

The Power of Distribution

By

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Note: I am back! The Unit has requested, and I have agreed to provide a monthly article for the Unit's website. Some will be old, some new, some advanced some not. Hope you enjoy! NK

Distribution is a powerful weapon. It can nullify the opponent's high cards, as easy as waving your hand in the air. And of course it is a double edged sword. If the opponents seemed to have bid too much based on their expected high card, they might have extra distribution.

There is a famous hand where, despite only having 6 HCPS between them, a small slam is unbeatable!

Levels of Fit

An eight card fit, as we have learned, is the minimum desirable to suggest a contract in that suit. With that degree of fit you need the full amount of high cards between the partnership for the level to which you bid. As an example, 25 HCPs serves as the minimum to have a reasonable play for a major suit game.

A nine card fit is better – maybe only 23 HCPs is needed on an average. Ten is obviously better than nine. An eleven card fit is on cloud nine!

What this means is you can often make higher level contracts than your point count would indicate. There are two basic techniques for scoring more than your aces and kings:

1. Ruffing losers with the short trump hand (usually dummy).
2. Setting up a long suit

Example 1

Contract: 3♠ Scoring: Dealer: Vul:		♠	9 7 4		
		♥	A Q 7 4		
		♦	A 4 3 7 2		
		♣	6		
♠	J 10 6	N W E S		♠	Q 8
♥	10 9 8			♥	K J 6 5
♦	K J 9 8			♦	Q 10 6
♣	J 9 8			♣	K Q 10 7
Lead: 6♠		♠	A K 5 3 2		
		♥	3 2		
		♦	5		
		♣	A 5 4 3 2		

On a spade lead you should make 9 tricks with normal breaks:

- 4 Aces
- 1 King of spades
- 2 Club ruffs in dummy*
- 2 Diamond ruffs in your hand.
- 9 Total

Notice that if you give up a trick early in the play, such as taking a heart finesse that loses, the opponents will continue spades. This reduces your total by 1, leaving 8. So unless you are a gambler, a more prudent approach would be to take your 'sure' nine tricks.

*You do not have transportation or trump length to set up a long card in a minor without running out of trump or be uppercut.

However change the degree of fit:

Contract: 3♠		♠	10 9 8 7 6 4		
Scoring:		♥	A Q		
Dealer:		♦	A 4 3 2		
Vul:		♣	6		
♠	J	N W E S		♠	Q
♥	10 9 8 7			♥	K J 6 5 4
♦	K J 9 8 7			♦	Q 10 6
♣	J 9 8			♣	K Q 10 7
Lead: 10♥		♠	A K 5 3 2		
		♥	3 2		
		♦	5		
		♣	A 5 4 3 2		

You haven't added one extra high card point, just three small spades in dummy, and now you can make a Grand Slam!! If you don't believe me here is the trick by trick play:

(Underline indicates who is on lead)

	W	N	E	S
Trick 1:	♥ <u>10</u>	♥A	♥6	♥2
Trick 2:	♣8	♣ <u>6</u>	♣7	♣A
Trick 3:	♣9	♠4	♣10	♣ <u>2</u>
Trick 4:	♠J	♠ <u>6</u>	♠Q	♠ <u>A</u>
Trick 5:	♣J	♠7	♣Q	♣ <u>3</u>
Trick 6:	♦7	♦ <u>A</u>	♦6	♦5
Trick 7:	♦8	♦ <u>2</u>	♦10	♠2
Trick 8:	♥7	♠8	♣K	♣ <u>4</u>
Trick 9:	♦9	♦ <u>3</u>	♦Q	♠3
Trick 10:	♦10	♥Q	♥4	♣ <u>5</u>
Trick 11:	♥8	♠9	♥5	♥ <u>3</u>
Trick 12:	♦K	♦ <u>4</u>	♥J	♠5

Trick 13: ♥9 ♠10 ♥K ♠K

Moral of the Story

- Bid more with a better fit.
- If the opponents seem to be bidding higher than their high card total would indicate, then a lively possibility is because of a big fit(s). This is even more likely when you and are partner also have well-fitting hands.
- Any bid that shows exact or extra length is one worth having. Some that show specific or extra length are:
 - **Weak twos.** That is why in my books I discourage bidding a weak two with other than exactly six card in their suit. Partner will misevaluate the trick taking potential otherwise. Same with three level preempts – have a seven card suit only.
 - **Bergen Raises over a major.** This shows 4+ card support.
 - **Preemptive raises.** If partner overcalls in a major a double raise usually shows 5+ card support with a weak hand (less than 7 HCPs or so).