

14 NO TRUMP PLAY – HOLD UP – IDENTIFYING THE DANGER HAND

When planning your no trump play it is wise to assume that the opponents have a 5 card suit – this will be the case if one has overcalled. If there has been no overcall assume the lead is from a 5 card suit on your left. What you don't want to happen is for the opponent with the long suit 'to get in' and cash that suit.

Say spades are led

3 2

K Q J 10 9

8 7 6

A 5 4

Lead Spade K (assume 5)

You must not win with your Ace until exactly the 3rd round! If earlier East will win a trick in another suit and lead a spade to W and they will cash the rest of their spades.

Or,

6 4 2

Q J 10 9 3

A 5

K 8 7

Lead S Q

West overtakes with the A and returns the S 5 – do you win with the K or duck? – the answer is win with the K! Why? The answer is THE RULE OF 7!

The 'Rule of 7' says that if you hold the top card in the suit where one opponent has a 5 card suit, YOU SUBTRACT THE NUMBER OF CARDS YOUR SIDE HOLDS IN THAT SUIT FROM 7 - THE ANSWER EQUALS HOW MANY TIMES YOU MUST HOLD UP PLAYING YOUR WINNING CARD.

Note: if you don't have the controlling card you will need to cash any winner when it is possible – you can't hold up.

(rationale: say you have 5 cards between yourself and dummy – one opponent has 5 which means the other has 3, if you have 6 – the other opponent only has 2)

In holding up we are trying to sever communication between our opponent's hands – and we have identified a **DANGER HAND**.

We must then stop the danger hand getting on lead – which means that all of our subsequent finesses have to be such that if they lose, they lose to the 'safe' hand.

(note: if the opponents have a 4:4 split, the hold-up play does not work, but equally they don't have a long suit to run)

Identifying the DANGER HAND :

3 2

K Q J 10 9

8 7 6

A 5 4

Lead K

6 4 2

Q J 10 9 3

A 5

K 8 7

Lead Q

In these examples W is the danger hand.

However,

9 4

A 10 8 7 6

Q 5 2

K J 3

Lead 7 > Q, we win with the K

Now the DANGER hand is EAST! – if they get in and lead a spade through our Jack we lose 4 tricks. If West has to lead our Jack will be a winner. On this hand we finesse so that W wins.

Example – we are in 3 NT

North

S 3 2

H A 5 3

D A J 10 9 8

C K 5 4

West

S K Q J 10 9

H 9 8 7

D 5 4 2

C 9 8

East

S 8 7 6

H Q J 10

D K 7 6

C Q J 10 7

S A 5 4

H K 6 3 2

D Q 3

C A 6 3 2

West leads Spade K - we hold up 2 rounds and W is the danger hand – we need 4 diamond tricks for the contract so we finesse by playing the D Q and letting it run, if not covered. East can win but can't get back to West – 3 NT makes!

Example – we are in 3 NT

North		
	S	7 5
	H	A Q J
	D	A Q J 10 4
	C	9 8 7
West		
	S	K J 8 6 4
	H	9 8 5 2
	D	5 3
	C	K 6
East		
	S	Q 10 9
	H	10 6 4 3
	D	K 7 6
	C	5 4 3
South		
	S	A 3 2
	H	K 7
	D	9 8 2
	C	A Q J 10 2

West leads Spade 6, East plays Spade Q then Spade 9 – South holds up twice, West is the danger hand – South MUST finesse the diamonds and NEVER the clubs (only the club Ace will be a winner) - making 4 diamonds, 1 spade, 3 hearts and 1 club for the contract.