

BRIDGE – BEGINNER’S LESSONS III – 18

Planning the Play of the Hand - Part 2

4. Step III - Counting the Tricks:

Counting One’s Winners (“Sure” or “Potential”): - (Used When in No-Trump Contracts)

The strategy here is for the Declarer to count his/her “sure” winners and see how many “potential,” (“possible”) additional winners might be available to be developed through *promotion, finessing, and/or suit length.*

(With KQJT opposite xxx, there are no “sure” winners but three likely ones. Until the Ace is driven out, however, these winners cannot be established.)

(With AQx opposite xx, there is one “sure” winner with the Ace and one “possible” winner with the Queen, which depends on finessing for the missing King.)

(With AQxx opposite Kxx, there are three “sure” winners but only one “possible” winner, which requires the missing cards to divide 3-3.)

(With Axxx opposite xxxx, besides the “sure” Ace winner, there is one “possible” added winner in the 4th round of the suit, if the missing cards divide 3-2.)

(With AKx opposite Jxxxx there are two “sure” winners and up to three “possible” winners, depending on how early in the play the Queen falls.)

A. Counting One’s Losers: - (Used When in a Suit Contract)

The strategy here is for the Declarer to count his/her “potential” losers and see how many can be eliminated by finessing, by discarding them on side-suit winners, and/or by ruffing.

(With AOJ opposite xxx, you have no “sure” immediate losers (holding the Ace), but one “possible” loser in that the finesse for the King might fail.)

(With Axx opposite Kxx, you have a definite loser in the third round of the suit, but it cannot materialize until the Ace and King are removed.)

(With AKQxx opposite xxxx, you have an unlikely, but nevertheless “possible,” loser, if the missing cards divide 4-0.)

(With Kxxx opposite QTxx, you have one “sure” loser to the Ace and two “possible” losers, one to the Jack and one in the 4th round in the play of the suit, whenever the missing cards divide 4-1 or 5-0.)

5. Step IV – Examine the Entries: An “Entry” is a conveyance which allows you access from one hand (Declarer’s) to the other (Dummy’s) or, vice versa. When one is developing extra tricks or getting rid of losers, entries, by virtue of their facilitating access from one hand to the other, help to enable the development of tricks. Whether the contract is in a Suit or in No-Trump, entries represent a vital link between the Declarer’s hand and the Dummy.

Types of Entries:

A. A “Sure” Winner is a “Sure” Entry provided, of course, that you have a “spot” card to reach it.

(With Kxx opposite Axx, each hand contains an entry card, the King in one, and the Ace in the other.)

(With AKQJ opposite x, you have four "sure" winners and only one entry because of the singleton spot-card; but with AKQJ opposite xxxx you would have four entries to your four winners.)

(With AQT8 opposite KJ9, you have as many as three entries to either hand. You could lead the 8 to the 9, the Ten to the Jack, and the Queen to the King, or, going in the other way, you could lead the 9 to the Ten, the Jack to the Queen, and the King to the Ace.)

B. A "Potential" Winner is a "Potential" Entry. Its ability to be converted to a "sure" entry depends on its being able to be converted into a "sure" winner.

(With KQJ opposite xxx, you have two entries once the Ace is driven out; with KQJ opposite xx, however, you can only count on one entry.)

(With AK642 opposite 9753, if the Ace and King draw all of the Opponents' cards, by careful play you can have two long-suit entries to either hand: the 2 to the 7 and the 4 to the 9, or, going the other way, the 3 to the 4 and the 5 to the 6 (provided you drop the 9 and 7 under the AK)

(With AQT opposite xxx, you have one "sure" entry with the Ace and two "possible" entries by double finessing the Ten and Queen first.)

(With Axx opposite x, you have one entry to the hand with the Ace and two later entries to the other hand by trumping the spot cards, assuming you are in a Suit contract.)

6. Step V - Creating an Entry Where None Previously Exists: By playing a combination of cards in a different manner from that which is customarily done, Declarer can often create an entry where none appeared to have previously existed. This usually involves the sacrificing of a trick, but the extra entry it provides by doing so, can often generate more than one extra bonus trick in return during the subsequent play of the hand.

(With K opposite Ax in the Dummy, you have two tricks by cashing the Ace and King separately, but no entries to the Dummy, unless you lead the King and overtake it with the Ace.)

(With Qx opposite KJT in the Dummy, if you lead the Queen and the Opponents take the Ace, you will have one entry to the remaining KJ. If they refuse to take the Ace, however, you will have no entries at all. You can force the entry into Dummy by leading the Queen and overtaking it with the King.)

(With AKxx opposite JTx in the Dummy, you have a certain entry to the Dummy with the JTx by twice leading up to that combination away from the AK.)

(With AQTx opposite J9 in the Dummy, if you need an entry to the J9, lead the Ten to the Jack and, if that loses to the King, later lead the spot card to the 9. The normal play, of course, would be to lead the Jack, finessing through the AQ.)

(With KQx opposite AT in the Dummy, if you are desperate for two entries to the Dummy, lead the spot card, cross your finger, and finesse the Ten.)

(With KQJ2 opposite A543 in the Dummy, you can force two entries to the hand with the A543, provided the Opponents' cards divide 3-2. Cash the King and Queen, overtake the Jack with the Ace, and later lead the 2 to the 5.)