

The Robson Touch

TRUMP COUP

Despite being in dummy, you cannot pick up East's King of trumps in this ending:

	♠ - ♥ - ♦ 432 ♣ -	
♠ - ♥ - ♦ Q108 ♣ -	N W S	♠ K8 ♥ - ♦ - ♣ 9
	♠ A♠J ♥ - ♦ - ♣ -	

Spades are trumps. You lead a Diamond from dummy but East discards and, after ruffing, you have to lead from your ♠AQ to East's ♠K8.

Let's make a small change:

	♠ - ♥ - ♦ 432 ♣ A	
♠ - ♥ - ♦ Q108 ♣ 5	N W S	♠ K8 ♥ - ♦ - ♣ J9
	♠ A♠J ♥ - ♦ - ♣ 3	

Now, you can do it. You ruff a Diamond (East throwing a Club), crucially reducing your trump length to the same two cards as East. Now you

return to the Ace of Clubs and, holding ♠AQ over East's ♠K8, must score the last two tricks.

Look at this deal from the Andrew Robson Bridge Club in South West London: (www.andrewrobson.co.uk).

	♠ AKJ3 ♥ J ♦ 1083 ♣ KJ932	
♠ Q106 ♥ K97654 ♦ 4 ♣ Q64	N W S	♠ 8742 ♥ A102 ♦ K762 ♣ 107
	♠ 95 ♥ Q83 ♦ AQJ95 ♣ A85	

North-South vulnerable.

W	N	E	S
			1♦
2♥ ⁽¹⁾	Dble ⁽²⁾	3♥ ⁽³⁾	Pass
Pass	Dble ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	6♦ ⁽⁶⁾

(1) Weak jump overcall.

(2) Negative, showing Spades.

(3) Raising preemptively to the (nine-card) level of the fit.

(4) More takeout.

(5) Very optimistically looking for slam and showing their (second-round) heart control.

(6) Good trumps and a side ace warrant.

At many tables, the contract was 3NT (especially after South opened a Weak No-Trump, naturally prevalent in England). This did not fare well, West leading a Heart to East's Ace and East returning the top-of-two 10. The defense took the first six tricks – down two.

The best North-South result came after they bid in spirited fashion to 6♦. West led a Heart to East's Ace and East returned the 10 of Hearts, forcing dummy to ruff and thereby seemingly promoting his King of Diamonds – no longer did declarer have the trumps in dummy to pick up the long King via repeated finesses. East's defense was strongly indicative he began with four Diamonds headed by the King. After ruffing the Heart, declarer ran dummy's 8 of Diamonds. However, he did not follow with the 10. Instead, he cashed the Ace of Spades, then crossed to the Ace of Clubs and finessed dummy's Jack of Spades. He cashed the King of Spades, discarding a Club, and ruffed a fourth Spade (carefully with the Jack – retaining the 9). He then led his remaining Club, finessing dummy's Jack. Here is the four-card ending with the lead in dummy:

	♠ - ♥ - ♦ 10 ♣ K93	
♠ - ♥ K97 ♦ - ♣ Q	N W S	♠ - ♥ 2 ♦ K76 ♣ -
	♠ - ♥ Q ♦ AQ9 ♣ -	

Declarer led dummy's King of Clubs. If East ruffed, declarer could overruff, then ruff his Queen of Hearts with dummy's 10 of Diamonds and win the last two tricks, holding ♦AQ over East's ♦K7. In practice, East chose not to ruff the Club, so declarer could discard the Queen of Hearts. He then led the 10 of Diamonds, running it when East played low (you can see why it was important he'd earlier ruffed with the Jack not the 9). He now held ♦AQ over East's ♦K7 and the slam was made.

What a beautifully handled Trump Coup.

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.