

BRIDGE – BEGINNER’S LESSONS II - 11

DECLARER PLAY OF THE HAND – MAKING A PLAN

In general terms, the objective for effective “*Declarer Play*” in a **Suit Contract** should focus *around potential losing tricks, and their elimination*; and when in a **No-Trump Contract**, *around potential winning tricks and their possible supplementation*. Before a Declarer initiates his/her action, however, it is essential to organize the play of the hand. Four basic steps are indicated and necessary to accomplish these goals, and they are as follows:

1 Pause to Consider the Objectives: - What is the final contract, who are my Opponents, what card and what suit was led, and what is its significance to me and to my Opponents, what is the number of acceptable winners or losers in order to fulfill the contract, and lastly, need I play conservatively or aggressively as a result of the lead and the specific contract that must be fulfilled?

2 Look at the Projected Winners or Losers - Dependent upon whether in a No-Trump Contract or in a Suit Contract, respectively.

(A) **In a No-Trump Contract** playing techniques include:

- (1) Promotion of high cards (Developing a sure trick when holding suited connecting honors (**KQJ**))
- (2) Suit establishment - Developing of tricks through excessive length (**AKXXX**)
- (3) Finessing – The attempt to develop a second trick when holding a tenace (**AQ**) (**KJT**) (**AJT9**)

(B) **In a Suit Contract** all of the above apply plus:

- (4) Trumping Losers
- (5) Discarding losers on extra winners

3 Analyze The Alternatives - Need you play conservatively or aggressively based upon such variables as; (a) the skill of your Opponents, and (b) the quality of your Game thus far and whether you think your Game could use a boost.

4 Now Put It All Together - Using the above information along with factors such as being aware of *Entries*, avoiding the “*Dangerous Opponent*”, using the “*Hold-Up Play*”, *Inferences* and probable placement of missing high cards, *Trump Pieces* and *Suit Distribution* all deduced from the previous bidding, or lack thereof.

Exercise 1: Counting one’s Objectives as to the numbers of Winners needed or Losers acceptable

3H (4 Losers) **6-NT** (12 Winners) **4S** (3 Losers) **1-NT** (7 Winners) **2D** (5 Losers)

Exercise 2: Counting Sure Winners = Tricks capable of being taken without giving up the lead to the Opponents

N (Dummy)	-	AKQ (3)	AK (2)	JX (5)	KQX (0)	AXXX (2)
S (Declarer)	-	XXX	QX	AKQTX	JXX	KXX

Exercise 3: Counting Losers - Defined as the number of tricks the Opponents are likely to take

N (Dummy)	KQ	KQ	QJT	XXXXX	AK	XXX	KJT
S (Declarer)	AXX (0)	XX (1)	XX (2)	AK (0)	XXXXX (3)	AQJ (1)	XXX (2)

There are two basic types of losers; **Quick-Losers**, and **Slow-Losers**. Quick-Losers are those that the Opponents can take immediately if they have the lead. Slow-Losers are those which the Opponents can never take immediately because they must first give one the lead back first.

Exercise 4: Counting both quick and slow losers

DUMMY	KQJX	JT98	XXXX	AX	KXX
DECLARER	XX (1 Quick)	XXXX (3 Quick)	AX (1 Slow)	XXXX (3 Slow)	XX (2 Quick)

If the cards in the Dummy and Declarer's hand are unevenly divided, the order in which the cards are played; the first trick(s) should be won by the high card(s) from the short side.

Exercise 5: Which high card would you win the first trick within each following combination

<u>DUMMY:</u>	AQJTX	AX	AJX	QX	KQX
<u>DECLARER:</u>	KX (King)	KQX (Ace)	KQXX (Ace/Jack)	AKJX (Queen)	AJX (A or K)