

Dealing With Poor Trumps

As a general rule, we will usually have at least a few of the high cards when we nominate a trumps suit. Since we will usually be playing in a fit of eight or more cards between us, the opponents only have five. The chance of them having most of the picture cards is thus very unlikely. But.....it does happen. When you are playing a hand with poor trumps, there are often a few issues to consider.

First Tip – Draw Trumps Anyway!

A very common response amongst inexperienced players when they are looking at a terrible trump suit is to play other suits. The trouble with this is that after you cash an Ace or a King.....the opponents *still* have all the good trumps! You haven't dealt with the problem, you've put it off for one or two tricks.

Second Tip – Remember to Lead Towards Your Picture Cards

This is a useful principle in many cardplay situations but becomes essential when faced with a fragile trump suit. If you lead picture cards (or lead away from them) the opponents *both* get to choose what to play. Leading towards a picture card makes one opponent commit a card before you do. Sometimes you will be able to save your good cards until later.

Third Tip – Don't Panic. They Can Have SOME Tricks

One very common problem when inexperienced players have a poor trump suit is that they go to pieces and begin doing very strange things in the other suits wishing they were playing a different hand! Don't worry. The Opponents will win some trump tricks, but they are entitled to some tricks – there's no need to do anything silly.

A Couple of Examples

In all of these Dummy is the top hand and Declarer's hand is below

Hand One

Two Spades
Three of Clubs led

♠ J9742
♥ 54
♦ 8763
♣ 83

♠ A3
♥ KJT3
♦ AQ2
♣ KT92

Here things look pretty grim. We'll need to draw trumps by playing Ace and the Three *towards* the Jack-Nine. The face we're in a bad contract is no reason to not win what we can!

Hand Two

Four Hearts
Queen of Diamonds led

♠ KT
♥ T872
♦ KT3
♣ A963

♠ AQ7
♥ 9653
♦ A654
♣ KQ

Win the opening lead with the Ace of Diamonds and then keep playing trumps until they don't have any left. We'll probably just lose three heart tricks!

Hand Three

Two Spades
Four of Clubs led

♠ 73
♥ AJ42
♦ 5
♣ J96532

♠ AT8642
♥ 4
♦ A983
♣ AQ

Win the lead but before drawing trumps, ruff two diamonds. Defenders will probably win a few trumps (maybe with a club ruff) and a diamond.