



The Robson Touch



THE RULE OF THIRTY

When you can deduce partner has a void in a suit in which you have no wasted honors, you are playing with a 30-point pack – the 10 points the opponents hold in that suit will take no tricks on defense. The sky's the limit. Take this deal from the 2019 European Champions' Cup.

	♠ 9542 ♥ AQ1074 ♦ K10 ♣ 95	
♠ KQJ863 ♥ 9 ♦ QJ86 ♣ J7	N W S	♠ A107 ♥ J82 ♦ 972 ♣ K863
	♠ - ♥ K653 ♦ A543 ♣ AQ1042	

W	N	E	South
3♠ ⁽¹⁾	Dble ⁽²⁾	4♠	5♥
Pass	6♥ ⁽³⁾		

(1) The lack of seventh spade made up for by the six-four shape with decent suits, and the favorable vulnerability.

(2) Take-out, showing Hearts.

(3) Assuming East-West have nine Spades for their spirited bidding in the suit, partner must be void. His side will be playing with a 30-point pack. Further, there is a ninth trump, invaluable in such situations.

Plan the play in 6 Hearts on the King of Spades lead which you ruff. The main question is how many rounds of trumps to draw. Two declarers opted for one round. They crossed to the Ace of Hearts then, expecting East to have the Club length given West's preempt, ran the 9, losing to West's Jack. All would have been well if West has returned a second Spade (or a Club). However, West switched to a Diamond and declarer could not unravel his winners. He won dummy's King, led a second Club to the Queen, the finesse winning. He cashed the King of Hearts, hoping for a 2-2 split (West throwing a Spade), then cashed the Ace of Clubs, hoping for a 3-3 split (West throwing another Spade, dummy also throwing a Spade). He ruffed a Club but could do no better than draw East's last trump (drawing his own) and cross to the Ace of Diamonds to cash the fifth Club. He had to lose a trick at the end – one down. Teammate Tony Forrester, who was one of the two failing declarers, now thinks he should have drawn two rounds of trumps. After ruffing the Spade, you cash the King of Hearts and cross to dummy's Ace. If Hearts split 2-2, you guess West for very short Clubs and run the 9. If Hearts are 3-1 (as here), you lead a Club to the Queen. By not disrupting your communication suit (Diamonds), you can now cash

the Ace of Clubs, ruff a third Club, ruff a second Spade, ruff a fourth Club, draw East's last trump then return to your Ace of Diamonds to cash the fifth Club. You score the first twelve tricks, leaving the opponents to win only the last. I'd have been tempted to draw no rounds of trumps, leaving open the possibility of scoring all nine Hearts separately to go with the three minor-suit top tricks to make the requisite twelve. After ruffing the Spade, there is a case for cashing the Ace of Clubs, then crossing to the King of Diamonds to lead up a second Club (not cashing the Ace of Clubs and crossing at trick two to the King of Diamonds to lead a Club to the Queen works just as well and is perhaps more natural). If East plays low, you win the Queen and cross-ruff. East does best to rise with the King and switch to a Heart (otherwise you make all nine of your Hearts). However, with West's Jack of Clubs falling, you can now draw trumps and run your Clubs. Considering the alternatives certainly cost us all a few hours of lost sleep in a most enjoyable tournament in Bucharest, Romania. How many rounds of trumps would you have drawn?

FACT

Andrew Robson OBE is England's best known bridge player. Andrew has represented England for some 30 years. His many competitive successes include winning the World Youth Team Championships, the European Championships and the Gold Cup on no fewer than eight occasions.

BridgeCast - Learn with world-renowned bridge player and teacher Andrew Robson OBE (andrewrobson-bridgecast.com) Andrew's BridgeCast posts three videos daily. There are three levels: Beginner, Improver and Advanced.