

Counting Losers and Drawing Trumps

Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 9 8 6		♠ A Q 4 3 2			
♥ A Q 6		♥ —			
♦ K 8 4		♦ 7 6 3 2			
♣ A 7 6 3		♣ 9 8 4 2			
♠ K 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A Q 4 3 2
N					
W E					
S					
♥ 9 5 4 3 2		♥ —			
♦ 10 5		♦ 7 6 3 2			
♣ K Q J 10		♣ 9 8 4 2			
♠ J 10 7					
♥ K J 10 8 7					
♦ A Q J 9					
♣ 5					

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	2 ♦

Auction Commentary: South's 5th ♥ makes 13 total points, so 1 ♥ is a fine opener. North immediately knows the contract belongs (at least) in 4 ♥. But jumping directly to 4 ♥ would show a much weaker hand, holding 5+ pieces of trumps, not many points, and a singleton someplace. If North jumps to game and South were holding a hand that might be interested in slam, North's preemptive jump would keep South from looking further.

Here's a good rule of thumb when you have support for partner's major suit opener.

- With opening values in your own hand, take two bids to get to game. The first bid should be a change in suits, (even if you have to get creative!), and the next bid should be in your game.
- With a weak hand, but a big trump fit, (10+ pieces), preempt the opponents by bidding game immediately. (This jump is based on the Law of Total Tricks, which says that we should be able to win the number of tricks that corresponds to our combined total pieces in trump.)

Opening Lead: ♣ K (top of a sequence)

Planning the Play: Count the losers first -- from the position of South's master hand, the one with the long trumps, there are 3 ♠ losers right off the top! We have no ♣ losers, and no ♦ losers, and hope for no trump losers. When you count losers and you don't have too many to make the contract, (and you control the trump suit!), you should start by drawing trumps. In this hand, with the bad break, it looks like you're only going to take the 10 tricks you need. It would be a mistake to try to make an overtrick by pitching a ♠ from Dummy on the 4th ♦ before pulling all the trumps.

Do not try to set up anything. Do not try to ruff anything. Do not pass Go. Do not collect \$200!

Pull trumps and take your winners carefully. The red suits are lopsided, so be sure to win with the high cards on the short side first. :)

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Board 7

South Deals

Both Vul

	♠ 6 3										
	♥ 9 3										
	♦ K 10 8 4 2										
	♣ Q J 10 5										
♠ K J 5	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q 7 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A Q 6 2		♥ K J 7 5 4									
♦ Q 6 3		♦ 9 5									
♣ A 7 4		♣ 8 2									
	♠ 10 9 8 4										
	♥ 10 8										
	♦ A J 7										
	♣ K 9 6 3										

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
1 NT	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	4 ♥	All pass

Auction Commentary: When you open 1 NT, you have described your hand completely, and you have limited the hand to a maximum of 17 HCP. Your partner knows what you have:

- 15-17 HCP
- Balanced hand
- No singletons
- No voids

Since 1 NT described your hand to a tee, you are now done bidding. **A limited hand is NEVER, EVER in charge of the auction.** You told partner what you had, and partner is looking at her 13 cards. Partner will ask you a question or two, and will find the right contract.

An auction is all about just 3 things: (1) Find the fit, (2) do the math, and (3) bid the contract!

- (1) Stayman finds the ♥ fit.
- (2) East adds partner's (minimum 15) points to their own.
- (3) Game in a suit contract requires 25 points, so East bids game. (That was easy!)

Opening Lead: ♣ Q (top of a nice sequence - the best lead in bridge - gives away nothing!)

Planning the Play: Always count losers from the perspective of the master hand. This hand demonstrates that the master hand is not always the declarer's hand! The one with the longer trumps is almost always the master, so we need to count East's losers. 1 ♣ and 2 ♦s are all we see. Since you don't have too many losers, get busy drawing trumps. First look for transportation issues, since both majors are lopsided. Win the high cards from the short side in both suits, (which here means win them in West first), and the hand will practically play itself.

Counting Losers and Drawing Trumps

Board 9
North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ J 4	♠ K Q 9 8 7 2	♠ —
♥ A K J	♥ 10 5 2	♥ Q 9 7 6 4 3
♦ K J 6 4 3	♦ —	♦ A Q 10 9
♣ 4 3 2	♣ A K J 5	♣ 10 8 7

♠ A 10 6 5 3	♠ —
♥ 8	♥ Q 9 7 6 4 3
♦ 8 7 5 2	♦ A Q 10 9
♣ Q 9 6	♣ 10 8 7

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
All pass	1 ♠	Pass	4 ♠

Auction Commentary: South's hand is the quintessential "weak freak" hand. It has 5+ pieces in trumps, with few HCP, and a singleton (or void) is the cherry on top! With 10+ pieces of trumps, we hope to take 10 tricks. Let's not let the opponents easily find their ♥ fit. This is a preemptive jump to game, that sometimes makes. :)

Opening Lead: ♥ 6 - East knows that South has a very distributional hand, and with all these ♥s in East's hand, they want to score whatever is possible before the trick(s) somehow disappear!

Planning the Play: Counting losers in a suit contract, from the position of North's master hand, there is just 1 ♥! This is a lucky hand indeed, as it will take 12 tricks. Although North's hand is very pretty, it can't investigate further in this auction.

Counting Losers and Drawing Trumps

Board 12
West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K J		♠ A 8 7 5 2
♥ J 10 9 4 3		♥ Q 2
♦ 10 8 7 3 2		♦ J 5
♣ 6		♣ K Q J 10
♠ 9 6 4 3	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	
♥ 7 6 5		
♦ A K Q 9		
♣ A 7		
♠ Q 10		
♥ A K 8		
♦ 6 4		
♣ 9 8 5 4 3 2		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

Auction Commentary: East has 14 total points, which is a maximum responder's hand. And while East knows that their side belongs in game, she also knows that the first order of business is to find out if there's a fit somewhere. There's no rush to get to game, since a new suit by responder is ALWAYS forcing. But once West rebids the ♠s, East now needs to jump to game. If East rebid 3 ♠, it wouldn't be forcing. (Remember that anytime either you or partner bid an old suit that one of you bid before, it's never forcing.)

Opening Lead: ♥ A (promising the ♥ K)

Planning the Play: We always start the plan in a suit contract by counting losers. From the position of East's hand, there are sure 2 ♥ losers (right now!), and there will be some number of trumps to lose. Holding 9 pieces of trumps, it's likely that the missing pieces are split 3-1. The only hope for this contract's success is to find them 2-2. If the opening lead were a minor, we'd have a chance at discarding a ♥ or two. But with this lead, we don't have that opportunity. We'll apply this widely-used bridge adage to this hand: "I'd rather be lucky than good!" :)