

play bridge

A section designed with the newer player in mind.

Give your partner a little support

Early in your duplicate life you find the advantage of having lots of trumps. The more the merrier. There are hands where you only have seven trumps in the partnership, however, and it still plays better there than in notrump. I know, for some of you, every contract plays better when it is not in notrump!

I am going to share a secret with you. I don't want it to get out, because lots of other players will start using it. After you have opened the bidding and partner responds in a major suit, you *do not* need to have four trumps to raise. It is nice to have four, but nice is not always possible.

Let's take a look at opener's hand:

♠87 ♥AJ6 ♦KQ865 ♣A42.

You open 1♦ and partner bids 1♥. You could rebid 1NT (but you have no spade stopper), 2♦ (you have only a five-card suit and balanced hand) or raise to 2♥ (you have only three trumps). Of these three choices, the 2♥ bid will work best on balance. Any time partner has five hearts, your bid is perfect. Even when he holds only four hearts, the contract might be fine. The only requirement to put on the three-card raise is to have a ruffing value and a reasonably good holding in your partner's suit.

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I don't want it to get out ...**

When you and partner are both weak in a side suit, the trump contract usually scores much better.

Suppose he has:

♠965 ♥108732 ♦87 ♣KQJ.

Whatever rebid you choose is going to be the final contract. Take a look at the two hands together — a heart partscore looks like a winner. In notrump you are likely to be held to five winners. Even if the responder only had four hearts and one more club, the hand might produce extra trump tricks to make the 4-3 fit a higher scoring partscore.

If the responder has a medium strength hand or better (11 or more high-card points), he can use a little gadget over your raise to find out more about your hand. After the raise, he bids 2NT to ask what kind of a hand you have. Your responses are:

3♣ = minimum (12-13) with three-card raise

3♦ = maximum (14-15) with three-card raise

3♥ = minimum (12-13) with four-card raise

3♠ = maximum (14-15) with four-card raise

This allows you to stay in the major when you have an eight-card fit or consider some other place to



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play if the partnership only has seven trumps. You might still veer into notrump or even play in partner's minor. You might choose to play game with only seven trumps, if they are reasonably good. You might even have a hand that is considering slam if partner has a maximum and four trumps.

As far as I know, this gadget has no name, but it does allow the opener to raise freely with three trumps. Try it out with your favorite partner and share all your success stories with me! □

Impossible lead

After play was over, the opening leader said she knew a club lead would have defeated the contract — but she couldn't lead one. "You weren't void in clubs," said partner, "so why couldn't you lead one?" The answer: "Our card says we are playing fourth-best leads, but I had only three clubs. I didn't want anyone calling the director on me."

Notes from ACBL Accredited Teachers