

7.2 Extra chances as a result of pulling only one opponent's trump

As we saw above, it is normally right to leave a master trump out. It may also be right to leave a non-master trump out temporarily, if we can improve our own chances by doing so. In notrump, we use the holdup play to run one opponent out the suit we fear, then try to keep the other opponent out of the lead. In a suit contract, we may run one opponent out of trump, and hope it is he, not his partner, who is able to ruff our side winners.

It is against the odds for the same person to be long in two suits, but remember, we seek to combine all our chances. Adding that modest chance of two favorable breaks to our other chances may be just what we need. The classic situation to take advantage of an opponent being “long-long” is this:

Dummy	Declarer	
♠9xx	♠AKQJx	The defence takes three diamonds, so we need all the rest
♥Qxx	♥AKxx	to make 4♠. It looks like our only chance is to pull trump
♦Txxx	♦xxx	and hope for a 3–3 heart break, but there is an extra chance
♣AJx	♣x	available: if we leave a trump in the dummy, we may be able

to ruff our fourth heart if hearts break 4–2. This requires the same opponent to hold the long heart and the long spade, and this will happen only about 20% of the time – but we’d much rather make our game 56% of the time rather than 36%. What if you try this and someone ruffs your ♥Q? You were going to go down anyway; instead of giving up the fourth heart to the ♥J, they ruff the third and you ruff the fourth.

What if you had the ♣AQx instead of the ♣AJx? As we learned in Week 3, a finesse is a 50% chance while a 3–3 break is a 36% chance; *if* we were in notrump or we couldn’t afford to leave a trump in the summy we would take the finesse; but the combined chance of 3-3 hearts or a long-long in the majors is better than the finesse.

Dummy	Declarer	
♠AJxxx	♠Kxx	If you immediately play the ♠K and finesse the ♠J, you
♥xxx	♥Axx	will make 5 when you pick up the trumps, but go down if they
♦xx	♦AKQx	can win the ♠Q, two hearts, and a club. It is better to cash
♣KQx	♣Jxx	the diamonds first intending to pitch a heart on the ♦Q: if

dummy’s trumps were QJxxx, that would be your only chance for the contract. But better still is to pull two rounds of trump before running the diamonds. You will make an overtrick if the ♠Q falls doubleton; when it doesn’t, you gain an extra chance that you will survive on 5–2 diamond breaks, if the person with short diamonds either is out of trump or has to trump with the queen. You will also be able to survive a 4–1 trump break if the Qxxx is inside (cash 2 spades, 3 diamonds, then later lead toward the ♠J.)

The odds of a “long-long” depend on whether there are an odd or even number of cards outstanding. Two odd suits will break long-long (say 3-2 in two suits with the same person having 3) a bit more than 40% of the time; An odd and an even suit like the first example above (5 trumps and 6 diamonds out), a bit over 20%; and two even suits, a bit over 10%.

7.3 Examples

On Deal 1¹, you lose two hearts right away and trump the third. If trumps break, you will have 11 easy tricks. What if they don't? You don't want to risk losing control of the hand. Cashing the ♠K and ♠A will produce 11 tricks if East has Jxxx but you may be set if West does. An alternative is to pull two round with the ♠KQ; if they break 3-2, cash your 11 winners. If not, run the clubs until someone ruff. After the ruff, regain the lead, pull the last trump with the ♠A and enjoy the last club. Making four against all the 4-1 trump breaks.

Deal 1 Guard against a bad break

	♠A62 ♥K43 ♦852 ♣AKJ2		West	North	East	South									
♠J987 ♥QJT ♦QT76 ♣95	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠3 ♥A9765 ♦J9 ♣T8743	Pass Pass Pass Pass	2♣ 3♠ 4♠	Pass Pass Pass	1♠ 2♦ 4♦ Pass
	N														
W		E													
	S														
	♠KQT54 ♥82 ♦AK43 ♣Q6														

Deal 2 Don't lose trump control

	♠763 ♥8542 ♦KQ9 ♣QJT		West	North	East	South									
♠QT2 ♥KQJ6 ♦7543 ♣A8	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠J9 ♥AT93 ♦J862 ♣765	Pass Pass Pass	2♠ 4♠	Pass Pass	1♠ 3♣ Pass
	N														
W		E													
	S														
	♠AK854 ♥7 ♦AT ♣K9432					♥K led									

Deal 2² is a classic example of pulling trump until only the master is out, then turning to other business. West will start with two rounds of hearts, forcing you to ruff once. With a sure club loser, you need 3-2 spades to make your contract. Play off the ♠AK then lead clubs to force out the ace. Either West will cash his ♠Q and you will have the rest, or you

¹From *Play of the Hand with Blackwood*.

²Deals 2, 3, and 4 are from Bill Root's *How to Play a Bridge Hand*.