

## BRIDGE – BEGINNER’S LESSONS III - 21

### Planning the Play of the Hand

#### Declarer’s Strategy When Playing in No-Trump Contracts

##### 1. With All Four Suits Well Protected:

###### A. Work on “Possible” Winners First, *Not* “Sure” Winners:

1. Save your “*sure*” winners for entries and stoppers, as the need arises during the hand.

- a) “*Sure*” winners are entries, and they represent the vital links between your two hands, both to facilitate the development of “*possible*” winners and ultimately to enjoy them as cashable tricks.
- b) “*Sure*” winners are stoppers, and if you need to lose the lead in the process of developing “*possible*” winners, you will need these stoppers to control the run of your Opponents’ long suit(s).

2. If you cash “*sure*” winners prematurely, you promote the lesser honors in your Opponents’ hands to winning rank.

With AQx opposite Kx, if you cash three tricks early in the play, you merely establish the Jack, the Ten, and whatever long cards are outstanding as winners for your Opponents. Without your help it would take four defensive leads for them to accomplish the same thing.

3. Likewise, if you cash long-suit winners too early, you might give yourself an unnecessary discarding problem. “*Do Not Squeeze Yourself!*”

Whenever you can run six winners from one hand, you will have to make several discards from the other. If these discards are long cards in a side suit, you may be throwing away “*possible*” winners; if they are spot cards that protect honors, such as from Kx, Qxx, or Jxxx, you may be jeopardizing your stopper in a particular suit.

4. Unless you have enough “*sure*” winners to make the contract without further work, develop your “*possible*” winners while you still have stoppers in all four suits.

###### B. Drive Out the “Sure” Losers Early, While Your Stoppers are Still Intact:

1. The “*sure*” losers must be lost, regardless of how you play, whereas the “*possible*” losers might be avoided. The outstanding “*sure*” losers stop the run of your “*possible*” winners. To facilitate the flow of tricks, you must eliminate the Opponents’ Aces and Kings that block your way.

2. What are “*sure*” losers to you are entries for your Opponents. To minimize the threat to your contract, the “*sure*” losers must be forced out before your Opponents’ long suit is established.

If you hold KQJ opposite xxx in one suit and ATx opposite KJx in another, drive out the missing Ace first, a trick that must be lost. It is a certain entry for your Opponents, and it also prevents you from taking tricks in this suit. The missing Queen, however, in the other suit, is neither a certain trick nor a guaranteed entry for your Opponents. They can not score the Queen, unless you lead the suit yourself and the finesse fails (A 50% chance).

**C. When All Your Busy Work has been Completed and You Have Established Enough Tricks to make the Contract, then Cash Your “Sure” Winners.**

**2. With Inadequate Protection In One Suit:**

**A. With Only One Stopper Remaining:**

1. If you might lose the lead only once more before you have enough tricks to succeed, concede the loser and claim your contract.

2. If you might lose the lead more than once, attack the likely entry of the “*Dangerous*” Opponent first, while you still have a stopper to fend him/her off.

If the Opponents hold an Ace and you also have a finesse which might lose to the “*Dangerous*” Opponent, force out the Ace first.

If you mistakenly attack the finesse first, and it were to lose, the Opponent will drive out your last stopper, while the “*Dangerous*” Opponent still has a potential entry, the Ace, into his/her hand.

**B. With No Stoppers Remaining:**

1. With enough “*sure*” winners to make the hand, take your tricks immediately.

2. If you lack the necessary “*sure*” winners to make the hand,

a) Continue to develop your “*possible*” winners, provided you can prevent the “*Dangerous*” Opponent from gaining the lead.

b) If the “*Dangerous*” Opponent has a likely entry to his/her hand, cash all of your winners in an established, long suit. Hopefully, this will put discarding pressure on him/her, and he/she might have to abandon some of his/her long-suit winners.

**3. The “Holdup,” “Ducking,” and “Unblocking” are Effective Mechanisms Used to Maximize Declarer Play When in No-Trump Contracts**