠ A Q J 8 4
♥ 7 5
♦ K 7 4
♣ A 8 7

HOW TO PERFORM THROW-INS AND TRUMP COUPS

This book covers two endgame techniques — the throw-in and the trump coup. In this brief preview we will look at them in turn.

The idea behind a throw-in play is to give up the lead to a defender at a time when he will have to surrender a trick with his return. For example, perhaps he has only ♥K-J-9-3 remaining in his hand and he will have to allow you to score the ♥Q in one hand and the ♥A in the other. (An earlier book in this series covered Elimination Play, where declarer has at least one trump remaining in both hands. Here we will look at the throw-in play in notrump, or in a suit contract where the ruff-and-sluff element is not present.)

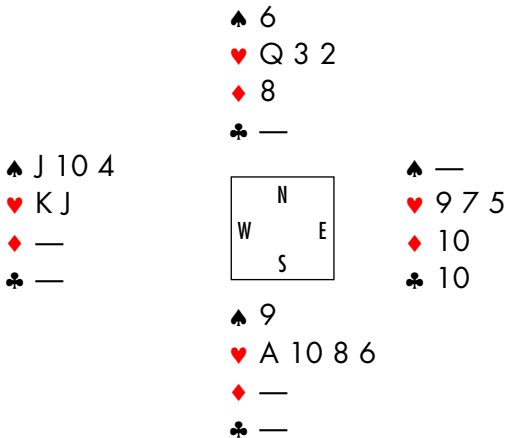
To ensure that a throw-in is effective, you must first remove any safe exit cards that your intended victim holds. Let's see a simple example:

	♠ 6 5 2				
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♠ K Q J 10 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 8 3
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♦ Q 5		♦ 10 9 7 3			
♣ 9 7 2		♣ 10 8 4 3			
	♠ A 9 7				
	♥ A 10 8 6				
	♦ A 6 2				
	♣ A Q 5				

You play in 3NT after West has opened 1♠. He leads the ♠K and you duck the first round, winning the spade continuation. East

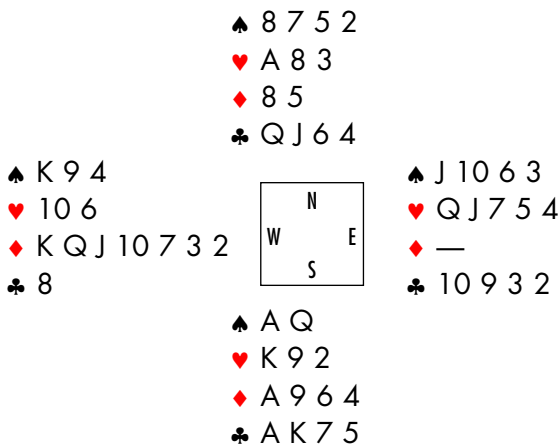
follows on the second round, so you know that the spades are breaking 5-2. When you play ace and another diamond, West's queen appears on the second round and you win with dummy's king. You try your luck with the $\heartsuit J$ but the suit breaks 4-2. What now?

You have eight tricks at your disposal and must hope to score a ninth trick with the $\heartsuit Q$. It is no good simply leading towards the $\heartsuit Q$ because West will step in with the $\heartsuit K$ and beat the contract by cashing three more spades. Instead you must aim to throw in West with a spade, forcing him to lead away from the $\heartsuit K$. To prevent him from exiting safely with a club, you must first play three rounds of clubs. Both defenders follow all the way and these cards remain:



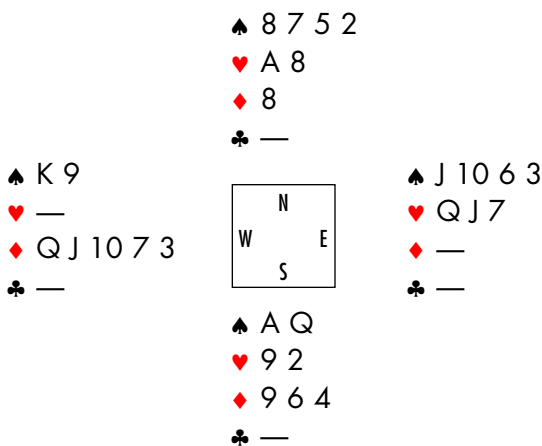
The great moment has come. You play the $\spadesuit 9$ and West has to win. After cashing two more spades it will be his privilege, at Trick 12, to lead away from the $\heartsuit K$. You will score the last two tricks with the queen and ace of hearts, making the game.

That hand was fairly easy to play because the $1\spadesuit$ opening had placed the cards for you. Let's see next a type of throw-in where the defender has a chance to fool you.



West opens 3♦ and after two passes you bid 3NT, ending the auction. You win the opening lead of the ♦K as East discards a heart. When you play four rounds of clubs, West throws a spade and a heart, followed by a diamond winner.

You have eight top tricks and a successful spade finesse would give you a ninth trick. What if West holds the ♠K? If he keeps two spades in the end position, you will have the chance to throw him in with a diamond, forcing a spade return. Keeping this option alive, you decide to cash your two top hearts. West follows to the first heart, leaving these cards still to be played:



You cannot throw West in yet, of course, because his five diamond tricks would defeat you. Instead you must play a heart to the ace. What should West throw on this trick? Many (perhaps most) defenders would throw another winning diamond. Knowing that West had two spades left, it would then be clear to you to exit in diamonds. After scoring three tricks in the suit, West would have to lead into your ♠A-Q. Game made!

A more wily opponent would discard the ♠9, baring his ♠K. Now your task is not so easy. To make the contract you have to guess which defender began with the ♠K. If you think that East holds the card you will need to take a finesse. If instead you think West has the spade king, and has been clever enough to bare it, you have to drop the ♠K by cashing the ♠A.

A throw-in play may not sound very glamorous but that's because no one has awarded it a fancy name. It can be a tricky play to get right, as we have just seen, and deserves our full respect.

Let's look next at the trump coup. This technique allows you to avoid a trump loser even when you have no trumps left in one hand and cannot therefore catch a defender's trump honor with a simple finesse. Here is a typical example:

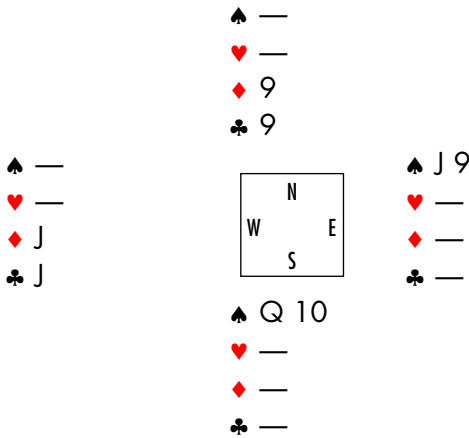
	♠ A 4										
	♥ A 5 4										
	♦ A 9 5 3										
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♠ 2 ♥ J 8 7 3 ♦ Q J 10 7 ♣ J 8 7 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr>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

When partner tells you he holds all four aces, you bid a confident 7♠. West leads the ♦Q and you win with the king. You play the ace and

king of trumps, hoping to make an early claim, but West disappoints you by showing out on the second round of trumps. What now?

You must aim to score six trump tricks, alongside seven more tricks from your side-suit winners. To achieve this you must take two minor-suit ruffs in your hand. You must then be in dummy at Trick 12 to lead a plain card towards your remaining Q-10 in the trump suit.

You cross to dummy with the $\heartsuit A$ and ruff a diamond in your hand. Next you cash the king and ace of clubs and ruff a club. Now you (hold your breath and) play the king, queen and ace of hearts. Yes! East follows all the way. You have reached this end position:



You lead either of dummy's remaining cards and score the last two tricks with your trump tenace. What was the main point to remember about that deal? You needed to reduce your trump length to the same as that of the East defender. Look at the diagram above and suppose that your last three cards had been $\heartsuit Q-10-7$. No good, is it? You would have to ruff one of dummy's cards at Trick 11 and lead away from your $\heartsuit Q-10$.

Perhaps you have heard players talking learnedly about a 'trump reduction'. All it means is that you deliberately take ruffs in the long trump hand, with the eventual aim of scoring all the trumps there.

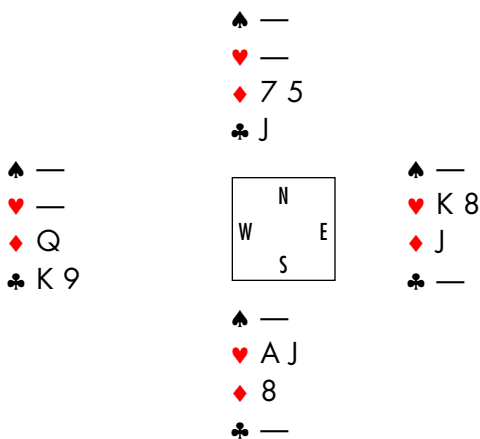
Sometimes you do not need to lead a plain card from dummy towards your trump tenace. Instead you throw in one of the defenders, forcing him to give you the last two tricks. That's what happens on this deal:

	♠ A 4 3										
	♥ 10 4										
	♦ A 7 5 3										
	♣ A J 7 4										
♠ J 10 9 7	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; 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		♠ 8 5 2
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♦ Q 10 2		♦ J 9 4									
♣ K 9 8 6 3		♣ Q 10 5									
	♠ K Q 6										
	♥ A Q J 9 7 3										
	♦ K 8 6										
	♣ 2										

Mindful of your reputation as a bold bidder, you reach 6♥ on the South hand. When West leads the ♠J, you win in the dummy and run the ♥10 successfully. You play a trump to the queen and have to put your plans to claim the contract on hold when West shows out. You cannot catch East's ♥K with a straightforward finesse and there is an apparent second loser in the diamond suit. What can be done?

On deals like this you must plan to add six trump tricks to the six winners you have in the side suits. The first move is to cash the ♠K and ♠Q. You need East to have at least three spades anyway and you don't want him to discard a spade when you ruff clubs in your hand. When this passes by successfully, you cross to the ♣A and ruff a club. You then play the king and ace of diamonds and ruff another club.

The two club ruffs have reduced your trump length to two, the same as East. This is the end position that you have reached:



As you see, there is no need to cross to dummy to lead a plain card towards your trump tenace. You simply exit with your losing diamond. It makes no difference which defender wins the trick. You are assured of the last two tricks with your ♥A-J poised over East's ♥K-8.

Well, that was a brief summary of the two techniques that are the subject of this quiz book. The 36 problems that follow contain a mixture of throw-in plays and trump coups. The audience has settled down and the curtain is rising. It is time for you to take the stage!

ENDPLAYS AND COUPS



Problem 1

[To Solution](#)

♥K led

♠ 6 4
♥ 9 8 2
♦ A K 10 2
♣ A 8 5 2

♠ A K Q J 9 7
♥ 10 6
♦ 8 5
♣ K 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♥*	2♠
pass	3♥	pass	4♠
all pass			

West continues with a second heart to East's jack. You ruff the third heart with the ♠A, West throwing a club. When you play the ♠K-Q, East follows with the ♠8 and then discards a heart. What now?

Problem 2

[To Solution](#)

♥K led

♠ A J 8 6 3 2
♥ A 8 7 2
♦ K 5
♣ 6

♠ 10
♥ 5
♦ A 10 7 4
♣ A K Q 10 7 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
pass	1♠	pass	3♣
pass	3♥	pass	5♣
pass	6♣	all pass	

West leads the ♥K against 6♣. How will you play the hand? Can you survive if East or West holds ♣J-x-x-x?

Problem 3

[To Solution](#)

♥9 led

♠ A K Q 3
 ♥ 10
 ♦ K Q J 10 4
 ♣ A 5 3

♠ 8 6 4 2
 ♥ A 7 3
 ♦ A 9 6 2
 ♣ Q 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		3♥	pass
pass	dbl	pass	4♠
pass	4NT	pass	5♥*
pass	6♠	all pass	

You win the heart lead and play the ace and king of trumps, East showing out on the second round. What is your plan?

Problem 4

[To Solution](#)

♥10 led

♠ A 9 5 4
 ♥ K 5 3
 ♦ 8 7 5 4
 ♣ K 2

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

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♠	pass	2♣
pass	3♦	pass	6♦
all pass			

You win the ♥10 with the ♥K and play a trump, East showing out. How will you play the slam?

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 1

<p>♠ 10 5 3 2 ♥ K 5 ♦ Q 9 7 3 ♣ J 10 7</p>	<p>♠ 6 4 ♥ 9 8 2 ♦ A K 10 2 ♣ A 8 5 2</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>♠ 8 ♥ A Q J 7 4 3 ♦ J 6 4 ♣ Q 9 6</p>
	N											
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	<p>♠ A K Q J 9 7 ♥ 10 6 ♦ 8 5 ♣ K 4 3</p>											

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3♥	2♥*	2♠
all pass		pass	4♠

West leads the ♥K and continues with a second heart to East’s jack. You ruff the third round of hearts with the ace, West throwing a club. When you play the king and queen of trumps, East follows with the ♠8 and then discards a heart. How will you continue?

To make the game you must score all six trumps in your hand, as well as the four side-suit winners. The first move is to cash the ace and king of diamonds and to ruff a diamond. When you do this, the ♦J appears from East on the third round and West follows with the ♦9.

How do you read the diamond suit? If West had started with ♦9-7-3 he would surely have discarded a diamond when you ruffed a heart high at Trick 3 (a defense that would beat the contract). So, it is likely that he started with ♦Q-9-7-3, in which case you will be able to ruff another diamond in your hand. You play the king and ace of clubs and lead dummy’s last diamond. East shows out (yes!) and you ruff with the ♠9, proceeding to claim the contract.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM 2

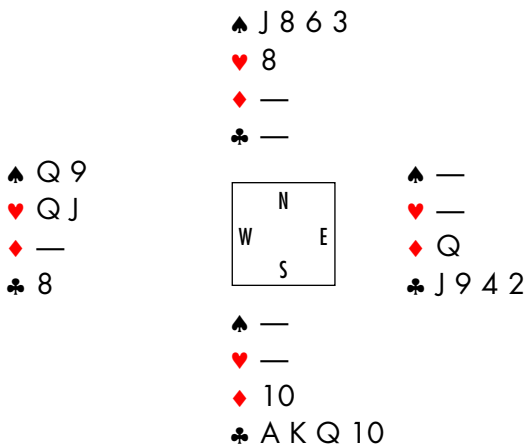
<p>♠ Q 9 7 4 ♥ K Q J 9 4 ♦ 8 6 2 ♣ 8</p>	<p>♠ A J 8 6 3 2 ♥ A 8 7 2 ♦ K 5 ♣ 6</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="margin: 0;">N</p> <p style="margin: 0;">W E</p> <p style="margin: 0;">S</p> </div> <p>♠ 10 ♥ 5 ♦ A 10 7 4 ♣ A K Q 10 7 5 3</p>	<p>♠ K 5 ♥ 10 6 3 ♦ Q J 9 3 ♣ J 9 4 2</p>
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WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♣
pass	1 ♠	pass	3 ♣
pass	3 ♥	pass	5 ♣
pass	6 ♣	all pass	

West leads the ♥K against your small slam in clubs. If the defenders' diamonds break 4-3, you will be able to ruff one diamond in dummy without being overruffed. All will then be well unless the trumps break 4-1. Do you see how you might survive when East holds ♣J-x-x-x?

To achieve a trump coup against East you will need to shorten your trumps three times. You cannot afford to waste any of your entries to dummy, so you must ruff a heart at Trick 2. You then cross to the ♦K and ruff another heart. When you play the ♦A and ruff a diamond, the defenders follow all the way but a magical ♦Q-J-x does not fall.

You cash the ♠A and ruff a spade in your hand, leaving you with just A-K-Q-10 in the trump suit. These cards remain:



You play the ace and king of trumps and are delighted to see West show out on the second round. Why is that? Because your careful preparations will now bear fruit! You exit with your losing diamond and are now certain to make two tricks with your remaining ♣Q-10.

What if it was West who started with ♣J-x-x-x? Prospects would then be less rosy. You would need to find him with four diamonds as well as four clubs. By choosing your major ruffs so that they would remove West's cards in those suits, you could reduce West to ♦Q ♣J-x-x-x. East would show out when you cashed two top trumps. When you exited with your last diamond, West would have to win and lead into your ♣Q-10. You would then have a story to tell!

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TEST YOUR DECLARER PLAY!

This book, which concentrates on endplays and trump coups, is one of several collections of problems designed to accompany the *Bridge Technique* series.

Why should you want to polish your endgame technique? There are two very good reasons. The first is that many of these plays are relatively easy 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 these techniques, or to defend against them, will arise in nearly every bridge session you play. So the rewards to be gained are considerable.

The basic principles of endplays 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.