

ALEX & BARBARA'S BRIDGE TIPS

TAPPING THE DECLARER

also known as PUNCHING THE DECLARER

			754		
			AK5		
			7543		
			1096		
9					A863
J103					Q987
 K82					Q1096
87542					3
			KQJ102		
			642		
			J		
			AKQJ		
W	N	E	S		
P	P	P	1S		
P	2S	P	4S		
All Pass					

The best defence, most of the time, is to lead a suit in which Dummy has small cards and Declarer is out of that suit. This means that Declarer has to ruff in her hand. Declarer's hand is usually the one with more trump and is called the long hand. If we make her ruff in her hand over and over, we shorten her supply of trumps and now she is no longer able to pull trump successfully and loses control of the hand i.e. one of the opponents often ends up with more trump than Declarer now.

On the hand above, Declarer is doomed if West leads a Diamond and continues a Diamond. South ruffs. When East gets in with Spade Ace, he must not now shift to another suit but must continue leading Diamonds, making Declarer trump in the "long hand".

Less experienced players are tempted to now shift to another suit because they think that when declarer ruffs, this is a bad thing for their side. Thus they reckon they should now try to find other tricks elsewhere. BUT if East continues with a third round of Diamonds, Declarer is forced to ruff yet again. This destroys Declarer.

Now East ends up having more trump than Declarer has and South will lose control of the hand. East-West will end up scoring TWO trump tricks and a Heart and the Diamond Ace.

BID THOSE SLAMS!

S ---
H A10
D KQ62
C QJ108732

S 108
H KQJ853
D 10754
C A

S KQ976543
H 964
D 98
C ---

S AJ2
H 72
D AJ3
C K9654

S	W	N	E
1C	1H	2H	4S
Dbl	P	6C	All pass

Look at this exciting gem that was recently dealt to us in a club game on BBO. I was South, Alex was North. 2H showed a limit raise or better in Clubs. A limit raise of a minor usually also asks opener to bid NT at his next opportunity with stoppers in opponents' suit(s).

East got into the auction with a frisky bid of 4S. Since my bridge teacher told me that the 5 level belongs to the opponents (!!), I made a penalty double of his 4S bid. Alex pulled my penalty double and bid 6C, not wanting to defend 4S with a void and a huge fit in Clubs. With such a huge fit, one does not expect to take any tricks in Clubs if defending and Spades are trumps, as most likely one opponent is void in Clubs.

West led H King. It was won in dummy, now giving NS a "quick loser" in Hearts. With a quick loser and no Ace of trump, don't pull trump yet. Diamond to the Ace in South hand; Spade Ace and discard the Heart from dummy. As a matter of fact, NS has a 12-card fit in Clubs and are only missing the Club Ace. Why pull trump at all. When there is only one trump outstanding (ever, not just with a 12-card fit) and it is the boss trump or the master trump (the Ace in this case), don't pull trump at all. Play Diamonds. When you run out, you will now have to lead a trump and that is all there is for EW. 6C bid and made.

PLAY THIS HAND IN 1NT

North

S J963
H J3
D Q543
C A83

South

S A42
H AK854
D J2
C K72

The bidding was a little different because NS were playing weak No Trumps.

1H by South. North bid 1S and South rebid 1NT. All pass.
West led Club 2.

As South, you count your winners and find you only have 5 winners. Where will the extra two tricks come from? When you cannot work out where they will come from, work out where they will not come from. That will point the way to what is to be your project suit.

Hearts is your project as in Diamonds you do not even own the 10. This is too moth-eaten a suit and there are only 6 cards. In Spades, you have fewer high cards than in Hearts and Clubs could never be your project suit as you only have six of them and the bad guys led them which is troubling.

So now, how do you plan to take 5 tricks in Hearts. Here is the rule. NEVER lead an honour if your side does not have the next door neighbours (the Q and the 10 in this case or the 10 and the 9. i.e. Do not lead the H Jack from dummy and hope for it to win a trick. It NEVER will. If East has the Queen, East will cover it and you will win with the Ace but then you have squandered your Jack. If West has the Queen, she will win it so why did you waste your Jack?

West has H Q976 and East has H 102.

The correct play is to win the Club King in your hand at trick one and lead the H 3 from your hand towards the H Jack in dummy, hoping that West owns the Queen. If West plays the Q, you play low and your Jack is good later. You now get 4 tricks in Hearts. If you had led the Jack from dummy instead, you would have ended up with only 3 Heart tricks (or maybe only 2) and you cannot make your contract.