

Count your way to better bridge and improve your defence

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'Millson says'

- The number of players who count properly can be numbered on one hand?
- Contentious?
- Let's see how this can be disproved



Get into good habits

- Always allocate a point count score to your partner
- And declarer...
- Do the mental maths to add up to 40



Start with No Trumps

- So declarer is in 1NT (and everyone passes) having opened 12-14 and dummy appears on the table
- A 9 count.....so.
- Immediately subtract 13 from 40
- And then a further 9
- Then your own hand point count
- (say a 6 count)



Take your time: Trick 1

- This will leave you with a point count number for partner
- Memorise this or write it down on your score card!!!
- 12
- They will have 12 (or 11 or 13)
- But fix the 12 in your mind!



The hand progresses....

- As your partner plays honour cards subtract these from the 12
- A King
- Now he/she has 9 point left (or 8 or 10)
- So in the crucial end game you have key information about your partner's hand.



In practice

- You are defending 1NT* with 15 points in your hand and dummy has a 7 count (♠Qx♥Axx♦xxxx♣J10xx). Partner has
- A 5 count
- He leads a ♦ and the play progresses with the suit showing up as ♦KJxx
- In the end play you



Win the argument in the pub!

- When partner claims that he was playing for you to have the ♠K and the contract goes through 😊
- Of course the contract could still make but at least there was extra information to help it be defeated.



No Trump Rebids

- The same argument applies if declarer has rebid 1NT (showing 15-16/17) or 2NT or has opened with a different range 1NT.
- Or for that matter over a 2NT opening bid
- Which is why it is important to check these ranges before the play of the cards



What about non-NT contracts?

- Although not as clear (especially with highly distributional hands) as when declarer has bid NT the same process applies. If declarer jumps in his/her suit ie $1\heartsuit-3\heartsuit$ then assume 17-19 ie 18 (or if known to be punchy players assume a 17 count)



- It's the same idea. Dummy tables a 7 count, your hand is a 5 count partner has a 10 count (or 9 or 11 but work with the 10)
- Write it down and defend accordingly. This is a better version of ' I had nothing, so knew partner must have something'



Other situations

- If declarer has reversed then assume an 18 count (and then a point either side) and likewise if declarer has bid a new suit at the 3 level with no interference or used fourth suit forcing or a jump shift (if this is natural)



The dog that didn't bark..

- So if declarer hasn't done any of these things then assume a 13-15 count ie 14 points... or if a known 'chancer'.. mentioning no names.. Then assume a 13 count.



- Remember to take a note of how easily the opposition reached their contract.
- For example if they have edged to game they probably only have a combined 25 count (so look at dummy and work out declarer's hand from this)



- If game was sailed into but slam not considered then maybe you are looking at a combined 30 count (again look at dummy and if it holds A♠, K♥, QJ♦) then expect declarer to be 18/19 points.
- Or slam was initiated but not reached again conclusions can be drawn



In conclusion

- Get into the habit, when defending, of always giving partner a nominal point count.
- Start with NT as that is more exact
- Write it down if that helps.
- Keep track as the hand progresses



And then what?

- The next stage to improvement (another talk here surely?-Ed) is to allocate a hand shape to declarer and so to partner as well.
- And the associated need to use count signals (ie high/low card shows an even number)



Guarantee

- Your bridge will improve!
- Better results will follow!
- You will usually win the argument
- This will benefit Norfolk bridge

