

TRUMPING IN THE SHORT TRUMP HAND

By Maritha Pottenger

It is important to recognize hands in which a source of tricks is ruffing in the short-trump hand. (The fewer trumps in the short-trump hand, the more imperative that you recognize this type of hand immediately. If you squander your opportunity, it may be too late!)

Clues that You Need to Trump in the Short-Trump Hand

1. You have losers in the long trump hand that cannot be discarded on other winners.
2. You don't have a long suit to develop. Or, developing your long suit will still not bring in as many tricks as ruffing in the short-trump hand AND developing your long suit.
3. Short-trump hand has shortness in a suit in which long-trump hand has losers.

Points to Check:

1. Ask yourself whether you can afford to pull ANY rounds of trump before ruffing in the short-trump hand. Sometimes even one round is too many. Other times, you can afford to pull one or two rounds of trump before trumping in the short-trump hand.
2. Sometimes you will be trying to trump a loser in the short-trump hand and not caring if you get over-trumped—providing the over-trump was a trick the opponents were getting anyway.
3. Make sure you have the transportation to do the trumping you need to do, and get back and pull trump in the long hand, cash winners, etc., as needed.

EXAMPLES:

AKJ9x AKxx Ax xx opposite Q10x xx Kxx xxxxx with the lead of the Ace of clubs. The opponents take the top two clubs and switch to a trump. Take in your hand and immediately play AK of hearts and trump a hearts with 10 of spades. Cash King of diamonds and diamond back to your Ace. Trump your last heart with the queen of spades. Now, ruff a diamond back to your hand. (Diamond should be safer than a club. Opponents are less likely to run out of diamonds than clubs.) Making 5.

AKQ43 xx AK42 Ax opposite 5678 Jxxx 57 Kxx with the lead of the Ace of hearts. Opponents take two hearts and shift to a trump. Take TWO top trumps. If trumps are 3-1, do NOT pull the last trump. Instead, cash AK of diamonds and trump a diamond. Return to Ace of clubs and trump your last diamond. If person with the 3rd trump over-ruffs dummy, it doesn't matter. You were going to lose that diamond trick if you didn't trump it. Sometimes, the person with the 3rd trump also has the 4th diamond, and you get both your diamond ruffs. Making 5.

KQJ109 AK32 xx Kx opposite A32 456 J1098 Axx with the lead of the Ace of diamonds. Leader then shifts to a trump. Take it in your hand and immediately play AK of hearts and a low heart. If hearts are 3-3, you can pull trump. If hearts are 4-2 (more likely), opponent who wins 3rd round of hearts will play another trump. Take that in your hand and you can still trump your 4th heart with the Ace of spades. Making 4 exactly (losing 2 diamonds and one heart).

Remember that Declarer sometimes has the short-trump hand (e.g., after a transfer sequence).

Axx KQxx Axxx Qx opposite KQJ109 Axx Kx Axx You are playing 6S after opening 1 NT. The opponents lead a trump. Immediately play the Ace of clubs and a club. The opponents can play one more spade, but you can get to dummy with the King of diamonds and lead a third club (which you ruff with the Ace of

spades). Then, play over to Ace of hearts and pull trumps. Making 6. If you pull trumps early, you only take 11 tricks!!