



May 2006 BridgeHands Newsletter

Trumps Are Wild!

May 2006

Dear *BridgeHands* Friend,

Welcome to our May issue of *Bridgehands*. Last month we explored the raw power of trump used for ruffing and sluffing. This month we have a special treat - Marty Bergen has generously agreed to allow BridgeHands excerpt the chapter "Trumps are Wild" from his [Points Schmoints](#) book (nominated "book of the year" by the [ABTA](#) - American Bridge Teachers' Association). You may call Marty directly at 800 386-7432 or send EMAIL to him at mbergen@mindspring.com to place your order for this and other books. Mention Coupon Code **BHB1** when you order any hardbound book and you will receive two free softbound books!

In our premiere issue, BridgeHands covered the basics of the finesse. Let's add a handy reminder on repeated finesses, enter the [Rule of 2](#).

Goulash, a tasty treat for Bridge players? No, we're not referring to anything edible. But the [goulash deal](#) is an oddity enjoyed by masochistic Bridge players, if you care to try a bizarre interlude from the typical Rubber Bridge game.

Note: Viewing the hands below requires your EMAIL reader to use "fixed fonts" (not proportional). If you have problems reading this document, please view our [online web-based copy](#) or [Adobe Acrobat PDF file](#) suitable for printing.

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Trumps Are Wild!

Drawing Trumps: Count on Your Opponents

"Counting to a bridge player is similar to an actor learning his lines — it does not guarantee success, but he cannot succeed without it."

George S. Kaufman, playwright, director and bridge player

Counting trumps should be a straightforward process. However, most players do it the hard way. Here is the simple, yet effective technique used by experienced players.

				North											
				S	6	5									
				H	Q	7	6	5	2						
				D	10	3									
				C	K	J	4	3							
								East							
West								S	10						
S	J	9	4	3					H	A	4	3			
H	K	J	10	9					D	9	8	7	6	4	
D	Q	J	2					C	A	10	6	2			
C	7	5													
								South							
				S	A	K	Q	8	7	2					
				H	8										
				D	A	K	5								
				C	Q	9	8								
West				North				East				South			
—				P				P				1S			
P				1NT				P				4S			
All Pass															

With only two sure losers, prospects are good. The **HJ** is led, and it is time to think about the opponents' trumps. You have six spades and dummy has two, a total of eight. Therefore, the opponents have five.

After winning the **HJ**, West leads a second heart which you ruff. You do not need to keep track of that trump. The opponents began the hand with five, and they still have all of those. Don't draw trumps just yet. First things first.

You must ruff your **D5** while dummy retains some trumps. You cash the **DA-K** and ruff a diamond with the **S5**. You need not worry about that trump either. The opponents' five spades are still intact.

Now you are ready to draw trumps. Lead a **spade** to your ace as both opponents follow suit. Two down, with three to go. When you continue with the **king**, East discards a diamond. You know that West has two trumps remaining, since only three of the opponents' five spades have been accounted for.

Take the **SQ**, pulling one more trump from West. You now leave him with his trump winner, and establish clubs. Your only losers are one heart, one spade, and the **CA**.

Voids Are the Name of the Game

For a little fun, consider the following: What is the fewest number of HCP needed by one side to make a grand slam? (Hint: You have only two opposing trumps to count, and each royal member is single.)

North	
S	—
H	9 7 6 4 3
D	4 3 2
C	6 5 4 3 2
South	
S	8 7 6 5 4 3 2
H	A J 10 8 5 2
D	—
C	—

The answer is five. **7H** is cold as long as trumps are divided 1–1 and neither opponent has five spades. You will ruff spades until you have established them.

Dummy's Ruff Can Be Smooth

"Shortness is in the eye of the beholder."

Wee Willie Keeler, 19th century baseball player

Many players do not appreciate the importance of winning extra tricks with dummy's trumps. Of course, this is possible only when dummy has a short suit along with adequate trumps. (continued on next page)

On this deal, declarer was not impressed with any of dummy's suits.

North			
S Q J 6			
H 8 6 5			
D 7 6 3			
C A 8 7 2			
West			East
S 7 5 4			S 3 2
H K J			H Q 10 9 4
D Q J 10 8			D 9 5 4 2
C Q 9 6 5			C K J 10
South			
S A K 10 9 8			
H A 7 3 2			
D A K			
C 4 3			

West	North	East	South
–	P	P	1S
P	1S	P	4S

All Pass

Declarer won the diamond lead and drew trumps in three rounds. He now turned his attention to hearts, hoping for a 3–3 split. Not likely. After the normal 4–2 heart split, declarer ended with the same nine winners he started with. However, he could have made **4S**.

While dummy is not short in hearts, he does have fewer than declarer. With that in mind, declarer should trump one of his heart losers in dummy for the tenth trick.

Use good crossruff technique by taking your side-suit winners first.

Trick 1: Win your **DA**.

Trick 2: Lead your **DK**.

Trick 3: Lead a club to the **ace**.

Trick 4: Lead a heart to your **ace**.

Trick 5: Concede a **heart** trick.

Trick 6: Win the likely **trump** return in your hand.

No other defense would affect the outcome.

Trick 7: Concede a second **heart**, creating a void in dummy (finally).

Trick 8: Win the **trump** return in your hand.

Trick 9: Ruff your losing **heart** with dummy's **Q**.

Más vale tarde que nunca. That translates to better late than never, which is all I remember from three years of high school Spanish.

(continued on next page)

At this point, you have won seven tricks. You still have three winning trumps in your hand. In addition to your four obvious side-suit winners, your ruff in dummy increased your five trump winners to six. All you lose is one club and two hearts. Very smooth!

Drawing Trumps First is Often the Worst

Just as a golf or tennis pro must concentrate on correcting the imperfections in a student's swing, a bridge teacher must often correct a student's misconceptions. Whatever the source, many players carry around a great deal of incomplete and/or incorrect information. You have heard it all before:

"An opening 1C bid is usually made with a three- card suit."

"The Rule of 11 only works in notrump."

"You need an opening hand to answer partner's preempt."

I have always been struck by the irony of the following scenario. Someone calls, seeking bridge lessons. We agree on all the administrative details. He then announces, "There's just one problem. I've never played bridge before. I am a total beginner."

My reaction: "Problem? What problem? You're fortunate to be starting fresh — no bad habits to undo. What could be better?"

Perhaps the most popular bridge misconception is that declarer should draw trumps first. Wrong! I do not know why so many players believe this when the truth is: With most hands, it is wrong to begin, let alone finish drawing the opponents' trumps as soon as possible.

It would be absurd to say that drawing trumps first is never correct. However, there are many reasons to postpone pulling trump, such as:

1. You need to ruff losers in dummy.
2. You must preserve trump entries in order to develop a long suit or set up an endplay.
3. You are eager to set up a side suit on which you will discard losers.

In fact I would estimate that declarer should draw trumps first roughly a third of the time.

As South, can you take 10 tricks on the following deal?

		North		
		S 5 3 2		
		H 5 4 2		
		D K Q 6		
		C K J 10 4		
West			East	
S A K			S 6 4	
H Q J 10			H 8 7 6 3	
D J 9 5 4 3			D A 10 8 7	
C 8 7 5			C 9 3 2	
		South		
		S Q J 10 9 8 7		
		H A K 9		
		D 2		
		C A Q 6		

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1S
P	2S	P	4S

All Pass

Declarer is confronted with four possible losers: two spade tricks, one heart and one diamond. Clearly, there is nothing he can do about the ace and king of trumps. The diamond loser is also inevitable, unless of course, the opponents neglect to take their ace. Therefore, declarer should focus his attention on avoiding the heart loser.

Some players are overly impressed with the quality of the club suit. They immediately attack trumps, planning to discard the heart loser on dummy's fourth club. This cannot possibly succeed.

Give it a try. You (South) win the heart and play a trump. West takes the SK and leads a second heart. You win and play a second trump, giving West the lead. He cashes the H10 and shifts to a diamond. Down one. No, after the heart lead, dummy's fourth club is not the answer. The correct line of play is as follows:

- Trick 1: Win the **HQ** lead with the ace.
- Trick 2: Lead a **diamond** to the king and ace. You need to develop a diamond winner; until you force out the ace, dummy's diamonds are worthless.
- Trick 3: Win East's **heart** return with your king.
- Trick 4: Play the **C6** to dummy's king.
- Trick 5: Cash dummy's **DQ**, discarding the H9 from your hand.
- Trick 6: Draw **trumps**, conceding the ace and king. It never ceases to amaze me what is possible when you don't draw trumps first. I know that it is difficult to undo the habits of a lifetime, but why not start today?

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Next month Marty will complete his saga, "**Trumps are Wild**" so stay tuned.

Rule of 2 - How do you do? (repeated finesses)

The **Rule of 2** is a handy "rule of thumb" to consider when planning repeated finesses within one suit. In our premiere December 2005 eMag Newsletter, we covered some common finessing scenarios with dual tenaces (split honors). Generally, we first play to the lower of split honors, repeating the finesse to the higher honor on the second round of play:

#1. **A Q 10**
6 5 4 **Finesse West's Jack, then King**

The Rule of 2 has a 76 percent chance to earn two tricks and a 24 percent chance to make 3 tricks.

#2. **A J 9**
4 3 2 **Finesse West's 10, then King-Queen**

We can always make one trick; using the Rule of 2 we have a 38 percent chance to make two. Looking at the above explanations, we note that in both situations the correct play is to first try the lower finesse. Regardless of the outcome, we return to our hand and repeat the finesse to the higher ranking finesse. The nice thing about the Rule of 2 is that it's easy to remember and can be applied with various tenace situations as:

#3. **K J 7**
4 3 2 **Finesse West's Queen, then Ace.**

The Rule of 2 has a 76 percent change to earn two tricks and a 24 percent chance to make 3 tricks. While the tenances are different, this sequence is effectively the same as #1 above.

#4. **Q 10 8 7**
4 3 2 **Finesse West's 9 then Ace-King**

While we only have two lowly honors, the Rule of 2 still is in force. This line has an 85 percent chance to make one trick and a 26 percent chance to take two tricks. Of course, like any "rule of thumb", we should not be surprised to find exceptions. Here are some caveats: (continued on next page)

a) Evaluate the best line of play. Perhaps you can promote a side suit or let the opponents first break the suit, such as employing an endplay. Here's an example:

#5. K J 7
4 3 2

Returning to our prior example, we normally finesse West's Queen, then Ace. However, this was a major suit and West bid the suit, so it is possible both of our finesses are doomed to lose. Here's the entire deal:

		North		
		S K J 7		
		H A 7 6 5 4		
		D K 4 3		
		C 8 2		
West			East	
S 6 5			S A Q 10 9 8	
H 2			H 3	
D J 10 9 8 7 6			D Q 5	
C 7 6 5 4			C K Q J 10 9	
		South		
		S 4 3 2		
		H K Q J 10 9 8		
		D A 2		
		C A 3		

West	North	East	South
—	—	1S	2H
P	4H	All Pass	

Based on East's **1S** opening bid, declarer's chances to finesse a Spade do not look promising. Looking at the situation, we can see that in addition to losing one Club, we have three Spade losers – one too many. So instead of playing a repeated finesse, let's pursue an endplay. We should pull trump, win the Diamond Ace-King and ruff the third Diamond. Next we win the Club Ace and lose a Club. East is on lead with this holding (continued on next page):

		North		
		S K J -		
		H A 7 6 5 -		
		D - - -		
		C - -		
West			East	
S - 2			S A Q 10 - -	
H -			H -	
D J 10 9 - - -			D - -	
C 7 6 - -			C K Q J - -	
		South		
		S 4 3 -		
		H - Q J 10 9 -		
		D - -		
		C - -		

East has won two tricks but is stuck for a play. Leading either a Club or Diamond will allow declarer to pitch a Spade loser from hand and ruff in the dummy, restricting East to only one more Spade loser. Leading a Spade is no better – dummy will win the carefully retained Spade King, losing only one more Spade.

Note for the aspiring defenders: West should lead the **Spade 6**, top a doubleton sequence. A considerate West appreciates that the outstanding Spades are 6, 5, 4 and 3 (dummy's 8 and 2 are visible). So West can deduce a disciplined partner East is leading the top of a doubleton sequence – not a three card suit (begin low or medium, depending on agreements). Trusting partner, East can win two Spades, give partner a ruff on the third Spade and later win the Club King – what a hero!

b) Consider transportation – since you need to return to the hand in order to repeat the finesse, ensure the other hand has sufficient entries (especially weaker dummy)

c) Beware of a dangerous opponent – if the opponent behind the lower finesse (the Jack in the first hand) wins the lead, might the player return a card in an unprotected suit and run many tricks though your hand? (especially in a Notrump contract) If so, perhaps there is another safer line of play.

d) If you do not need the extra trick to take home the contract, consider the direct line of play. This is particularly true should the opponents have an unusual suit distribution in trump or a seemingly promotable side suit. A similar deviation is true when the bidding disclosed one opponent holds certain cards – we should make good use of all information provided.

e) As the number of combined cards in a suit grows above seven, the benefit associated with the Rule of 2 is diminished. Here is an example:

#5. K J 7 6
5 4 3 2

While the honor sequence here is the same as #3 above, the best line of play is dependent on your goal. For instance, if your objective is to make two tricks, the best line is to initially finesse the Ace (68 percent chance). When we hold a greater number of cards, it's more likely we can drop opponents' lower honor as well as promote the suit. However, if we really need to make three tricks, then by all means use the Rule of 2 on this holding.

In summary, the Rule of 2 is a nifty rule of thumb with multiple finesse opportunities when holding split honors in a given suit.

Goulash - The Tasty Treat

While goulash dealing isn't for everyone, all would agree the approach certainly generates some interesting hands!

Goulash - To deal unshuffled cards in packets. One variation involves dealing one packet of 5 consecutive cards off the pack to the first player, a second packet of five cards to the second player, and a third packet of 3 cards to the third player. Dealing the 5-5-3 pattern proceeds with the fourth player (dealer). While certainly not in accordance with the laws of Bridge, goulash dealing certainly generates highly distributional hands in Rubber Bridge that lead to unusual bidding and play. Some players like to deal "goulash" from time to time as an exciting interlude to generate challenging hands to bid and play.

So, you ask, how does goulash dealing generate such distributional hands? Here's the scoop. When we played the prior hand of Rubber Bridge, when a player gathered a winning trick, each player typically followed to the suit led. So most of the tricks have four cards from the same suit. So on the next hand, you can imagine the outcome if the dealer does not shuffle and simply deals out trick "packets" to each player! It's not uncommon for players to have 7 or more cards in a suit, or perhaps a two-suited hand. And yes, your opponent will often have surprising length in your suit, so beware! Needless to say, goulash dealing is not in accordance with the Laws of Contract Bridge, but when players are looking for some real action as a diversion from "real Bridge", goulash dealing can provide loads of fun – provided the players have a good sense of humor.

BridgeHands Back Issues

If you missed a back issue of a ***BridgeHands*** Newcomer-Novice eMag newsletters, here's the links:

[Issue 0 - Finesses](#)

[Issue 1 - Promotions](#)

[Issue 2 - Notrump Leads](#)

[Issue 3 - Leads Against Suit Contract](#)

[Issue 4 - Trump Power](#)

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Best wishes,

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