


BRIDGE ARTICLE 1 “Luck and Perseverance”

MALENY CONTRACT BRIDGE CLUB

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LUCK, GOOD AND BAD

These are some thoughts on board 25 from the recent teams competition. Three NS pairs bid to 6♠ with North as declarer. There are quite a few lessons in this hand about luck and perseverance. If you find it all a bit hard to follow, it may be easier if you lay out the cards and play face up or cross off cards on a printout of the board diagram.

Board 25	♠ 9 8 6 3 2
North Deals	♥ A K 7
E-W Vul	♦ A 8 5 4
	♣ 7
	
	♠ A K J 5
	♥ 8
	♦ K Q 10
	♣ A 10 9 4 3

Suppose East leads the 10♥ and you win the first trick with the A. How many tricks do you think you are going to win? Is this a contract you would like to be in? What do you plan to do at trick 2?

Well if trumps break 2-2, you can win the A and K of trumps, which with the AK of hearts, the AKQ of diamonds, the A of clubs makes 8. You have 5 trumps left and can take them individually by trumping your losing heart and diamond in dummy and your losing clubs in your hand. That makes 13.

What if trumps are 3-1? You play it the same way. This time after you win the top spade, the opponents may have a winning trump that they can take whenever they fancy. Your 13 tricks become 12 after the opponents take their trump trick. You still make your contract.

What about trumps 4-0? If East has the trumps, you will know after playing the top spade. You can come to your hand by trumping a club, take the marked spade finesse, lead the top spade and play as before. This time you have only one trump in dummy after drawing 3 rounds of trumps and can use it to trump the heart loser. You can no longer trump your diamond. To make the contract, it must be a winner, which it will be if diamonds are 3-3 or the J is singleton or doubleton. In this case your contract is not assured but it still has over a 50% chance of making. When you play diamonds, you must play the K and Q first to take advantage of the possible singleton or doubleton J.

What about if West has all four trumps? This is what happened on the day! North finds this out when he plays to the A♠ and East discards a heart. West has the Q, 10, 7, 4 of spades and is playing after the A, K, J, 5 in dummy. Surely, he is going to be able to take the Q and 10 at some stage. Any finesse in trumps will lose. What bad luck! West will have all 4 spades only about 5% of the time.

Is all lost? Can you think of a possible way, no matter how unlikely, that you can still make the slam? You may be able to convert your 2 certain trump losers to 1 loser if you can force West to lead spades. After you play the A♠, if you can manage to win the next 8 tricks with your high cards and by trumping, without West trumping, West will just have his remaining three trumps left. He or she will be forced to win with a trump on the next trick (the third last trick) and then lead into dummy's KJ and the slam makes.

This is the full hand.

Board 25	♠ 9 8 6 3 2
North Deals	♥ A K 7
E-W Vul	♦ A 8 5 4
	♣ 7
♠ Q 10 7 4	♠ —
♥ J 6 2	♥ Q 10 9 5 4 3
♦ J 7	♦ 9 6 3
♣ K J 5	♣ Q 8 6 2
	♠ A K J 5
	♥ 8
	♦ K Q 10
	♣ A 10 9 4 3

Because West has 3 cards in the non-trump suits, you can take the first 10 tricks without West having the opportunity to trump (your A♥, your A♠, your 3 diamond winners, your remaining heart winner and trump a heart, your club winner and trump 2 clubs). West will win with a trump at the 11th trick but, being on lead, must concede the last two tricks to the KJ of spades in South.

For this to work, West must have had 3 cards in the non-trump suits. The chances of this is quite low. So, the extreme bad luck of 4 spades with West is counterbalanced by the extreme good luck of West having 3 cards in each of the non-trump suits.

Never give up. Luck certainly plays a big role in bridge.