

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 know 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 4 cards
 - evenly is 41%
- Missing 6 cards
 - evenly is 36%
- Missing 3 cards
 - evenly is 78%
- Missing 5 cards
 - evenly is 68%
- 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

*cash A
then finesse*

*cash ace
then king*

*cash ace
then to 9*

logic takes over

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

♠ KJ94

4 tricks
cash A
small to J

A) needs 3-3 and Q onside

B) makes in all possible cases

♥ A32

♥ KJ94

3 tricks
cash A
small to K

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

♦ A32

♦ KJ94

best average
cash A
small to 9

D) gains over B) when LHO has void and it shows up

♣ A92

♣ KJ43

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