

Learning Points – Count to Beat Game

By Steve Moese (Mike Purcell, ed.)

July 13, 2010

Defense Level: Intermediate

East Deals
NS Vul
MPs

♠ J9
♥ A10875
♦ K97
♣ 732

♠ 732
♥ KJ432
♦ 3
♣ QJ95
Steve

N
W 2 E
S

♠ AKQ84
♥ Q
♦ Q10842
♣ K4
Bruce

♠ 1065
♥ 96
♦ AJ65
♣ A1086

EW:2N,3♠

East

South

West

North

1♠

Pass

2♠

Pass

3♦¹

Pass

4♠²

All Pass

1= Help Suit Game Try

2= Only one loser in the help suit.

South leads the ♠5

Tuesday Club Game, July 13, 2010 Ms. Kay Mulford, Director.
Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 . Bruce Parent is my partner. We play 2/1 Game Force.

The attraction of this hand is not so much the bidding. EW got to a game that shouldn't make. The real challenge is whether the defenders can set the game. See if you can find the key.

The Bidding

East has 14 working points, ♥ shortness and a good ♠ suit so 1♠ is right. South has no need to speak at first turn (but would be thinking about balancing with 2N to show the minor suits if this should develop). West has an easy raise to 2♠. West's 7 HCP and shortness translate to about 9-10 Support Points. We play Bergen raises, so partner knows I have a 3-card constructive raise. A 4th ♠ would put the value firmly at 10 SPs and I'd bid 3♦ [Alert] not 2♠. West tries for game, looking for help in the ♦ suit. With 1 loser I decide 1) all round suit values are working, 2) 2♦ ruffs appear possible, and 3) Partner is prepared for game with only 3 trumps in my hand. I choose to count this hand as 7-8 losers and bid the game.

The Play

The ♠5 opening lead was best – taking away dummy trumps and giving nothing up in the side suits. East tries the ♥Q taken by North who switches to the ♣7. East plays ♣K and South wins ♣A. A 2nd trump takes away another dummy ruff. East ruffs a ♦ and then ruffs a ♥. The ♠Q draws the last defensive trump and declarer has a ♣ entry to the table for 3 pitches (losing ♦s). 4♠ by East making 4 was worth 10.5 of 11 matchpoints.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
MPs	9	10.5	1	4	10.5	6.5		1	4	1	6.5	4	8
Result	170	420	-100	-50	420	110		-100	-50	-100	110	-50	140

Do you see where the defense could have done better?

Post Mortem

South carries the defensive burden on this hand. Once Dummy's ♥ winners are set up, South has to think – "How can I keep East from enjoying those ♥ winners?" South must formulate a plan to attack dummy's side entries. Holding the ♠1065, South knows declarer must pull trumps or they cannot enjoy the 3rd ♥ trick. The only side entry threat Dummy has is in ♣s. If declarer has 2♥s and 1♣, then nothing can be done to defeat the contract, so don't protect that position.

When East plays the ♣K, holding up the ♣A will clarify the situation. If East is 5-5 in ♠s-♦s, then the round suits will likely break 2-1. The key clue is in North's switch to the ♣7. Playing upside down count and attitude, this card strongly implies an odd card holding (likely 3 – with 1, then East would hold 4

clubs – less likely on this auction). South can choose to 1) Duck the ♣K, or 2) Win the ♣A and return a small ♣ before declarer can draw trumps.

Line 2) seems counter-intuitive until you recognize the full threat the ♠10 represents in South's hand. Declarer cannot score 2 small trumps ruffing ♥s.

Help Suit Game Tries

Typically show a side suit of 3 or more cards and a hand that can play in game if partner's values or shape contribute importantly. Some play that the help suit game try looks for honor cards, others play that the game try asks about loser count in the suit. I prefer the latter – it is more flexible and as shown on this hand can lead to games that are tough to find and tough to defend. Playing this way, a new suit by partner at the 3 level after a simple raise asks about your holding in that suit, and not about the overall strength of your initial raise:

With 1 loser (or 2 cover cards) bid game – yes, even if you are a bare minimum.

If partner only has 3 cards in the suit you can be sure he has great values and distribution elsewhere.

With 2 losers (or 1 cover card), evaluate the strength and shape of your hand before committing the side to game (4333 shape, or no outside ruffing values make for poor support hands).

With 3 losers (or 0 cover cards), simply bid 3 of your major and hope partner makes it!

Bergen Raises in 2/1 Game Force

1NT	5+ to 7 HCP 9+ to 12- HCP <i>(plus all 5-12 HCP nonfitting hands)</i>	All weak 2 or 3 card raises and 3 card limit raises.	[Forcing]
2 Major	7+ to 9 HCP	Constructive 3 card raise	[Alert!]
3♣	9+ to 12- HCP	4 Card Limit Raise (Invitational)	[Alert!]
3♦	7-9 HCP	4 Card Constructive Raise	[Alert!]
3 Major	2-5 HCP	4 Card Preemptive Raise	[Alert!]

Extended Bergen raises:

3 Other major	10-15 HCP	4 Card Support & Undisclosed singleton (3N asks)	[Alert!]
4♣	18+ HCP	3 Card Raise (Swiss Raise)	[Alert!]
4♦	3 – 6 HCP	Preempt w/ A or K outside – discourages sacrifice	[Alert!]
4 Major	0 – 6 HCP	Preempt w/no defense – encourages sacrifice.	[Alert!]
IN then 4 Maj	7 – 9 HCP	Preempt w/slow values (not quick tricks).	

Some people switch the meaning of 3♣ and 3♦.

Learning Points

1. Get a count of declarer's likely distribution early in the hand. Use partner's count signals to help – they might just tell you when to duck to shut the door on dummy's long suit tricks.
2. Play Help Suit Game Tries. Both Loser count and strength in the suit are helpful when making the game decision. Be sure partner knows what a good help suit try looks like.
3. Bergen raises help clarify major suit raises and trump length. They give you important inferences about partner's trump strength, especially when partner shows game interest after a 3-card raise.

Keywords: Help Suit Game Try, Bergen Raises, Defensive Count Signal, Hold Up Play, Lead Trumps