

# Suit Combinations and Safety Plays

Patrick, September 2017

# Storyboard for tonight

- Key aspects of distributions

- Maximising the tricks

- Safety plays - minimising the losses

<play some hands and discuss> + <break>

- Defenders' perspectives

<play some hands and discuss> + <any questions>

# Suit Combinations

- Why does knowing these matter ?
  - familiarity lets you avoid waste of energy & time
- But you need to known when not to follow the standard
  - so we need to understand WHY

# PART 1

## Knowing the Distributions

# Some well known splits

- Missing 2 cards (11-card fit)
  - evenly is 52%
- Missing 3 cards (10-card fit)
  - evenly is 78%
- Missing 4 cards (9-card fit)
  - evenly is 41%
- Missing 5 cards (8-card fit)
  - evenly is 68%

# Some well known splits

- Missing 2 cards
  - evenly is 52%
  - Missing 3 cards
    - evenly is 78%
- Missing 4 cards
  - evenly is 41%
  - Missing 5 cards
    - evenly is 68%
- Missing 6 cards
  - evenly is 36%
  - Missing 7 cards
    - evenly is 62%

# Key Points to remember

- Even number missing : odd split more likely
- Odd number missing : even split more likely
- After that
  - most even comes next
  - then less even
  - then less even

*So 4 missing*

- 3-1 most
- 2-2 next
- 4-0 last

*So 5 missing*

- 3-2 most
- 4-1 next
- 5-0 last

*So 6 missing*

- 4-2 most
- 3-3 next
- 5-1 last

# Why is 1-1 break 52%

- Missing King and 2 :

♠ QJT987

♠ A6543

# Why is 2-2 break only 40%

- Missing Queen and 4-3-2 :

♠ KJT98

♠ A765

- What about missing Queen and 5-4-3-2 ?

♠ KJT9

♠ A876

*BUT ....*

# Vacant Spaces

- Knowing other cards adjusts the odds ...

♠ KJT98

♠ A765

- suppose : North has 3 hearts, South 4 hearts.
- suppose : North has 3 hearts, South 5 hearts.

# Odds on Individual Holdings

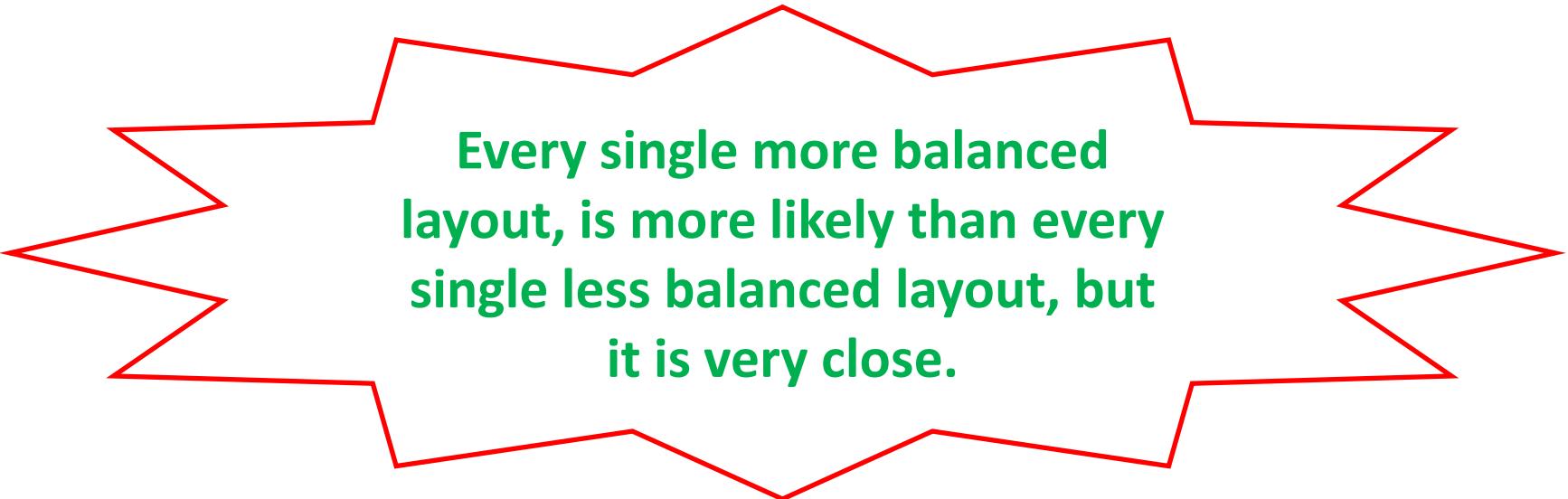
- Same length => same odds
- Different length => ?



AKJ9



87654



Every single more balanced layout, is more likely than every single less balanced layout, but it is very close.

# Odds on Individual Holdings

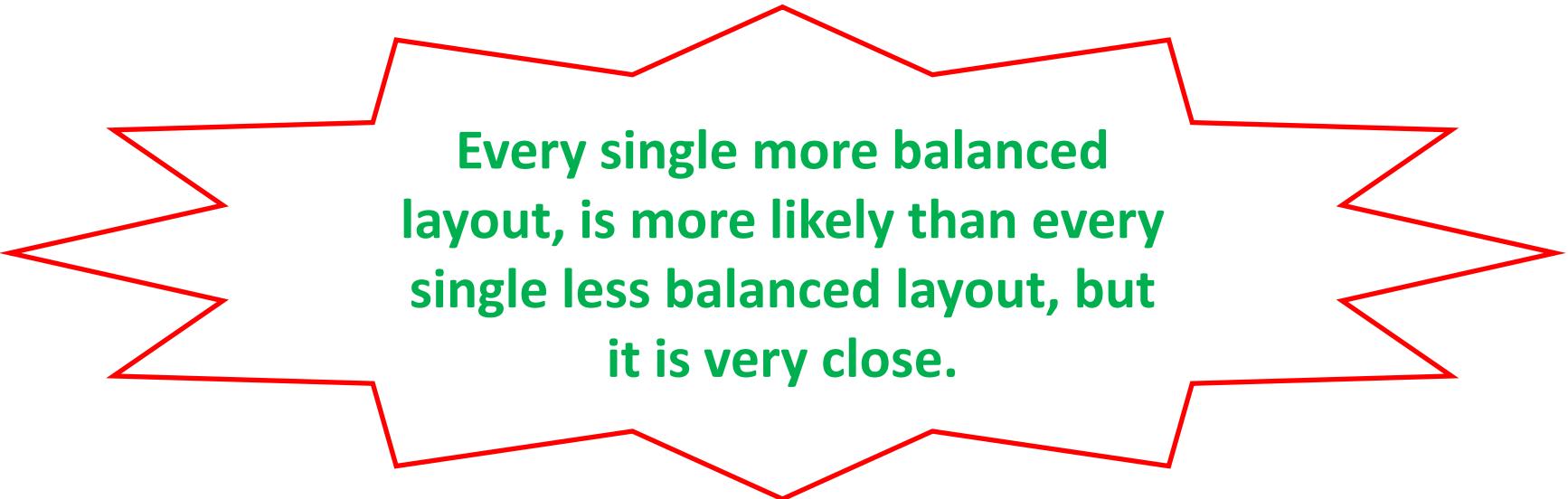
- Same length => same odds
- Different length => ?



AKT9



87654



Every single more balanced layout, is more likely than every single less balanced layout, but it is very close.

# Odds of individual holdings

- Number of options for 2 cards
  - 2 out of 3 : 3 options
  - 2 out of 4 : 6 options
  - 2 out of 5 : 10 options
  - 2 out of 6 : 15 options

# Odds of individual holdings

- Missing 5 cards
  - 3-2 break : 70% of the time : 20 options
    - each one is 3.5 %
  - 4-1 break : 30% of the time : 10 options
    - each one is 3 %

# Key Points to remember

- Even number missing : odd split more likely
- Odd number missing : even split more likely
  - most even comes next
  - then less even
  - then less even
- Any one more-balanced combination is more likely than a less-balanced one

# Applying the Principles

♠ A532

♥ A532

♦ A532

♠ KT964

♥ KT64

♦ K964

*logic takes over*

*cash A  
then finesse*

*cash ace  
then king*

*cash ace  
then to 9*

## PART 2

# Maximising the Tricks

# 3 tricks missing only the ace (1)

♠ KQ3

♠ JT98

*anything  
goes*

♥ KQ5

♥ J432

*up to KQ  
twice*

♦ K65

♦ QJ43

*up to QJ  
twice*

♣ Q2

♣ KJ43

*up to Q  
then duck*

# 3 tricks missing only the ace (2)

♠ KQ9

♠ J432

*small to the  
KQ twice*

♥ KQ5

♥ J932

*small to KQ  
twice*

♦ K95

♦ QJ43

*up to QJ  
then K*

♣ Q985

♣ KJ76

*to K-2 : to Q  
to K-A : ??*

# Key Points to watch for

- Leading through an honour, particularly Ax
- Don't let your high spot cards go to waste
- And remember
  - it's only playing the odds – it's not a guarantee!

# SUIT COMBO EXERCISES

try for yourself ...

combination of logic and probability

# 3 tricks missing only the king (1)

♠ A32

♠ QJT

*finesse  
finesse*

♥ A32

♥ QJ4

*cash A*

♦ A32

♦ QJ9

*run Q  
then always J,  
BUT ....*

♣ A32

♣ QJ8

*cash A*

# 3 tricks missing only the king (2)

♠ AT32

♠ QJ4

*small to T  
run Q*

♥ AJT2

♥ Q54

*small to T  
small to J*

♦ A32

♦ QJ54

*A and twice  
small to QJ*

♣ AJ2

♣ Q943

*4 tricks : A  
3 tricks : J*

# Key Points to watch for

- Leading through an honour, particularly Ax
- Don't let your high spot cards go to waste
- An honour covered can be an honour wasted
- Ask first – how many tricks do I need?
- And remember
  - it's only playing the odds – it's not a guarantee!
  - sometimes it depends on defensive behaviours

# 3 tricks missing only the queen (1)

♠ AKJ

♠ 432

*cash one  
and finesse*

♥ AK2

♥ J43

*cash A  
cash K*

♦ AK2

♦ JT3

*cash one  
finesse*

♣ AK9

♣ J32

*finesse  
twice*

*Clubs : 24.5% chance : drop is 8.72+0.96 = 9.7%*

# 3|4 tricks missing only the queen (2)

♠ A32

- A) needs 3-3 and Q onside
- B) makes in all possible cases
- C) gains over B) with QTxx onside (6 small doubletons off) and loses with Tx offside (4 doubletons)
- C) gains over A) when Qx (4 cases) offside and xx offside (6 cases) x offside (4 cases); but loses a trick with Qxx (6 cases) onside
- D) gains over B) when LHO has void and it shows up

♥ A32

♦ A32

♣ A92

♠ KJ94

♥ KJ94

♦ KJ94

♣ KJ43

4 tricks  
cash A  
small to J

3 tricks  
cash A  
small to K

best average  
cash A  
small to 9

for 3 tricks  
cash K  
then cash A

Some you just have to learn 😞

# 3|4 tricks missing only the queen (3)

♠ A532

♠ KJ94

4 tricks  
cash A  
small to J

♥ A532

♥ KJ94

3 tricks  
cash A  
small to J

♦ A532

♦ KJ94

best average  
cash A  
small to J

♣ A952

♣ KJ43

for 3 tricks  
cash K  
small to 9

Some you just have to learn 😞

# SUIT COMBO EXERCISES

try for yourself ...

combination of logic and probability

# 4 tricks missing only the jack (1)

♠ AKQ

♠ T432

*cash*

♥ AKQT

♥ 432

*from the top*

♦ AKQT

♦ 32

*one top then  
finesse*

♣ AKJT54

♣ 32

*finesse first  
round*

# 4 tricks missing only the jack (2)

♠ AK54

♠ Q932

*A and K first*

♥ AK84

♥ Q932

*A then guess*

♦ AK854

♦ Q932

*Q first*

♣ AQT32

♣ K954

*A or Q first*

Issue : you should know & recognise all these,  
and never need to work them out.

# Key Points to watch for

- Leading through an honour, particularly Ax
- Don't let your high spot cards go to waste
- An honour covered can be an honour wasted
- Ask first – how many tricks do I need?
- Always maximise the (valid) options kept open
- Finesses work more often than honours drop
- **And remember**
  - it's only playing the odds – it's not a guarantee!
  - sometimes it depends on defensive behaviours

# Learning Suit Combinations

- Books have lists
- Magazine have quizzes
  - found online, just search, lots of options
- Online software
  - SUITPLAY
- Some more difficult cases go as “safety plays”

# LET'S PLAY SOME HANDS NOW (BOARDS 1-2)

Tea break before / during / after but  
not all at once ... all done by 35  
minutes from now

# BOARDS PLAYED

- Board 1 : when the lead gives you a trick & missing an ace king
- Board 2 : vacant spaces changes the odds

## PART 3

### Safety Plays

# Why and when ?

- Suits do break badly – a large proportion of the time.
- Needs to be clear how many tricks are needed – so not as common in match-point pairs
- Best approach – think of what could go wrong.

# Standard Safety Plays

♠ AJ54

♠ K932

*A then small  
to the nine*

♥ AK9432

♥ Q65

*Q first*

♦ AQ432

♦ 765

*A then up to  
the queen*

♣ AJ932

♣ Q7654

*Q first*

# Standard Safety Plays

♠ AT98

♠ K765

*duck first in both hands*

♥ AQJ87

♥ T965

*A if there is a danger of a ruff*

♦ AJ654

♦ T8732

*towards ace and on the 9 play J*

♣ AK72

♣ 9843

*if A gets high card from N, cater for it being singleton*

# Less Standard Safety Plays

♠ J98754

♠ A62

*run the 4*



## PART 4

Defenders' perspectives

# Key advantages

- You can both see dummy ...
  - .... and you can avoid giving away tricks
- Declarer has been bidding
  - .... defenders might well have been silent
  - .... point count distribution is “known”
- Easier for the defence to go passive

# Suit Combinations

♠ KJT

♠ A98

♥ KJ9

♥ A32

[position 1](#)

[position 2](#)

♦ K32

♦ J54

[position](#)

♣ QT9

♣ K87

N DUMMY

♠  
♥ Q54  
♦  
♣

W YOU

♠  
♥ KJ9  
♦  
♣

E PARTNER

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣

S DECLARER

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣

N DECLARER

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣

W YOU

♠  
♥ KJ9  
♦  
♣

E PARTNER

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣

S DUMMY

♠  
♥ 1076  
♦  
♣

N DUMMY

♠  
♥  
♦ A109  
♣

W YOU

♠  
♥  
♦ K32  
♣

E PARTNER

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣

S DECLARER

♠  
♥  
♦  
♣

# **HAPPY TO TAKE QUESTIONS**

On what we have done, or what we  
have not done ....

# LET'S PLAY SOME HANDS NOW (BOARDS 3-4)

And then we are done ....

# BOARDS PLAYED

- Board 3 : elimination & end play
- Board 4 : find the trick requirement before the safety play

# **FINAL QUESTIONS**

Do scribble on the feedback sheets