

Cardiff Bridge Tutors

How to improve Declarer play

Part 3 – Strategies in Trump Contracts

Becoming a SWOT.

In Part 1 of this series we looked at making a plan using the SWOT technique.

The remaining booklets in the How to improve Declarer play assume that you have mastered this technique.

In Trump contracts you evaluate your potential winners, not just your top winners **but** you also count your losers. The loser count gives valuable information to help plan the play.

Remember to plan:-

S trengths	Your winners (Not just top winners)
W eaknesses	Your losers ○
O pportunities	Ruffs, Throwing losers, Finesses ○
T hreats	What might go wrong ○



Evaluating Weaknesses by counting losers gives you valuable information!

Counting your losers tells you:-

- **If the contract will make easily**
- **If the contract will make using strategies of throwing losers, ruffing or finessing**
- **If the contract cannot be made but you can try to make as many tricks as possible.**

Understanding Winners and Losers.

We need to count our potential winners and our losers. This often shows that we have more potential losers than we can afford and we must work out a strategy to cope with this.

As the count of losers gives us vital information we will look at how to count losers first.

How to Count Losers:

Count them in the hand **with the longest trumps**. This is usually Dummy.

Count your losers but take into account high cards in partner's hand which can cover your losers.

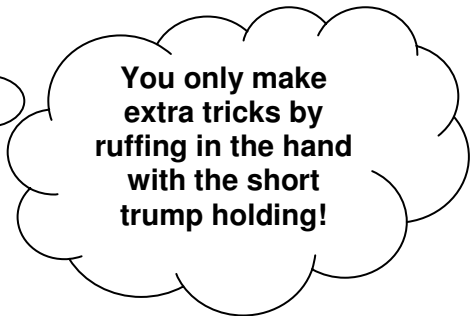
Losers are **highlighted**, covering winners are shown **bold and underlined**.

You	Dummy	
A K 6	8 7 2	You have one loser. Dummy cannot cover that loser
A K 6	<u>Q</u> 7 2	You have one loser but Dummy's Q cover's that loser. No Losers
9 8 3	<u>K Q</u> J 4	You have three losers but Dummy can cover two losers. One loser.

When you do not have too many losers, it is usually best to draw trumps at once.

When you have more losers than you can afford, the most common ways of eliminating them are

- *to ruff losers in hand with short trump holding*
- *discard losers on extra winners in dummy.*
- *Finesse*



You only make extra tricks by ruffing in the hand with the short trump holding!

Remember!

**Count losers in the hand with the longer trump holding.
Extra winners come from ruffs in the short trump holding.
When you do not have too many losers, it is usually best to draw trumps at once.**

How to Count Winners:

We count winners by evaluating which cards will make cancelling winners by cards which will fall to higher cards held by the opposition.

Let's count some winners in this example:

<p>♠ A 10 7 2 ♥ 10 9 ♦ J 10 3 ♣ 8 6 5 4</p> <p>♠ J 8 4 ♠ K Q 9 6 ♥ K Q 8 7 3 ♥ A J 2 ♦ 8 6 ♦ A K Q 4 ♣ A Q 2 ♣ K 10</p> <p>♠ 5 3 ♥ 6 5 4 ♦ 9 7 5 2 ♣ J 9 7 3</p>	<p>Dealer West : Love all</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">West(12)</th> <th style="text-align: left;">North(5)</th> <th style="text-align: left;">East(22)</th> <th style="text-align: left;">South(1)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 ♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1 ♠</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 ♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 ♦</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>6 ♥</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Lead: 6 ♣</p>	West(12)	North(5)	East(22)	South(1)	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♥	Pass	4NT	Pass	5 ♦	Pass	6 ♥	All Pass
West(12)	North(5)	East(22)	South(1)														
1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	Pass														
2 ♥	Pass	4NT	Pass														
5 ♦	Pass	6 ♥	All Pass														

Strengths:

Potential winners are –

- 2 in ♠s – We don't have the Ace and so we cancel the K (which we will use to capture the A) and now the Q and J might win
- 4 in ♥s – With A, K, Q, J
- 3 in ♦s – A, K, Q
- 3 in ♣s – A, K, Q

A total of 12

Weaknesses:

Potential losers are:

- 1 in ♠s
- 0 in ♥s
- 0 in ♦s

Opportunities:

This contract can be made by drawing trumps and winners.
Draw trumps and lose to the A♠ and the contract makes.

Threats:

Not drawing trumps and trying to cash ♠ winners will allow the opposition to ruff.

Opportunities:

Extra ruffs can only be made in the hand with the short trump holding and so ♠s provide an opportunity to ruff to convert one loser.


The other opportunity is to try to finesse the K♥ by leading low from North towards South's A,Q♥.

Threats:

Not trying the finesse.
Drawing too many rounds of trumps before playing ♠s.

Strategy:

We must win with the A♦ and start creating the void by leading back a small ♠ towards North's K. Once you win in North's hand try the finesse a low ♥ towards South's A,Q.



**Finessing is a
50/50 chance.
Ruffing and
throwing losers are
safer bets!**

North and South bid aggressively into 5♦s with only 20 points. Can they make the contract?

♠ 4 ♥ 763 ♦ 1098542 ♣ J63 ♠ J932 ♠ 876 ♥ KQJ2 ♥ 10985 ♦ 3 ♦ A ♣ A1098 ♣ KQ742 ♠ AKQ105 ♥ A4 ♦ KQJ76 ♣ 5	Dealer South : EW vulnerable West(11) North(1) East(9) South(19) Pass 2♦ Pass 1♠ All Pass 5♦
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West leads the 10♥.

Strengths:

Potential winners are –

- 3 in ♠s
- 1 in ♥s
- 5 in ♦s
- 0 in ♣s

A total of 9

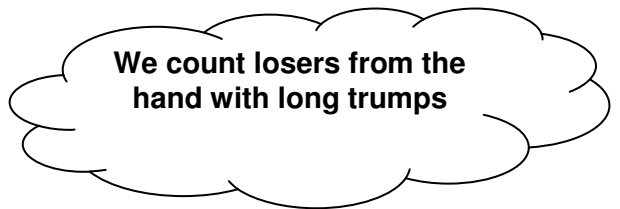
Weaknesses:

Potential losers are:

- 0 in ♠s
- 2 in ♥s
- 1 in ♦s
- 3 in ♣s

A total of 6 losers

We have to make 3 of the losers. How can we do this?



Opportunities:

Are there any losers we can ruff?

Yes, two clubs. This adds two tricks to our total of nine winner.

Are there any losers we can discard?

Yes, two hearts on the high spades. We need the spades to break 4-3 but it is the only chance of avoiding a heart loser.

Can we draw any trumps first?

No. East will win with the $\heartsuit A$ and return a heart to West which West will win. West will then play $\clubsuit A$ to beat the contract. We must first discard the two heart losers before drawing trumps.

More Examples.



The most common problem in a trump contract is whether to play trumps at once or whether to delay trumps.

If you need to ruff losers in dummy, do not draw so many rounds of trumps that dummy is left without enough trumps to ruff those losers.

Example 1. Ruffing losers in the short hand (Dummy)

Contract ♠4 by West. Lead ♥4.

♠ K Q J 5 4
♥ A K 7 6
♦ 4 3
♣ K 8

♠ 9 8 6 2
♥ 5 3
♦ A Q J 2
♣ A 7 3

Count winners: 4 in ♠, 2 in ♥, 2 in ♦ & 2 in ♣ = 10.

Count losers: 1 in ♠, 2 in ♥, 1 in ♦ = 4 losers.

♠ nothing can be done about this loser

♦ nothing we can do unless finesse works (only 50% chance so assume it won't work!)

♥ If the trumps divide 2-2 or 3-1 we will have a trump left in short hand and can ruff 1 heart there.

So we now have a plan that gives us only 3 losers.

Example 2. Ruffing losers in the short hand (Dummy)

Contract 4♥ by East. Lead ♠J.

♠ 3	♠ A 6 5
♥ 10 9	♥ A K Q J 5 4
♦ 8 6 5 3 2	♦ A K
♣ J 7 5 4 3	♣ 8 2

Count winners: 1 in ♠, 6 in ♥, 2 in ♦ =9.

Count losers: 2 in ♠, 2 in ♣ =4 losers.

♠ these can be eliminated by ruffing them in dummy

♣ nothing we can do about these 2 losers.

So we now have a plan that gives us only 2 losers.

We must not draw trumps until we have ruffed these 2 losers.

Example 3. Ruff as high as you can afford.

Contract 4♠ by East. Lead ♦2.

♠ J 8 2	♠ K Q 10 9 5
♥ 7 6	♥ A K 5 4
♦ K Q	♦ A J
♣ 8 7 6 5 4 3	♣ Q 2

Count winners: 4 in ♠, 2 in ♥, 2 in ♦ =8.

Count losers: 1 in ♠, 2 in ♥, 2 in ♣ =5 losers.

♠ we can do nothing about this loser.

♣ we can do nothing about these 2 losers.

♥ we can ruff these two losers in dummy

We need 2 ruffs, shall we take one round of trumps to make life safer?

No they return a trump and then we only have one trump in dummy for ruffing.

We can use our guide to probable splits here.

With the opposition holding 7 ♥s then the likely split is 4-3 (Odd breaks even)

When we play the 4th round won't they overruff or even 3rd round? – they may, so we ruff first with the ♠8 and then with the ♠J, to overruff they have to use the ♠A, a certain loser to us anyway.

Example 4. Throwing losers on extra winners in Dummy.

Contract 4♠ by East. Lead ♥2 or ♣6

♠ J 9 7
♥ A K Q 4
♦ Q 10 4
♣ 8 7 2

♠ K Q 10 8 6
♥ 3
♦ K J 9 3
♣ A 5 4

Count winners: 4 in ♠, 3 in ♥, 3 in ♦, 1 in ♣ = 11.

Count losers: 1 in ♠, 1 in ♦, 2 in ♣ = 4 losers.

♠ nothing we can do about this loser.

♦ nothing we can do about this loser.

♣ we can discard these on ♥K & ♥Q

With a heart lead, win and draw trumps at once. If they win and shift to clubs take two more rounds of trumps **ending in dummy**. Then take three heart tricks and discard two losing clubs.

With a club lead we must win with ♣A and must not touch trumps, because when they win with the ♠A they can take two rounds of clubs, giving us 1 spade, 2 club and 1 diamond loser = 4. We need to switch to hearts and discard our losing clubs.

What have I learnt?

- **Count winners**
- **Count losers in the hand with longer trump holding**
- **Too many losers?**
 - **You must use the strategies in planning your play**
- **Use probability**
 - **Odd breaks even**
 - **Even breaks odd**
- **Strategies to use in planning**
- **Ruff in the hand with the short trump holding**
 - **Try to make a void in this hand**
- **Throw losers on Partner's winners**
- **Throw losers on losers**
- **Finesse**
- **Extra winners are only made by ruffing in the hand with the short trump holding**
- **Never send a boy on a man's job**
- **It is often right to draw trumps first**