

Learning Points – Why Play No Trump When a 4-3 Fit is Available

By Steve Moese (Mike Purcell, ed.)

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Declarer Play Level: Basic

West Deals None Vul MPs	♠ 43 ♥ J103 ♦ K109 ♣ A7654 <i>Gary</i>	
♠ K10 ♥ Q765 ♦ A876 ♣ 1032 <i>Geroldine</i>	N W E S	♠ Q876 ♥ K4 ♦ 5432 ♣ Q98 <i>Lou</i>
	♠ AJ952 ♥ A982 ♦ QJ ♣ KJ <i>Steve</i>	

Thursday Evening Club Game, July 15, 2010 Annease and Marvin Comer, Directors. Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070.

This hand comes from the monthly evening Swiss Team game. My partner is Gary Busch. We play 2/1 Game Force.

The Bidding

North's 1N response is part of the 2/1 Game Force approach. By an unpassed hand, 1N is forcing and shows 5-12 HCP. The best hand North can have is a 3-card limit raise of partner's major, or 12 HCP with 0-2 cards in partner's major. The 1NT bid shows 8-9 losers, never 7. With 7 or fewer there we use more encouraging bids. South's jump to 3♥ is optimistic. The jump shift should show 18+ HCP and forces 1 round. The 7 HCP in the minors are not necessarily pulling their full weight. The South hand would be stronger if the minor K, Q, and J were in the majors. Strength with length is always better than strength with shortness.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	1N ¹	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥!	All Pass
All Pass			
1= Forcing (5-12 HCP)			
East leads the ♣ 10			

3♠, 4♣, or 4♦ by North at this point would be weak, denying strength for game. The 3♠ bid could be made on as little as a doubleton ♠ or a singleton ♠A, K, or Q. The 4♣ or 4♦ call would promise a very long suit, no major fit, and little else.

Partner had enough for game and realized either 3N or 4♥ might play. He judged the ♠ situation was a concern and chose to play the Moysian ♥ fit instead. Would you?

The Play

West did well to lead a ♣. Even though this appears to give up a trick, underleading the ♥Q or the ♦A is inadvisable and a ♠ lead is unlikely to fare well.

South counts 4 losers (1♠, 2♥s, 1♦) and must find a way to eliminate 1. The ♣ lead establishes the ♣A for a pitch. Perhaps there is a way to sneak a ♦ past West then pitch a ♦ on the ♣A. South leads the ♦J pretending to finesse the ♦Q. West holds off (a good play if partner has the ♦Q). South puts up the ♦K and pitches the ♦Q on the ♣A.

The ♠3 to the ♠9 draws the ♠10 from West who chooses to return a trump (a good move – cutting dummy's ruffing power seems right given declarer's intent to ruff ♠s). Partner follows with the ♥K won by South's ♥A. A small ♠ presents West with a choice – to ruff or not? West chose to ruff with the ♥Q while North pitched the remaining ♦. The ♦A followed, ruffed low by South, pitching a ♣ from dummy. Declarer cross ruffs the hand from here making 5 for +450. At the other table, North declared 3NT. East led the ♠6 and EW took 3 ♠s, 1♥ and 1♦ for down 1. 10 IMPs from this board helped win the match.

Post Mortem

Turns out partner's concern appears well founded. Did you see what he saw?

Do you think West would have done better to resist ruffing the ♠ with the ♥Q? Pitching a ♦ allows South to cross ruff, leaving 2 more winners for EW. However declarer has 10 tricks at that point.

Since the ♣s set up after 3 rounds, playing trumps often and early does not set this contract either.

Try it!

So, do you bid the major game or 3NT? Looks like it might depend on who has the ♠10! Don't ask me how we knew that from the bidding.

The real villain is the duplication of strength in the North South ♦ suit. NS can only take 2 ♦ tricks, but in so doing set up 2 for the opponents. Strength with length is always better than strength with shortness.

West Deals
None Vul
MPs

♠
♥ J10
♦ 109
♣ 76
Gary

♠		♠ Q8
♥ Q76	N	♥ 4
♦ A87	W	♦ 542
♣	S	♣
Geroldine		Lou

♠ J52
♥ 982
♦
♣
Steve

Learning Points

1. Don't play the contract you're not in. Focus your attention, energy and skill at the task at hand.
2. Sometimes a little deception can reap benefits early in the hand before opponents know your shape.
3. When offered an expensive over ruff by declarer, you might do better to decline. Trump length and pitches in a suit being ruffed by your right hand opponent suggest letting declarer shorten their trumps and give you extra tricks at the end.

Keywords: Moysian Fit, Jump Shift 18+ HCP, Forcing 1NT Response, Cross Ruff, Beware Strength in Short Suits