

## ***HAND OF THE MONTH FOR NEWER PLAYERS***

April, 2015

From our earliest days at the bridge table we are taught that as declarer, we should draw the opponent's trumps early to prevent them from making tricks by ruffing. With many hands this is an excellent general rule, ***BUT*** like all general rules there are exceptions. Over the next several months, we will look at examples of a few of the most common situations in which declarer needs to delay drawing trumps.

Consider the following:

	NORTH	
	S KQ32	
	H 53	
WEST	D KQ5	EAST
S 84	C AKQ4	S A6
H KQJ10		H 98764
D J1094		D 8763
C 864	SOUTH	C 97
	S J10975	
Vul. none	H A2	
Dealer North	D A2	
Opening lead HK	C J1062	

Bidding			
North	East	South	West
1 club	pass	1 spade	pass
4 spades!!!!	pass	4 notrump	pass
5 spades	pass	6 spades	all pass

New players might mistake north's jump to four spades as a shutout; remember south's initial one spade response could have been on as little as six points and four baby spades; north's jump says he is prepared to play game even if that is all south holds. With a fifth space and considerably more than a minimum in HCP for his response, south carries on with key card Blackwood; five spades shows two key cards – the four aces and the king of trump being the five key cards – plus the queen of trump, and six spades settles things.

Following the opening lead of the king of hearts, declarer should see that if he follows his old bridge teacher's rule of promptly drawing trump, the opponents will win the ace and cash a heart to set the contract.

Before reading further, do you see how to avoid this fate?

Declarer should see that it is essential to get rid of the heart loser ***BEFORE*** touching trump. The diamond suit provides the answer. Declarer must cash the ace, king and queen of diamonds throwing a heart from his hand. Only then is it safe to draw trump.

This line of play runs the slight risk that an opponent will ruff the second or third round of diamonds, a small price to pay for the chance to make the contract.

QUERY: Had the opening lead been the diamond jack, would you play differently? If so, how? And why?

MORAL: One common reason for delaying the drawing of trumps is when it is essential to first shed a side suit loser.