

A coup en passant (or elopement play) is a trump promotion play by declarer. The fancy French name hides a pretty simple technique. Declarer attempts to make her small trumps by leading a side suit through an opponent who has a bigger trump than the one with which declarer hopes to ruff.

Assume that South plays in hearts in this 3-card ending:

	Dummy	
	♠ 65	
	♥ —	
	♦ 2	
	♣ —	
West		East
♠ 8		♠ —
♥ —		♥ A
♦ 83		♦ AK
♣ —		♣ —
	South	
	♠ —	
	♥ J	
	♦ 97	
	♣ —	

If South is on lead, then all three tricks must be conceded to East. But if dummy is on lead, South can generate a trump trick by leading a spade from the table. If East ruffs, then South's ♥ J is promoted into a winner. If East discards a diamond, then South simply ruffs with the ♥ J. The term "coup en passant" is French for a coup "in passing".

	North	
	♠ 64	
	♥ T64	
	♦ K876	
	♣ AK52	
West		East
♠ KQT8		♠ A975
♥ J9732		♥ Q5
♦ J953		♦ Q42
♣ —		♣ QJT3
	South	
	♠ J32	
	♥ AK8	
	♦ AT	
	♣ 98764	

South declares 3♣. The defence attacks with three rounds of spades, South ruffing the third in dummy. Next comes the ♣A which reveals the bad trump break. The contract is now in jeopardy since South has 5 losers: 2 spades, 2 clubs and 1 heart.

Given the circumstances, South can try for a coup en passant. At trick 5, South can cash the ♥A-K, the ♦A-K, and ruff a diamond in hand.

The layout is then

	North	
	♠—	
	♥T	
West	♦8	East
♠Q	♣K5	♠7
♥J9		♥
♦J	South	♦—
♣—	♠—	♣QJT
	♥8	
	♦—	
	♣987	

A club to dummy's ♣K sets the stage. When dummy's last diamond is led, East can pitch the ♠7, letting South ruff. Or East can ruff high, in which case South discards the ♥8. Either way, South gets a 9th trick.

It was important for South to take both heart winners before attempting the elopement. Otherwise, the ending would be –

	♠—	
	♥T64	
West	♦8	East
♠Q	♣K5	♠7
♥J973		♥Q5
♦J	South	♦—
♣—	♠—	♣QJT
	♥AK8	
	♦—	
	♣987	

When South leads a club to the king and plays a diamond off the board, East simply discards a heart. South only gets one top heart before suffering a heart ruff by East. A heart trick must also be conceded to West at the end for down one.