

Counting Winners and Minding Entries

Board 2

East Deals

N-S Vul

	♠ 9 7 4					
	♥ J 10 9 8					
	♦ Q 10 4 3					
	♣ 4 2					
♠ Q J	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 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 K 5 3	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ A 7 5 3		♥ K Q				
♦ K 9 6 5 2		♦ A 7				
♣ K Q		♣ A 9 7 6 3				
	♠ 10 8 6 2					
	♥ 6 4 2					
	♦ J 8					
	♣ J 10 8 5					
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>			
		1 ♣	Pass			
1 ♦	Pass	2 ♠	Pass			
6 NT	All pass					

Auction Commentary: East opens 1C with this maximum, unbalanced hand. West is a 16 point maximum responder, and wants to make sure to make a forcing bid to keep the auction open. West's 1♦ call is forcing, and East chooses to jump-shift to show the maximum hand and shape: 2♠. Responder knows there are enough values for slam, and it looks like they're headed for NT. Points needed: 6 NT needs 33 points (or extreme distribution that can stop everything else) 7 NT needs 37 points (and some luck, finding all the suits breaking evenly)

When West sees 2 doubletons, he knows that similar distribution around the table is likely. THINK before reflexively asking for Aces! In this hand you would find you held all of the Aces and Kings. But you need more than 8 top cards to take 13 tricks :) With no strong, running suit, West knows to settle for 6 NT.

Opening Lead: ♥ J (safe lead from the top of the sequence)

Planning the Play: Let's count winners - we need 12: 4 ♠s, 3 ♥s, 2 ♦s and 3 ♣s. So far so good, but this will be tricky! The ♥s are blocked, the ♣s are blocked, and the ♠s are blocked. You can use your ♦ suit for transportation to untangle the tricks. PLAN! Cash the ♥ KQ, then a small ♠ to your ♠ QJ. Win the ♥ A and ♣ KQ. Go back to the dummy's ♦ A to win the ♠ AK and the ♣ A. The ♦ K will be your ticket home.

Takeaway: Distribution is everything in bridge. Yes, HCP are the backbone, but long, solid suits create extra tricks. When you don't have one, be very careful bidding NT grand slams!

Counting Winners and Minding Entries

Board 5

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ A J 8 6		♠ Q 10 9 7
♥ A 9 7		♥ K Q J 10 5
♦ A Q 4		♦ 7
♣ A K 5		♣ 8 4 3
♠ K 4 2	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: green; padding: 5px; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px; vertical-align: middle;"> N W E S </div>	
♥ 6 4 3		
♦ 8 6 5		
♣ Q J 10 9		
♠ 5 3		
♥ 8 2		
♦ K J 10 9 3 2		
♣ 7 6 2		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

Auction Commentary: Opener has 22 HCP, and the hand is balanced. But it's too strong for a 2NT opener, which is very descriptive as a balanced hand with exactly 20 or 21 HCP. The way to show strong balanced hands like this is to start with 2♣, our artificial strong opening bid. Responder almost always answers an artificial 2♦ here, giving opener as much room as possible to describe the hand. Opener's rebid is now 2NT, which after the 2♣ opening means "22-24 HCP and balanced." While the 2NT is not forcing, responder needs to see that ♦ suit as a great course of tricks, and take partner to game.

Opening Lead: ♥K, top of that great sequence

Planning the Play: Counting winners in NT, we find 1 ♠, 1 ♥, 2 ♣s and 6 ♦s. We have 10 tricks off the top! The only players who will fail in this contract are those who forget to take the high card from the short side of the ♦s first!

Takeaway: Looking at the whole picture here, it may seem "trivial and obvious" to some to play the ♦s in the right order, unblocking them. But players who don't know this yet will want to win the ♦A, then win the ♦K, then the ♦Q... in that order. "High card from the short side!" I can still hear my very first bridge teacher's voice every time I type that :)

Counting Tricks and Minding Entries

Board 8
West Deals
None Vul

	♠ J 5 2		
	♥ A 6 5		
	♦ J 8 5 4		
	♣ 7 6 4		
♠ 7 4 3	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠ K Q 8 6	
♥ 8 2		♥ K 7 3	
♦ 6 3 2		♦ A K Q	
♣ A Q 9 5 3		♣ K J 10	
	♠ A 10 9		
	♥ Q J 10 9 4		
	♦ 10 9 7		
	♣ 8 2		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 NT	All pass		

Auction Commentary: East opens 2 NT to show a balanced hand with 20-21 HCP. West knows game is imminent, even with his 7 points. Wanting to be in NT instead of a minor, West chooses not to show the ♣s and just bids game in NT.

Opening Lead: ♥ Q best lead in bridge :)

Planning the Play: On the ♥ lead, you can count 1 ♥. When you are declarer and you have a King, and LHO leads the suit, if the Ace is with LHO and they've underled it, you will score your King right now. And if RHO has the Ace and plays it, your King will be good. We also have 3 ♦ tricks and 5 ♣ tricks. Time to take 'em and run... being mindful of the ♣ transportation. You know to play the high card from the short side, but you also must know that there is no outside transportation to that long suit. So you must play ♣ K, then ♣ J or ♣ 10, and then OVERTAKE your third one in dummy to win the other two ♣ tricks. Roll your 9 tricks and call it a win!

Takeaway: We don't like to spend two high cards on one trick, but here it's necessary to gather enough tricks. In ♣s, you own the A-K-Q-J-T-9 -- too bad they weren't all on one side. ;) But you know that all of these cards are equals - all are top - and using one for transportation didn't cost you anything!

Counting Tricks and Minding Entries

Board 11
 South Deals
 None Vul

♠ 3 ♥ K Q J 10 ♦ 9 5 4 2 ♣ Q 10 8 5	♠ A Q J 10 5 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ 8 7 3 ♣ 9 2	<div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; background-color: #008000; color: white; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> N W S E </div>	♠ 9 8 6 4 2 ♥ 9 7 2 ♦ Q J 10 ♣ K J
	♠ K 7 ♥ A 8 4 ♦ A K 6 ♣ A 7 6 4 3		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♣
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

Auction Commentary: Opener shows 18-19 HCP balanced with that rebid to 2 NT. (The hand is too strong for a 1 NT opener and too weak for 2 NT.) North has enough points, and that great ♠ suit, and wants to be in game. 3♠ investigates further for a ♠ fit, and North making any rebid at all tells South that game is there somewhere. Since South has only 2 ♠s, 3 NT seems best. (And with 6 pieces in ♠s, North would have jumped 4♠ instead of showing the 5th piece with 3♠.)

Opening Lead: ♥K - the stronger of the two unbid suits, and sequence leads rule!

Planning the Play: Counting winners, as we need 9, we find 5 ♠ winners, 1 ♥ winner, 2 ♦s and 1 ♣ off the top. Take 'em and run! Planning the transportation is next, being very careful to unblock the ♠K before traveling over to the dummy to cash the others. There is no outside entry to the dummy, so "high card from the short side" is required!

Takeaway: When we breakdown an auction, it's all about 3 things:

- (1) Find the fit,
- (2) do the math,
 --- and with very strong hands, you may need to slide in
- (2.5) to find the aces, (and sometimes, the kings),
- (3) then bid the contract.

So:

- (1) Our North tried ♠ (twice!), but found no fit. And South
- (2) jumped so North could do the math, and then
- (2.5) North wasn't strong enough to investigate, since South was content to
- (3) play this in 3 NT :)