Hand Evaluation -part 1.

Losing Trick Count

Losing Trick Count (LTC) is a method to evaluate trick taking potential of **two hands combined**.

LTC should be used in conjunction with **common sense** and the standard HCP point-counting system of 4-3-2-1. In its basic form LTC requires the following:

- A. Count your losers
- B. Add your partner's losers
- C. Subtract the total from 18.

The result will **give you the level** at which you can expect to play with the fit suit as trumps.

There are three basic rules of LT counting:

- 1. Only the **first three cards** in any suit can be losers.
- 2. Only the A,K and Q are winners.
- 3. 'Droppable honors' are losers (i.e. a singleton king or a doubleton queen).

Example 1.

♣ A K 8 – one loser

♥J854 – three losers

♦ K Q 6 - one loser

7 5 2 - three losers

Total: 8 losers and 13 HCP

Example 2.

A Q 6 3. – one loser

Q8 – two losers

♦ KQ843 – one loser

9 5 - two losers

Total: 6 losers and 13 HCP

Example 3.

AK8642 – one loser

• ----- no losers

♦ KQ643 – one loser

J 8 – two losers

Total: 4 losers and 13 HCP.

We only count LT when we have a fit.

The power and the beauty of the LTC: it is able to evaluate the long suits, the short suits and the high-card points to produce one simple answer.

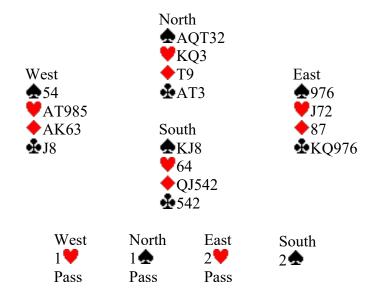
Hand evaluation - Part 2.

Law of Total Tricks (LTT) is a hand evaluation method in **competitive** auctions.

The Law says: The total # of cards in each partnership's longest suit is equal to # of "total tricks" that either side can win in a suit contract.

Examples.

Example #1.



East-West have 8 hearts and North-South have 8 spades.

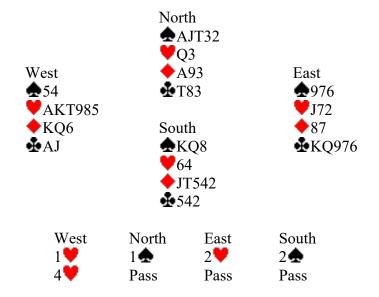
LTT: 8 hearts + 8 spades = 16 total trumps.

That number happens to be the **combined number of tricks** that can be made in $2 \checkmark$ and $2 \spadesuit$. Playing $2 \checkmark$, West would make exactly 8 tricks after losing 2 spades, 2 hearts and a club.

In $2 \clubsuit$, North would also win 8 tricks against best defense, losing a heart, 2 diamonds and 2 clubs.

8 heart tricks for EW + 8 spade tricks for NS = 16 "total tricks".

Example #2.



NS still own an 8-card spade fit, but EW have 9-card heart fit.

LTT: 8 spades + 9 hearts = 17.

Playing 4, West will win 10 tricks against best defense, losing 2 spades and a diamond.

If North were allowed to play $2 \spadesuit$, he would only win 7 tricks; East-West would score 3 clubs, 2 hearts, and 1 diamond. **10 tricks** + **7 tricks** = **17.**

This is equal to the total number of spades and hearts in the deal.

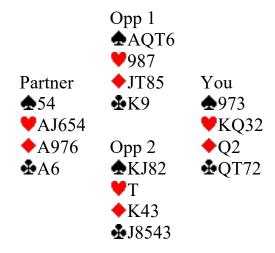
Example #3: Sitting East, you hold:

The auction:

Partner	Opp 1	You	Opp 2
1♥	Pass	2 >	Pass
Pass	2.	?	

The Law says: bid 3♥.

The full deal:



The opponents hold 8 spades and your side holds 9 hearts.

LTT: 8 + 9 = 17, so the Law says there should be 17 total tricks available.

Therefore, if the opponents can make $2 \triangleq (8 \text{ tricks})$, then your side should make $3 \checkmark (9 \text{ tricks})$.

LTT says: Bid Your Number of Trumps

This is most common issue at the 2- and 3-levels.

With 8-card fit, its **safe to compete** to the 2-level.

With 9-card fit its **safe to compete** to the 3-level.

Contract will either make, or be a good sacrifice against whatever opps can make.

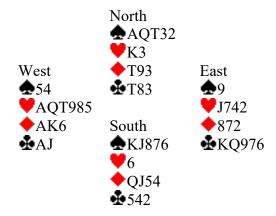
- Get to the right level quickly. In the above auction, East bids 2♥ first, which allowed the opponents to compete in spades.
 Playing Bergen raises, a bidding convention based on LTT, East could have shown 4-card support immediately.
- 2. Bergen raises allow a major-suit jump raise (i.e. 1♠ 3♠) with 0 points, because of the Law's premise of a 9-card fit.
- 3. Do not compete above LTT level unless you have extra shape, points, or vulnerability in your favor.

South could bid $3 \triangleq$ over $3 \checkmark$ in the above auction.

This is much more attractive if North-South are NV.

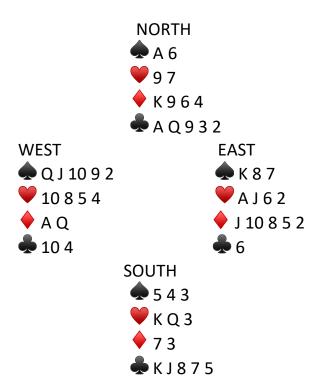
If vulnerable, $3 \triangleq$ doubled is -200 which is obviously a worse score than defending $3 \checkmark$.

Example #4:



20 total trumps in hearts and spades but only 18 total tricks. 4 Vis cold for EW, but NS can only make 2. NS however may sacrifice in 4. with 10 combined trumps.

Example #5:



This was a deal from a team game in World Championship. The Italians gained a useful swing by making 4^{\bullet} on the NS cards at one table and 2^{\bullet} as EW in the other.

Here LTT =18 (10 in clubs and 8 in spades).

Bergen Raises

Opener's Bid	Responder's Bid	Meaning
1 ♥ or 1 ♠	3♣	showing 7-9 points and exactly 4-card trump support
	3◆	showing 10-12 points and exactly 4-card trump support
	3♥/3♠	showing 0-6 points and exactly 4-card trump support
	3♠ over 3♥	splinter
	2NT	Game-forcing raise (Jacoby 2NT)

When opponents interfere over $1 \checkmark / 1 \spadesuit$ then Bergen raises are off, responder bids are natural.

What about over <u>double</u> by opponents? <u>Bergen is On.</u>

Hand evaluation – Part 3.

Suit Quality Overcall Test ("SQOT")

Just how good must the five-card suit be to justify the overcall?

Cluttering up the auction for the opponents is good, but not at the cost of going for a large penalty or giving misleading information to partner.

SQOT: Add the # of cards in your suit to the # of honors in that suit.

(A,K,Q,J =one, T=one but only with another honor).

SQOT Rule:

Overcall safely if the SQOT is at least as high as the # of tricks you are bidding for.

Exercise: Which of the following heart suits are worth a

- a) $1 \checkmark$ overcall over $1 \diamondsuit$, b) $2 \checkmark$ overcall over $1 \diamondsuit$, c) $3 \checkmark$ overcall over $2 \diamondsuit$?
- (1) **♥**KJ752 SQOT =7
- (2) **♥**QJT83 SQOT=8
- (3) A97632 SQOT =7
- (4) **♥**AKJ9 SQOT =7
- (5) ₩AT97632 SQOT =9
- (6) ♥Q976532 SQOT = 8

Answers:

- (1). Overcall $1 \heartsuit$ over $1 \diamondsuit$, but not $2 \heartsuit$ over $1 \diamondsuit$, and not $3 \heartsuit$ over $2 \diamondsuit$.
- (2). ?