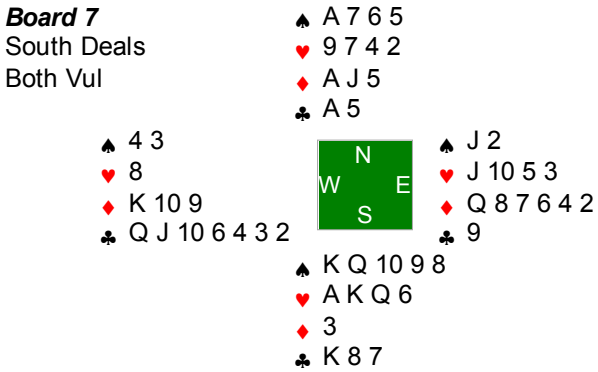
Play Trumps Fluidly

By Derek Rimington

Fluidity, one of the qualities of liquids, also applies in contract bridge to the effective utilization of the trumps. Declarer especially must ensure that his trumps remain so. This is often achieved when drawing trumps by cashing the top honors in such a way as to leave entries to both hands.

To illustrate, here is an example adapted from a rubber bridge grand slam played by the legendary Helen Sobel:



West leads the queen of clubs against seven spades. With the aid of a club ruff declarer apparently has thirteen tricks, barring bad breaks, just the time to take care! Primarily to guard against a 4-0 trump break in either hand, after winning the king of clubs, declarer cashes the king of spades. When both opponents follow it may not appear of any consequence which spade honor to play next. This is not so; the queen should be selected for fluidity, thus preserving the ace of spades as an entry to dummy.

Again both opponents follow, so declarer cashes the ace of diamonds and ruffs a diamond. Dummy is re-entered with a club, East showing out. Another diamond is ruffed, proving that West originally had a

2-1-3-7 or 2-0-4-7 shape. All is not lost provided West has a singleton heart other than the five or three.

Accordingly, the ace of hearts is cashed. When West contributes the eight the contract is certain. A club is ruffed and a low heart led. Declarer intended to make the spectacular play of finessing the six. Should East split his honors, fluidity saves the day. Dummy can be reached with the ace of spades for another heart play.