

# Tricks Not Points!

December 21, 2012

Kootenay Jewel Bridge Club

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I especially like to play in Nelson. I like the fellow bridge addicts, and I appreciate people seeking my expertise. Here is a hand that would make any evening of bridge extra special.

I had

♠K10x ♥AKxxxx ♦x ♣Ax

I opened 1♥ and partner replied 1♠. I liked my hand very much and the potential fit in spades. I jumped to game fully expecting partner to correct to spades if he was long in spades and very short in hearts.

## Underlying principles:

- Be cautious with misfit-hands and aggressive with potential double fits.
- I would never pre-empt in a hand with opening points or a hand that would go to game opposite 15 points and a fit.

I often tell my partner not to compete (balancing or the like) with a misfit in partner's main suit especially if the bidding is at the three-level. One does not want to give the opponents the option of either playing their contract or our contract doubled. If their contract is iffy, they will let us play doubled in a misfit.

Online, I often see experts try for slim games (23 points or so) when partner has pre-empted in another suit especially a minor. The thing of note is that they always have a fit for partner's pre-empt (or principal) suit. They may want to play in their own suit to give enough ruffing power to their own singletons or voids (any shortness for that matter) and that shortness will not be in a suit that partner has declared to be the most important feature of his hand.

## So do I like garbage pre-empts in first or second seat?

No, of course not! I rely on the fact that if partner pre-empts in first or second seat, that suit is the most important feature of his hand. No outside aces, voids or four-card majors (6-4 hands or better are stronger than their points indicate) and if the suit is weak then his hand is very weak.

Back to the example at hand.

Partner thought for a bit and raised me to six. He then put down a ten-point dummy and I made seven in a hand where out of the five times it was played, one was in a partial and the rest were in game.

One defender looked at dummy and said how can my partner go to slam with ten points opposite my 18. I realized then that I had not even counted my fourteen points because I knew I had enough tricks for game. I certainly had, because opposite ten points, I made seven.

But is dummy ten points? No, partner also realized that it is tricks that make game and slam, not points. Dummy is a valuable two-suiter with all his points in his long suits. His singleton ended up not being that important because that was my singleton as well.

Thing of note.

Things I liked about my hand were:

- there was not anything I really disliked about my hand
- a long suit to the ace and king. This is hardly worth only seven points or even ten points counting the length points. It is much more. It is more than half of the total tricks, likely.
- a stiff diamond
- first and third round control in clubs and
- a mild fit for partner which turned out to be a very good fit.

Dummy had:

♠AQxxxx ♥9x ♦x ♣KJxx

Things partner liked about his hand:

- It is a two-suiter.
- He has no points in his short suits. They are concentrated in his long suits.
- He has two cards (a mild fit) in a suit that I jumped to game opposite a possible five points.
- He has a stiff diamond.
- He has a six-card suit headed by the ace and queen.
- The ace of spades is important opposite a hand with a long heart suit.
- I should be able to ruff spades good or take a spade finesse if I had a doubleton.
- He had second round control in clubs.
- If I was desperate for a twelfth trick I could also fall back on a club finesse.

This is a perfect example of how **it is tricks not points** that make a hand valuable.

## Two-suited bids

I learn valuable lessons from playing with and against Spokane experts. I also enjoy the camaraderie of those fellow bridge addicts. I used to play mini-maxi with unusual and top-and-other cuebids and I used to be hung up on points not tricks. I do that no longer. Mini-maxi means that the hand is either less than opening or more than 15 points. With a minimum hand, the next bid by the two-suited hand is usually a pass.

I was playing with a diamond life master and against a grand life master when a two suited hand came up. I cuebid RHO's suit and caused the declarer to make a contract my partner doubled.

I remember myself saying to a displeased partner, "But I had eight points."

The grand life master said to me, "you keep mentioning points. It is tricks not points that are useful with your bid. The suits must also be playable. Partner doubled because he expected my suits to be playable.

My hand had wasted honours and broken suits (king-jacks, jack-eight, etc). One five card suit was KJxxx and the other was J8xxx. These were hardly playable. Playable often means touching honours and good intermediates in a hand that will fare okay doubled opposite a doubleton in partner's hand. I got the zero board my bid deserved.

On another occasion, playing with the grand life master, I did a direct cuebid with a strong two-suiter. My partner said that direct cuebids, unusual notrump and sandwich notrump (8-11) were weak bids. I should have doubled.

Bidding strongly also is a descriptive way to describe a two-suiter. Overcall the higher ranking suit at the one level and not being afraid to come back into the auction at the three-level with the second five-card lower ranking suit describes the hand well.

Here is a grammar lesson:

"Only *principal* is an adjective. *Principal* is also a noun, signifying either a person or money. *Principle* is only a noun, usually designating a law or rule." This is from <http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/principalgloss.htm>, accessed December 21, 2012.