

BRIDGE – INTERMEDIATE LESSONS I – 24

Managing the Trump Suit

There are three principal roles for the Trump Suit:

- 1) Ruffing losers
- 2) Keeping control of side suits
- 3) Providing entries between the two hands.

To score a trick by ruffing does not necessarily mean that you have added to the number of winners. If the ruff occurs in the hand with the *longer* Trump suit holding, typically it is just a substitute for the trick that would have otherwise been taken in the Trump suit itself. The one sure way to produce extra winners is to ruff with the Trump cards in hand containing the *shorter* Trump suit holding, which is usually that of the Dummy.

Whether or not the Trump suit is adequate to accomplish this, depends upon three factors:

- 1) How many total Trump cards Declarer and Dummy collectively hold
- 2) Their quality as opposed to that of the Opponent's Trump cards
- 3) The amount of work that must be done with them in order to make the stated contract.

With enough cards to both perform the required tasks and to draw the Opponents' Trumps, the situation is then favorable for Declarer to proceed.

Declarer will usually want to draw the outstanding Trumps, whenever:

- a) Declarer's Trump situation is favorable, and he/she has no immediate use for the Trump cards in the Dummy.
- b) Declarer has a long, established side suit that is ready to run.
- c) Declarer is threatened by a possible defensive ruff.

Declarer will usually want to delay drawing the outstanding Trumps, whenever:

- a) Declarer's Trump situation is unfavorable.
- b) Declarer has a lot of work to do in the side suits first.
- c) The missing Trumps divide badly, and Declarer might lose control of the hand if he/she were to attempt to draw the outstanding Trump cards.
- d) Declarer has a fast Trump loser, usually the Ace, and Declarer cannot afford to give up the lead right away.

Never allow the quality of your Trump cards to influence the decision about whether or not you should draw them. The failure to do so, simply because your suit is weak, increases the risk of defensive ruffs.