

MAKING OVERTRICKS

Hi fellow Lepers! I am conscious that my articles might be read by any bridge player in the club (But by all means feel free to do disseminate them more widely). Thus I will be pitching them boringly low for some players and dauntingly high for others. Take out of them what you wish. This article is about how to be a greedy bridge player.

Whenever I am declarer I always try to make as many tricks as possible. You should too and there are a few strategies you should use.

Firstly, I'm sure that nearly all of you know the basic technique in playing a no-trump contract. Here it is anyway.

You are in a contract of 3NT and you have to make 9 tricks. You look at your combined holdings and you see that you do not have 9 tricks instantly available. Sometimes you only have 8 or 7, and occasionally only 6 and sometimes, despite you having 25HCP between you, you can only see 5 immediate tricks. The other tricks have to be developed. For instance you might have QJT98 in a suit, but before you can make 3 tricks in the suit, you have to lose two to the Ace and the Queen. Let's call these three tricks your slow tricks as opposed to your quick tricks, those you have off the top. That basic technique I was referring to is that you should develop your slow tricks before you cash your quick tricks.

Consider these two hands held between you and your partner.

♠A6 ♥JT6 ♦K74 ♣QJT98

♠KJ8 ♥K653 ♦AQJ2 ♣73

You receive the unhelpful lead of 8 of diamonds. An outright beginner might win the lead and then play off his 4 diamond winners and his 2 spade winners and then ritually disembowel himself. A somewhat better player might carelessly win the lead with the King in dummy and start on the clubs. Now it could conceivably go like this. East wins the first club with the Ace and puts a spade through. This particular declarer errs again by not putting up either his Jack or eight of spades with the unfortunate result that his only other remaining entry to dummy is knocked out. Now he too has to commit hara-kiri. The experienced player assesses both hands before he plays a card. Now he

realizes that the diamond King and the Spade Ace are both essential entries to dummy for when his club suit has been established. He therefore wins the first diamond in hand and starts on the club suit. And all he was essentially doing was establishing his slow tricks before taking his quick ones.

This principle can be extended to trump contracts. Let's call this principle in trumps, "Sneaking one by before the buggers work out what you are up to.", For most hands in trump contracts the first line of business is generally to draw trumps, but that is not always the case. Consider this 4S contract after a club lead.

♠K92 ♥T6 ♦JT98 ♣A984

♠AQJ87 ♥9843 ♦KQ6 ♣K

You can afford to lose 2 hearts and the Ace of diamonds, but not a third heart. You will probably have to draw three rounds of trumps, but not immediately. Your first action is to lose a heart. An alert defender will instantly rumble you and return a trump, but too late (They should have led a trump!). You win and play another small heart and make your contract. If instead you had drawn all the trumps first you would have gone down.

Here's another example where drawing trumps should be put off before more urgent business.

♠KJ6 ♥KJ876 ♦Q65 ♣Q9

♠AQT94 ♥T ♦KJT4 ♣K82

You are in 4S and your contract is not in danger. You receive a club lead which your King wins. Don't spend too long thinking about things, but as quickly as you can, play the ten of hearts. Whatever West plays, you play the King. Sometimes West will jump up with the Ace and sometimes East will top your King with his Ace, but just occasionally the one with the ace will duck. You are only likely to get away with this if you put them to the question at trick 2. If you leave it until later in the play, they will realize they have to take their ace.

The opposition have a nasty habit of working things out if you give them time and some of them actually use signals, so if you are going to use this manoeuvre, t'were best done betimes.

Another technique for producing an overtrick is the Simpleton Squeeze. There are all sorts of squeezes with all sorts of fancy names, but these squeezes are for people who actually know what they are doing, not for simpletons like you and me. The Simpleton Squeeze works like this. You have a very long suit and you can see that you can make a certain number of tricks. Let us say you are in 5C and you can see 11 tricks, but no more. You know for a certainty that you won't make 13 tricks, but how about trying for 12. (Of course you might actually be in 6C and really need to make 12 tricks.) Draw trumps of course and then deliberately lose that 13th trick. This has the effect of tightening everything up so that the opponents will find it more difficult to find discards. In the text books this dodge is called "rectumising the Count" or some similar expression. Now all you have to do is lead out all those long trumps and watch what they discard. Sometimes it pays to cash an outside Ace to give them something to hang on to. They clutch their King so tightly that they forget to keep a vital rag in another suit. Sometimes when you follow these instructions, you find yourself accidentally performing a genuine squeeze, but just as often it is just a pseudo-squeeze and the opponents throw the wrong card. You don't care what sort of squeeze or pseudo-squeeze it is of course. Here's an example.

♠A6 ♥JT6 ♦K764 ♣QJ98

♠Q9 ♥AKQ8653 ♦A92 ♣A

You are in 4H (6H if you prefer) and you receive a club lead. Just in case, you split your club honours, but the King doesn't appear and your Ace wins. It doesn't take you long to draw trumps. Now what? Well, it's a good idea to now deliberately lose a trick, let's say a small diamond from each hand. Now win the return with the Ace of spades (or cash the Ace of spades after a diamond return) and then run off ALL your hearts. They are desperately trying to hold the King of Spades, the King of Clubs and the last Diamond. That's all there is to it: draw trumps, lose a spare card, cash an Ace to give them another option to guard, and run off ALL your trumps. The error you can fall into is to think that because you have drawn all of their trumps, you don't need to play the rest.

So, let's repeat the steps in the Simpleton Squeeze.

- Draw trumps.
- Concede a spare card.
- Cash an Ace to give them something extra to guard.

- Run off ALL the rest of the trumps.

And finally in these hints on how to make an overtrick, you must learn to do a strip and throw-in. Now, when I look around the current membership of the bridge club, there are only a few people who I would want to take all their clothes off and drop their towel, so “strip and throw-in” must have another meaning, right?

Sure does. It applies to suit contracts where after you have drawn trumps, you eliminate one of the other suits, so that if they lead that suit, you can ruff in one hand and discard in another. Finally you play to give them the last available trick in the fourth suit. This throws them in and they have to then lead to your advantage. Here is an example.

♠K87642 ♥A52 ♦6 ♣AJ6

♠AQJ9 ♥K76 ♦A87 ♣KT5

You are once again in 4S (or 6S if you prefer). You receive a diamond lead which you take with the Ace. You play 7D and ruff with 2S. 2H to your KH in hand and then the 8D ruffed by the 4S in dummy. You have now STRIPPED (or eliminated) the diamond suit. Play the KS to the 9S and the 7S to the AS. and now the trump suit is STRIPPED and your two hands look like this:

♠87 ♥A5 ♦ ♣AJ6

♠QJ ♥76 ♦ ♣KT5

Play the AH and give them the last heart trick. You have just simultaneously STRIPPED the heart suit and THROWN THEM IN. Whoever wins that heart trick must either lead a spade or a diamond allowing you to ruff in one hand and slough a club in the other OR they lead a club into your tenace and you make three club tricks regardless of who holds the queen.

If you hadn't done a strip and throw-in, you would have had to play the club suit yourself and guess where the Queen was.

Okay, maybe you have never deliberately done a strip and throw-in. When you do, believe me, it feels very good, but in any event you should routinely play all your hands like this. Elimination play is basic.

All the above hints for making an overtrick have something in common. Have you worked it out yet?

Yes, it's the principle of losing something early if you know you have to lose it anyway. You do this to establish your slow tricks in no-trumps, to rectify the count in a squeeze, to throw them in after elimination play, and to try and slip a quick one past their guard at trick two.

Sometimes I do it just to see what happens. I'm not sure which of two suits to tackle so I just give them a trick in a suit I am going to lose anyway. For some reason that tends to make the opponents very suspicious of that suit and sometimes they then return one of the other suits to my advantage.

Stay safe 'til we meet on the other side.