

## DESCHAPELLES COUP

The Deschapelles (pronounced day-sha-pell') Coup is the name given to a bridge play wherein an unsupported high honor is led in order to establish an entry into partner hand.

This sacrificial play was devised by Frenchman Mr. Alexandre Louis Honore Lebreton, also known during his lifetime as Guillaume le Breton and Guillaume Deschapelles. He lived between 1789 and 1847 and was the coffee house world champion in the games of whist, chess and billiards. M. Lebreton made his reputation by beating many of the best for stakes. When a prospective opponent at the coffee house said, "My religion forbids me to play for money," Deschapelles responded, "Mine forbids me to be absurd."

Deschapelles was also a phenomenal chess player who quickly became champion of his region. But when competition grew tougher, he adopted a new condition for all matches: He would compete only if his opponent would remove one of Deschapelles's pawns and make the first move, increasing the odds that Deschapelles would lose. If he did lose, he could blame it on the other player's advantage and no one would know the true limits of his ability; but if he won against such odds, he would be all the more revered for his amazing talents.

It's interesting to note that the term "Deschapelles coup", while fairly common in the bridge world, is also used by psychologists to refer to acts of self-sabotage.

Here's how it works at bridge: North

♠AJ  
♥AJ102  
♦KJ1095  
♣J4

West

♠Q95  
♥65  
♦76  
♣KQ10932

East

♠K6432  
♥9874  
♦A42  
♣A

South

♠1087  
♥KQ3  
♦Q83  
♣8765

South declares 3NT (after a rather gross overbid by partner) and West makes the fairly obviously lead of the 4<sup>th</sup> best club. East wins this with the Ace but has no club to return. After a great deal of thought East returns the King of spades, won by North's Ace. Now South plays on diamonds and when East wins the Ace he is probably thinking how lucky he has been. However, East then exits with a spade to his partner's Queen and his partner gets to cash all those good clubs. Way to go Partner....East has figured out that the only hope of defeating the contract is if an entry card can be found to West's hearts. This is the Deschappelles Coup.

And there is nothing that South can do to offset this good play. He can't come to nine tricks without the diamond suit. Note that any other play by East on the second trick allows South to make the contract as he will just lead diamonds from the dummy and when East has the Ace there will be 10 tricks there for the taking.

The Deschappelles Coup is often confused with the Merimac Coup.....and it is similar. But whereas the Deschappelles Coup is the lead of an unsupported honor to create an entry to partner's hand, the Merrimac Coup is the lead of an unsupported honor to kill an entry to an opponent's hand.

In researching this article I found reference to Deschappelles Coup as a recording by a group called Dry Lungs. I haven't found the song yet though. Does anyone know if it exists?

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