

Learning Points – Manage Trumps Well

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Declarer Play Level: Basic / Intermediate

North Deals None Vul MPs	♠ J4	N W 33 E S	♠ K953
	♥ K987		♥ Q62
	♦ AJ1042		♦ K986
	♣ 54		♣ 93
♠ 2			♠ AQ10876
♥ AJ104			♥ 53
♦ Q753			♦ -
♣ J1076			♣ AKQ82

A/X Open Pairs, Qualifying, Indianapolis Regional Mike Ma is my partner. We play Precision.

Sometimes we try to do too much. Simply counting winners and losers will show how to get the most from our chances as declarer. 6-2 Trump fits can test our planning.

The Bidding – after 2 passes South opens a Precision 1♣ (16+ HCP, here a 2-suited 3-loser hand). North responds with a Game forcing 2♦ (8-11 HCP by a passed hand). South's 2♠ asked about controls and fit for ♠s. North indicated 0-3 Controls and ♠Jxx or worse. 3♣ shows a 2nd suit and is forcing. 3N suggested a place to play. 4♠ said this is better.

The Play – Declarer can count 1 loser in ♠s, 2 in ♥s and none in the minors. How can declarer make use of the ♦A and ♥K after the ♣ lead? Easy. Take a 2nd ♣ and ruff a small ♣ high. No matter that East over ruffs. East will have to give you an immediate entry in ♦s or lead ♥s, eliminating your 2nd ♥ loser either way. East chose to lead a ♦ and South to sluffed a losing ♥. Drawing trumps (the 1-4 break was harmless) yields 11 tricks. Making 5 was 15 of 17 MPs.

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	1♣ ¹	Pass
2♦ ²	Pass	2♠ ³	Pass
2N ⁴	Pass	3♣ ⁵	Pass
3N ⁶	Pass	4♠ All	Pass

- 1=16+ Strong Forcing, Artificial
- 2=5+Ds, 8-11 HCP (passed hand)
- 3= Support Asking Bid, 5Ss
- 4= Poor fit, 0-3 Controls (A=2, K=1)
- 5= Natural and forcing
- 6= No fit, and right side NT for red suits

West leads ♣J

high. If East can overruff, it will be with the ♠K. If East can't, you know the ♠K is off side. By allowing East to overruff you are making an avoidance play – With East on lead, opponents cannot profitably attack ♥s. East can make it dicey and return a trump. Simply draw trumps and run clubs, postponing the ♥ finesse till the end.

Partner's 15 HCP and 3-losers are more than enough to open 1♣. Partner has 3 ½ Quick Tricks, enough defense.

Learning Points

- Count your losers. Know which ones you might avoid.
- Look to ruff in the short trump hand so you add tricks to your total. Ruffing in the long trump hand adds tricks only when you can draw trumps in the short trump hand (Dummy Reversal). Otherwise it risks losing trump control.
- Keep the danger hand off lead.

Keywords: Ruffing in the Short Hand, Avoidance Play, Danger Hand

Post Mortem – One common way to increase your tricks as declarer is to ruff in the short trump hand (North). In this hand, play ♣s to split 4-2 and ruff a ♣

		NS	EW	NS MPs	EW MPs
3♠	N	170		2.50	14.50
4♠	S	420		7.50	9.50
4♠	S	420		7.50	9.50
5♠	S		50	0.50	16.50
3N	N	430		12.00	5.00
4♠	S	420		7.50	9.50
3♠	S	170		2.50	14.50
4♠	S	420		7.50	9.50
4♠	S	450		15.00	2.00
4♠	S	420		7.50	9.50
4♠	S	420		7.50	9.50
4♠	S	450		15.00	2.00
4♠	S	450		15.00	2.00
4♠	S	450		15.00	2.00
3N	N		50	0.50	16.50
4♠	S	420		7.50	9.50
4♠	S	450		15.00	2.00