

BOOK SUMMARY

Subject: Wirgren Lawrence SST-WP Hand Valuation Method

Source: Lawrence, M. & A. Wirgren, I Fought the Law of Total Tricks, Mikeworks Brentwood TN © 2004. 271 pp. ISBN 0-9762999-1-7

1. Assuming a fit (8+ cards), the number of tricks your side will take depends on Working Points (WP) and the Short Suit Total (SST). It is the short suits that determine what the trumps will be worth.
2. WP = working high card points summed *Do not count HCP in side suits that cannot take tricks with certainty*. across both our hands - HCP that WILL take tricks for our side regardless of opponent's holdings. WP can be much less than HCP. Length tricks in our side suits add 3WP each to total.
3. **Short Suit Total** is the sum of the number of total cards in the shortest and 2nd shortest suits in the combined hands. Note that being equally short in the same shortest suit counts only as the 1st suit. We must add the next shortest suit length to that length. The lower the SST the better. The higher the SST the more balanced the hands are.
4. Adjustments to both WP and SST follow below.

1 Deck = 40 HCP. 1 Deck = 13 tricks. Therefore 1 Trick = 3.08 HCP = ~ 3 WP (round to 3).

Trick Taking Potential:

WP	Adjust # Tricks	SST 0	SST 1	SST 2	SST 3	SST 4	SST 5	SST 6
4-6	-5	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
7-9	-4	9	8	7	6	5	4	3
10-12	-3	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
13-15	-2	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
16-18	-1	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
19-21	0	13	12	11	10	9	8	7
	<i># Losers = SST Winners = 13 - SST</i>							
22-24	+1	13	13	12	11	10	9	8
25-27	+2	13	13	13	12	11	10	9
28-30	+3	13	13	13	13	12	11	10
31-33	+4	13	13	13	13	13	12	11
34-36	+5	13	13	13	13	13	13	12

Adjustments:

1. Extra length in the trump suit does NOT add to your WP total
2. Extra length in the side suit (4+ tricks) adds 3 WP for each additional trick (not covered by an honor in the hand opposite). If you take a 4th trick in a side suit with your Jack, the Jack is worth 3 WP. Running small cards in a side suit are worth 3 WP each.
3. If the 3rd short suit is doubleton, subtract 1 from the SST. If it is a singleton, subtract 2. If it is a void (3 side suit voids) subtract 3.
4. We cannot use SST & WP until we find a fit. 5332 shape is worst shape for SST/ WP w/o a fit.

Bidding Concepts:

Double at 2 or 3 level after they balance shows distribution (SST) to compete but only fair values. Invites partner to compete. If doubler continues bidding then doubler shows extra values/strong hand.

When holding 3 small cards in opponent's opening suit, it is a very bad sign when opponent's partner does not raise. Our partner might very well have 3 cards and we can have 3 losers in the suit.

Holding 3 nice cards in RHO's suit is bad if partner also has only 3 cards. These HCP will NOT contribute to setting up length tricks. Also LHO might be ruffing our apparent winner in RHO's suit.

A player with a known 9 card fit does not like to defend.

Overcall on a 4 card suit only at the 1 level when no other call is better.

Weak 2 bids on 5 card suit too misleading to SST/WP evaluation – very risky.

Be cautious of preference auctions – they do not ensure great fits.

SST/WP combine to give a wrong answer when we have low WP and too few trumps to take advantage of your SST - 2 weak hands that do not offer a source of tricks except in the trump suit.

Suit	Fit	% time NO LOSERS
AKxxx	xxxx	41
AKxxx	Qxx	68
AKxxx	Qxxx	90
AQxxx	xxxx	20
AQxxx	Kxx	68
AQxxx	Kxxx	90

Extra trumps are not helpful unless there is useful shortness and working strength in our side suit length. However when trump holding is weak, extra trumps can limit losses in that suit.

When they double our cuebid, a pass shows no stopper, 3NT promises a full NT stopper, and a redouble promises a partial stopper. A cue bid in answer to partner's cuebid shows a void.

Opponent's bidding often influences what HCPs we own are WPs.

Other factors to consider:

- Good saves require distribution (low SST).
- With only 8 trumps, defenders can profitably lead trumps reducing your ruffing tricks.
- Having great trump strength and length is worth less to trick potential than working points in the long side suit.
- Luck;
- Controls and Timing (We might own 13 tricks in two suits with 6 losers in the other two. Since defense goes first, 7 tricks will likely be the limit for us);
- Right siding the contract – avoid opening leads through a finessable control.
- How distribution affects results (simulation analysis by Wirgren):

West North East South
 1♥ 1♠ 3♥* ? *= Limit Raise.

South Hands:	♠QJ643 ♥84 ♦843 ♣KJ4	♠QJ643 ♥84 ♦Q43 ♣KJ4	♠QJ643 ♥843 ♦3 ♣KJ42	♠97643 ♥84 ♦Q43 ♣KJ4
Avg NS tricks	7.77	8.04	9.94	7.70
Avg EW tricks	10.32	10.23	10.04	10.19
% NS Games	6	7	69	5
% EW Games	79	79	71	74
% Both sides games	3	3	47	3
% NS own the hand	14	16	65	20

Note how QJxxx and xxxxx are not very different. QJ WPs are not as valuable – better to have those HCP in side suits especially where they create extra tricks.

Note how singleton improves outlook dramatically.

On the Law of total tricks...

Distribution of total trumps (longest fit for both sides)

#	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22+
%	10.53	10.50	26.86	22.92	15.65	8.49	3.55	1.16	0.34

16 or 17 trumps make up almost 1/2 the hands.

When is the Law at its best?

The Law works best when the hands are balanced.

When there are 14-18 total trumps.

Simulation		Frequency (%) Number of Tricks vs. Number of Trumps										
Trumps	(N)	Freq	+4	+3	+2	+1	All >0	0	All <0	-1	-2	-3
14	(250)	9.2		0.8	4.4	34.0	39.2	55.6	5.2	5.2		
15	(250)	10.7			3.2	41.2	44.4	42	13.6	12.4	1.2	
16	(397)	26.5		0.7	6.0	27.0	33.7	44.1	22.2	17.1	4.8	0.3
17	(350)	23.3	0.3	0.6	8.6	26.8	36.3	36	27.7	22	5.7	
18	(266)	17.7	0.4	2.3	4.1	25.9	32.7	36.1	30.4	21.8	8.6	0.8
19	(250)	8.1		1.6	4.8	18.4	24.8	33.6	41.6	33.2	8.4	
20	(250)	3.2		0.4	7.6	18.0	26	30	44	28.4	12	3.6
21								21				

For cases where the only consideration is the minimum number of tricks between the two sides:

# Trumps	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
% time #Tricks ≥ #Trumps	94.8	86.4	77.8	72.3	68.8	58.4	56

The Law of Total Tricks is exactly right about 35-40% of the

time, but including extra tricks averages 74% of the time. Note # tricks skews above # trumps 34% (Ratio above/under = 1.34).

Law of Total Tricks works poorly when:

18+ Trumps and not much distribution.

14-18 Trumps and modest distribution.

Law of Total Tricks Benefits	SST/WP Benefits
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasis on trumps and not high cards keeps us from bidding too high with balanced hands at the 2 level well. 2. Encourages competition 3. Doubling of preempts made clearer. 4. Extra trumps provide extra tricks only when they cause extra distribution for our side. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Much better accuracy for how many tricks we can take. 2. Efficient way to bid CONSTRUCTIVE auctions (no opposing bidding). 3. Adjustments to penalty doubles and bidding on decisions.

No modeling data/statistics offered for WP&SST on same hands as LOTT. This is a weakness in this book's assertion. Would have been powerful to use the hand data that define LOTT accuracy to define the incremental accuracy of WP&SST. Many cases are discussed that favor WP&SST over LOTT. Here is one compelling example that stresses evaluation judgment:

SST/WP Negatives:

When we have low SST and few WPs, we need extra trumps to take full advantage of the distribution. Estimating WPs can be difficult – avoid tendency to over value Qs and Js especially in short suits.

Example Hand:

W Deals
Both Vul

♠ AQ963
♥ AQ873
♦ K3
♣ 3

♠ K4
♥ K1092
♦ AQ76
♣ KQ7

N
W E
S

♠ 107
♥ J4
♦ J1094
♣ J10842

♠ J852
♥ 65
♦ 852
♣ A965

South plays in ♠.

NS have an *initial* 20 WP and an *initial* SST of 3.

13-3 = 10 winners. However there are 12 winners for NS.

Why?

1. SST with 3 short suits → adjust for 3rd suit doubleton, -1.
2. ♠ WP = 10 since ♠K finesse works. No extra WP for ♠ length.
3. ♥ WP = 9 since ♥K finesse works and long ♥ can be established by ruffing (3-3 and 4-2 breaks make this assumption an 83% likelihood!) or +3 WP.

This adjusts WP to 26 and SST to 2. **Winners = 13-2+1 = 12**

Say West opens the auction a strong NT, then all the important HCP are placed and we need methods to compete to show fit and shortness.

Here the Law of Total Tricks says there are 9 NS + 8 EW trumps or 17 total tricks.

EW can make 7 tricks in Diamonds Clubs or NT (2♠, 2♥, 1♦, 1♣ = 6 losers).

NS can make 12 tricks in ♠.

Total of 19 tricks and the Law is low by 2.