

## Tidbit 13

### Law of Total Tricks

*Source: Larry Cohen*

**Interpretation:** This is more of a guideline than a law. It applies to duplicate bridge and states that you can afford to be at the level of the combined number of trumps in the two hands. You can often afford to bid up to a high level with a lot of trumps between your two hands and nothing much else because the opponents are very likely to have a game on and sometimes even a slam. However, you need to think about the vulnerability and the likelihood of whether the opposition will bid to game or slam before adopting this tactic. There is no point going down two or more tricks doubled when the opposition were never going to get to their optimum game or better contract anyway.

### Examples:

BOARD 20									
BD: 20		♠ K					Dir: W		
		♥ Q98652					Vul: ALL		
		♦ AJ97							
		♣ 93							
♠ AQ973					♠ J82				
♥ AK4					♥ 7				
♦ 63					♦ T542				
♣ J86					♣ AK742				
		♠ T654							
		♥ JT3							
		♦ KQ8							
		♣ QT5							
		♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT							
N	-	-	1	-	-		10		
S	-	-	1	-	-		14	8	
E	4	1	-	4	3		8		
W	4	1	-	4	3				

Bidding: You are South. Let's make North the opening bidder. She opens a weak 2H indicating 6 x hearts and 6-10 HCPS, or, by agreement 8-10 since first hand vulnerable. East passes. You know your partnership has the minority of HCPS and West is almost certain to overcall if the 2H opening comes around to her. The Law of Total Tricks says that you should be able to play at the three level with your combined 9 x hearts so, even with your meagre holding you could be very brave (or, perhaps, foolish) and raise to 3H. It now becomes very difficult for West to enter the bidding and you may get out for one or two down not doubled when East-West can make game in spades, a very good result. **Bear in mind you have to pick your moment to apply the Law of Total Tricks and be sure you have partnership agreement on it, that is, in this case, your 3H bid is not an invitation to game.**

BOARD 5									
BD: 5		♠ AJ7					Dir: N		
		♥ JT62					Vul: NS		
		♦ A							
		♣ KQJ95							
♠ 5					♠ T642				
♥ AK93					♥ Q				
♦ QJ98763					♦ K42				
♣ 7					♣ A8642				
		♠ KQ983							
		♥ 8754							
		♦ T5							
		♣ T3							
		♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT							
N	2	-	2	1	-		16		
S	2	-	2	1	-		10	9	
E	-	5	-	-	-		5		
W	-	5	-	-	-				

North	East	South	West
1C	Pass	1S	Double
Redouble*	Pass	Pass	3D
3S	4D	Pass	Pass

(Redouble shows 3 card support in spades) You are East.

West has shown she holds hearts and diamonds on her double. Following her jump in diamonds, she appears to hold 4 x hearts and 6-7 diamonds. The Law of Total Tricks tells you that you should be safe in 4D but, in this case, with West's strong and distributional bidding, combined with your potentially useful singleton QH and very useful AC you might even consider raising to 5D.

Exercise:

♠ T87
♥
♦ T7652
♣ AQ952

Bidding: You are South. What do you rebid?

North	East	South	West
1C(short)	Double	2C	3S
4C	4S	??	

Answer to Tidbit 12 exercise:

♠ 8532
♥ A75
♦ KQ8
♣ A64

You are East. North passes, you open 1C and partner responds 1D. You are "bidding up the line" so partner is not denying holding a major. Do you re-bid 1S, 1NT or something else?

BOARD 5						
BD: 5	♠ J6				Dlr: N	
	♥ Q98				Vul: NS	
	♦ T7653					
	♣ KJ9					
♠ KQ74				♠ 8532		
♥ KJ6				♥ A75		
♦ A942				♦ KQ8		
♣ T8				♣ A64		
	♠ AT9					
	♥ T432					
	♦ J					
	♣ Q7532					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	1	-	-	-	-	7
S	1	-	-	-	-	13
E	-	2	2	4	2	7
W	-	2	2	4	2	

I fell into the trap of re-bidding 1NT because I felt the spades were too paltry a suit to be worthy of mention. Not so. As you can see, partner had a "golden fit" in spades with me including holding KS and QS. Over my 1NT rebid, she correctly raised me to 3NT. 3NT doesn't even make on a club lead by South whereas a 4S contract not only scores better than 3NT but makes as well.