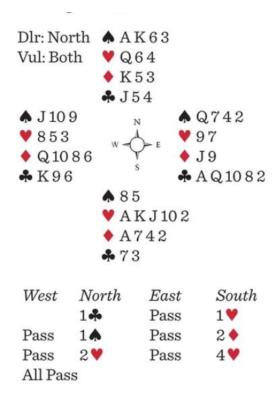
Theme of the Week: When Not to Draw Trumps



Bidding: North is dealer and starts by counting his points; he has 13. North should then subtract 1 point for having a 4-3-3-3 distribution since this is the worst possible distribution in bridge.

Now, North has 12 points, and should open 1♣. South should also count their points; he has 12 high card points, 1 extra for the 5th heart, and 1 extra for the 4th diamond for 14 total points.

South has 4 or more hearts and 6 or more points and therefore should bid 1♥. North does not have 4 hearts to raise partner, but does have 4 spades and so he bids 1♠. South can bid 2♦ as 4th suit forcing to game since he has game values. North then bids 2♥ to show 3 hearts. South now bids game, 4♥, because there are 8 hearts between the two players and enough points for game.

Lead: The lead doesn't affect the contract, so let's just say West leads the J♠ as the top of sequence.

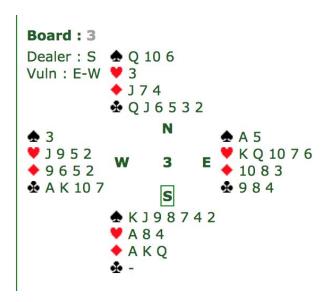
Declarer: Let's start by counting our tricks. We have 2 spades, 5 hearts, and 2 diamonds for 9 tricks. We need 10, so we have to look somewhere for that last trick.

Normally in a suit contract we like to draw trump immediately, but doing so would be detrimental to making this contract since the 10th trick is actually going to come from a diamond ruff in dummy.

To see why drawing trump is bad, let's say we started by doing just that, and then tried to set up diamonds. After playing the A♦ and K♦, we still have 2 diamonds in South and 1 diamond in North. Since we drew trump first, we cannot ruff the 4th diamond in our hand.

Therefore we have to start by playing the A♦ and K♦, and then a third diamond. We then win whatever the defense plays and play our fourth diamond, ruffing with dummy's Q♥ so East cannot overruff.

Now we have 5 hearts, 2 diamonds, 2 spades, and 1 diamond ruff for 10 tricks.



Bidding: I don't think there is an easy way to get to 6♠, so we are just going to say that is the contract we are in.

Declarer: This hand has a similar concept to the last hand. Here we have to ruff two small hearts in dummy so that the A♠ is our only loser.

To do this, we have to make sure that we don't try to draw trump first. If we do, East can play the A♠, then another spade. If this happens, we would only get to ruff a single losing heart and would have to lose the other for down 1.

Let's say the opening lead is the A♣ by West. This is the line of play that we should take.

- Ruff the club lead with the 2♠
- Win the A♥ and play another heart while ruffing in dummy.
- Play a diamond to the Q•
- Ruff the third heart
- Draw trump and claim all the tricks but the A♠.