

PLAY OF THE HAND – SESSION 2

Trump Management

By Her Royal Majesty Queen Victoria's Sometimes Humble Servant, Baloney Bill

I think that most of you are aware that management of Trump can be very difficult, if not impossible, but wait a minute, you are on the wrong thought track! I'm talking about bridge – you know, cards -- trump suits???. OK, with me now?

So, you and partner have agreed on a 4H contract. You, as declarer, have heard many times to "GET THE KIDS OFF THE STREETS!!" Right? _____ Look at the hand below, spades first, then hearts, then diamonds, then _____. Dummy's hand is on top, and Smarty's hand is on the bottom. Smarty is declarer.

Q J 6
A 7 3
K 9 7
Q 10 9 4

K 5
Q J 10 9 6
A 6 5
K J 2

West leads the 2 of diamonds. Partner knows that West has either an Ace or the _____. Smarty asks Dummy to play the 7, and West covers with the Jack. Smarty sees one spade loser, maybe a heart loser, a diamond loser and a club loser – down one (maybe)!! How can Smarty ensure the contract? Well, by appropriate TRUMP MANAGEMENT!!

Should Smarty lead the Queen of hearts, or the Jack, and then successfully finesse, hoping that West holds the king? I'll pick the Queen ____ I'll pick the Jack ____ No! The Ten!! ____ Don't lead a heart, because if you lead a heart now, and the finesse fails, you will go down one (heart loser, spade loser, diamond loser and club loser) _____.

How about leading the spade king at trick two rather than a trump? Huh? ___ Good idea, Baloney Bill ___ No way! ___ Will that ensure the contract? Explain:

Another example. You, Smarty, hold (spades 1st, etc.): 5 A K J 8 6 4 2 9 8 2 7 4

Partner holds: A K 4 3 2 7 A 10 5 K Q 9 8

You open 3H; partner sighs, fidgets, blows out a big breath, and finally bids 4H. Your LHO leads the K of diamonds, which you take with partner's Ace. Looks like you got a club loser, two diamond losers and maybe a heart loser. If you don't lose a heart, you make the contract. Ever hear the expression "Eight ever, nine never?" Your combined heart holding is eight, so you should definitely finesse by leading dummy's singleton 7 to your Jack, right? Yes ___ No ___ Is there a way to ensure this contract and not worrying if the heart finesse works or not?

Sure, another example: Dummy's hand on top, your hand on bottom. Contract = 4S. LHO leads the club Ace, followed by the 3 of spades.

J 10 8
A 4
Q 9 7
K Q 10 8 6

A K Q 3 2
9 8 6
A 10 4 3
J 4

Should you set up that club suit first, so you can toss spade losers on the extra clubs in dummy's hand? Yes! _____
Nope _____ I hate these fill-in-the-blank questions _____

How about a few more examples? Yes! _____ No, let's try some practice hands and leave more examples for future sessions _____

OK, we will try some practice hands, but here is a homework assignment that we will cover next week, most likely preceded by a mid-term exam. So, read this, answer the questions, and know how to make the contract, or else! No fair reading the last two paragraphs before you figure everything out with your brilliant mind.

6 5 4
A 6 5 4
8 2
A J 7 3

K 7 3
K 9 8 2
A K 6 4
K 5

You (bottom hand) are the declarer at 4H, opponents silent during the bidding. LHO leads the spade Queen. RHO takes the Ace and returns a spade. Is this contract makeable??

(no peeking below – yet)

In this case, you should lead trump after taking your king of spades. Lead your 2 to the Ace, then the 4 back to your King. One trump remains out – the queen. It is rarely beneficial to give up two or your smaller trump to drive out the last bid trump from opponent's hand, and in this case, it would be to your disadvantage for other reasons as well.

If you can ruff two diamonds in the dummy, you will have a spade trick, two diamond tricks, two club tricks, two heart tricks (A & K), two diamond ruffs, and a club ruff, making the contract. Had you led a third trump, you could not have ruffed two diamonds, and you would have failed to make your contract.