

## LOSER-ON-LOSER PLAYS

By Maritha Pottenger

Loser-on-loser plays are another way to avoid losing too many tricks when you are Declarer.

There are **two major variations of the Loser-on-Loser** play. **One involves equal honors in one hand and a void in the other hand** (and is called a ruffing finesse in a trump contract). The other **combines a Loser-on-Loser with a throw-in play** (after eliminating one or two side suits) to force a particular opponent to make a favorable lead for you.

In the **first variation**, you have two or more equal honors in one hand opposite a void in the other hand. You **play one equal honor and discard a loser** on it. If LHO takes that trick, you have discarded what was a loser anyway and now your 2<sup>nd</sup> equal honor is good for another trick. If RHO covers your equal honor, you can still discard a loser (in no trump) or you can ruff the higher honor (ruffing finesse) in a trump contract, and you've developed the other equal honor(s) for additional tricks.

For example: You hold AKxxxx A Kxxx Ax opposite Qxxx QJ10x Axx xx and the contract is 6S with the lead of the King of clubs. Take the Ace of clubs. Pull two rounds of trumps in hand and cash Ace of hearts. Play spade to dummy's queen, and put the queen of hearts on the table. If the King does not appear, discard your losing club. If the King does appear, trump it. Return to dummy with the King of diamonds and discard your losing club and one of your losing diamonds on the jack and 10 of hearts.

NOTE: even if you had lost to the King of hearts on your left, you have disposed of your club loser and now have time to discard two potential diamond losers on the jack and 10 of hearts!

Rule: **When discarding on an equal honor, it is advisable to discard immediate loser(s) first.** You can get rid of potential losers later. (In the above example, you have one immediate club loser because your single stopper is gone. You have one potential diamond loser which is not a loser until both your diamond stoppers are used up.)

**The second variation involves stripping the hand** (pulling trumps and eliminating one side suit); **throwing a specific opponent in** by giving them the lead in a third suit just as that card eliminates the suit from either your hand or dummy (and discarding a loser from the hand that does not have that third suit). Then, the opponent must either give you a ruff-and-sluff OR make a favorable lead for you in the 4<sup>th</sup> suit.

For example: You hold: AKxxx AKx Kxx Ax opposite xxxx Qxxx xxxx K in dummy and the lead is the 2 of hearts (presumed to be 4<sup>th</sup>-best). You take Ace in your hand and play two rounds of trumps. They break 2-2. Lead to King of clubs. Heart back to your King. Cash Ace of clubs (eliminating clubs in your hand as well as dummy). Discard a diamond from dummy on the Ace of clubs. Heart to the queen (and RHO discards, as expected). Play 4<sup>th</sup> heart from dummy and discard (LOSER-ON-LOSER) a low diamond on that heart. Left-hand opponent must take the heart trick and give you either a ruff-and-sluff or lead a diamond into your Kx. Making 5!!

NOTE: **Normally, the loser-on-loser combined with throw-in takes place in a trump contract, but you can also do it in NT if you have a count on the hand.** For example: You hold AKQ AQx Kxx AQxx opposite 10xxx xx AQxx KJx. The contract is 6NT and the lead is the Jack of diamonds. Take the Ace of diamonds in dummy and play 4 rounds of clubs, ending in your hand [discard a heart from dummy]. (Clubs break 4-2 with 2 on your left and 4 on your right.) Cash the top 3 spades. LHO discards a heart on the 3<sup>rd</sup>

spade. Cash the King of diamonds and lead to queen of diamonds on dummy. RHO discards a heart on the 3<sup>rd</sup> diamond. Play the 4<sup>th</sup> diamond from dummy and (LOSER-ON-LOSER) discard your low heart. Left-hand opponent has nothing but hearts left and must lead into your Ace-Queen. Making 6!