

As declarer, it is usually a good idea to draw the opponents' trumps if you can afford to do so, but not always. Sometimes you might need to postpone this until you have ruffed an outside loser. On other occasions, if an opponent is left with the master trump it's often better to leave trumps alone, but is it ever right to leave an opponent with a trump card that you could easily draw ? Take a look at board 13 from Shoreham, 9th July. North dealt with both sides vulnerable :

	75	
	KJ32	
	A106542	
	10	
AQ842		93
AQ5		1094
87		K3
K84		AQ9762
	KJ106	
	876	
	QJ9	
	J53	

North opened a weak Two Diamonds, showing 5-9 points and a 6-card suit. East chanced an overcall of Three Clubs, West bid his spades and then raised East's Four Clubs to Five Clubs – West could hardly bid anything less facing a vulnerable 3-level overcall !

South led the Queen of diamonds. North won the first trick with the Ace and returned a diamond, won by declarer's King. What next ?

Declarer can make the contract by establishing dummy's fifth spade for a heart discard. However, this plan requires keeping sufficient entries to dummy (a) to establish the spade suit and then (b) to reach the established spade winner. When declarer led a club to dummy's King at trick 3, one of those vital entries was used up. Declarer could still establish the fifth spade but could not get back to dummy to enjoy it.

At trick 4, declarer led a club back to his Ace, North discarding a diamond. Declarer drew the last trump, took the spade finesse, cashed the Ace of spades and ruffed a spade, North again discarding a diamond. When the spades failed to split evenly, declarer was forced to take two finesses in hearts, hoping that South held one or both of the missing honours. Not today. North held both of them and the contract finished one down.

Let's rewind the play back to the start of trick 5 where the position was as follows :

	75	
	KJ32	
	1065	
	---	
AQ842		93
AQ5		1094
---		---
8		Q976
	KJ106	
	876	
	J	
	J	

Instead of drawing South's last trump, declarer takes the spade finesse, cashes the Ace of spades and ruffs a spade, North discarding a diamond. At this point declarer knows that North has only red cards left and the contract is now secure *but only if declarer refrains from drawing South's last trump*. This is the 6-card ending :

	---	
	KJ32	
	106	
	---	
84		---
AQ5		1094
---		---
8		Q97
	K	
	876	
	J	
	J	

Declarer leads the 4 of hearts to dummy's Queen. North wins with the King but finds himself endplayed. A heart return allows declarer to win two heart tricks. A diamond return is no better – declarer discards a heart from his hand and ruffs in dummy. Now the Ace of hearts is followed by a heart ruff and declarer takes the last two tricks with the Queen of clubs (at last drawing South's Jack) and 9 of clubs.

Motto (not very useful !) : draw the opponents' trumps if you can ... but not always.

Our second deal this month comes from the summer party simultaneous pairs, where North picked up the type of hand you don't normally find in the textbooks :

AKJ9874  
 AJ8764  
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You are almost certain to be able to make a game contract and very possibly a slam so you might decide to open Two Clubs. The problem with this is that if the opponents get active in a minor suit you might not be able to mention both of your suits. For example, what do you do if the auction begins like this : 2C-(2D)-NB-(5D) ?

An opening bid of One Spade looks a bit strange with this powerhouse hand and you risk looking very silly if there is no further bidding but that's surely highly unlikely. If the opponents intervene in a minor suit you'll be able to bid your hearts next time round.

After an opening bid of One Spade, East overcalled Two Diamonds, South Passed and West bid Three Clubs. What now ?

A slam could be laydown even if your partner's hand contains no high cards at all, such as :

32  
9532  
5432  
5432

Opposite this Yarborough, you'd be unlucky if you failed to make twelve tricks in hearts !

At the table, North now bid Five Hearts. This attempted to tell South that any high cards he held in the major suits were all that North was interested in. Here are two possible hands that South might have :

Qx	x
Qx	xx
xxxx	KQxxx
xxxxx	KQxxx

Forget about high card points - after this bidding, the first hand is much better than the second !

South's actual hand was this :

1065  
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J973  
K106532

South decided to bid Five Spades and North Passed. Careful play allowed declarer to make all 13 tricks. Should South have jumped to Six Spades with his three trumps and a void ... or should North have raised to Six Spades anyway ? I'll leave that for you to decide !

Enjoy your bridge.