Law Of Total Tricks

when
and when not
to bid on in competition

Law of Total Tricks

what is it?

* Conceived by Jules Rene Vernes in 1996 and popularized by Larry Cohen

* All about trumps & distribution

* Unrelated to & unconcerned with HCPs

* A scenario evaluation technique

* Expresses a relationship between tricks we can take in our best contract & tricks they can take in their best contract

Law of Total Tricks

original statement

* Total tricks means tricks we can take declaring our best suit plus tricks they can take declaring their best suit

* Total trumps means trumps we have in our best suit plus trumps they have in their best suit

* "The number of total tricks in a hand is approximately equal to the number of total trumps held by both sides"

Law of Total Tricks

what does it mean?

* Add "our trumps" to "their trumps" to know how many tricks are in the hand

* LoTT does NOT say how many tricks we can take

* If we have a 9 card fit and they have an 8 card fit (8+9=17, total trumps = total tricks) ...

* then if we can make 8 tricks, they can make 9 ...

* or if we can make 9 tricks, they can make 8 ...

* or if we can make 10 tricks, they can make 7 ...

Law of Total Tricks

corollaries

* You may bid to the number of trumps held by your side because you are protected by the "security of distribution"

* Even with E/W's paltry 18 HCPs, 2♠ is a good bid

1958 World Championship
Deal #93
Dealer: N
Vul: All

North
♠A6
♥97
♦K964
♣AQ932

West
♠QJT92
♥T854
♦AQ
♣T4

East
♠K87
♥AJ62
♦JT852
♣6

South
♠543
♥KQ3
♦73
♣KJ875

Law of Total Tricks

theory ?!?

* Auction: 1 ♥ -1 ♠ -3 ♥ -3 ♠

* 3♠ is profitable when both contracts make (18 total tricks)

* 3♠ is profitable when either contract makes (17 total tricks)

* 3♠ is unprofitable only when both contracts fail (16 total tricks)

* With a 9 card fit, the opponents must have an 8 card fit, and the 3 level is safe

Law of Total Tricks

review

* Consider what we know:
  * Total tricks = Total trumps
  * Total tricks = Our tricks + Their tricks
  * Bid to the level of the number of trumps we hold
  * Given a 9 card fit, 17+ tricks are available

* Should you bid 4♠ on a 16 trick hand?
  * Only with the HCPs to support it!
  * Absolutely don't sacrifice against it!

Law of Total Tricks

advanced placement

* Losing Trick Count uses HCPs to directly estimate how many tricks we can take

* LoTT: Total Tricks = Total Trumps

* LTC: Our Tricks = 24 - Our Losers

* Their Tricks = Total Tricks - Our Tricks

* Now we know* whether to bid, pass, or double!
  * *Both LTC and LoTT may be +/- 1 trick
  * *LoTT is less accurate on hands with 20+ tricks

Law of Total Tricks

example 1

Dlr: N
Vul: EW
NS 6♥ tricks
EW 9♠ tricks

N	E	S	W
p	1s	2h	p
p	X	p	2s
??			

North
♠932
♥T63
♦AQ94
♣T63

West
♠A7
♥754
♦JT8
♣J8752

East
♠KQ864
♥K2
♦K632
♣AK

South
♠JT5
♥AQJ98
♦75
♣Q94

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RESULTS OF BOARD 9
SECTION A      SCORES           MATCHPOINTS
               N-S    E-W        N-S     E-W
3 H x  S              100        4.00    4.00
3 NT    W             600        0.00    8.00
3 S     E             170        1.50    6.50
3 S     E             170        1.50    6.50
4 S     E      100               7.50    0.50
3 H     S               50       5.50    2.50
1 S     E             140        3.00    5.00
3 S     E      100               7.50    0.50
2 H     S               50       5.50    2.50
```

Law of Total Tricks

example 2

Dlr: W
Vul: EW
NS 9♥ tricks
EW 8♠ tricks

N	E	S	W
-	-	-	p
p	p	1d	1s
x	2s	3h	p
p	??		

North
♠J85
♥J854
♦Q93
♣KJ4

West
♠AK973
♥K
♦7652
♣T32

East
♠Q642
♥Q976
♦J4
♣A65

South
♠T
♥AT32
♦AKT8
♣Q987

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RESULTS OF BOARD 16
SECTION A    SCORES         MATCHPOINTS
             N-S   E-W       N-S    E-W
3 H     N    140             6.50   1.50
2 S       W        110       1.50   6.50
3 H     S          50        3.50   4.50
2 H     N    110             5.00   3.00
3 H     N          50        3.50   4.50
3 H     S    140             6.50   1.50
1 S       W        110       1.50   6.50
4 S       W  200             8.00   0.00
3 H     S          150       0.00   8.00
```

Law of Total Tricks

example 3

Dlr: S
Vul: All
NS 10♣ tricks
EW 8♠ tricks

N	E	S	W
			1s
		1c	1s
2c	p	2n	p
3c	??		

North
♠A
♥Q
♦96532
♣KJ6543

West
♠QJT84
♥AK74
♦AT
♣Q7

East
♠9532
♥J985
♦J74
♣T2

South
♠K76
♥T632
♦KQ8
♣A98

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RESULTS OF BOARD 23
SECTION A      SCORES          MATCHPOINTS
               N-S    E-W      N-S    E-W
3 H      E     200             7.00   1.00
2 S      W            110      0.50   7.50
3 C   S        130             5.00   3.00
3 D   N        130             5.00   3.00
2 D   N        110             3.00   5.00
1 S      W            110      0.50   7.50
3 C   N        130             5.00   3.00
3 S      W     100             2.00   6.00
5 C   S        600             8.00   0.00
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