LOSING TRICK COUNT VERSUS HCP by Maritha Pottenger

Normally, we only apply LTC once we have a fit. With 6-5 hands or with a 7-card or longer suit, we are allowed to "assume" that we have a fit. **The more balanced the hand, the more we use HCP**. Remember, the more balanced the hand, the better it will do on defense. Very distributional hands are more offensively oriented.

	Losers by LTC	***HCP***
Standard Opening Hand	**7 or 8** **If you have 9 losers, should have 13+ HCP**	**12 or more** **OK to open some 9, 10 or 11 HCP if 2 quick tricks and HCP in your longest suits.**
Strong NT (15-17)	**Usually 6 or 7**	**15-17 HCP**
2NT Opening	**Usually 5 to 6**	**20-21 HCP**
2C followed by 2NT	**Usually 4 to 5**	**22-24 HCP**
"Average" Weak Two	**8 losers**	**5-10 (or bad 11) HCP**
Most strength in long suit. No more than one outside Ace or King. 2 of top 3 honors or 3 of top 5 when vulnerable. Can be less if NON-vulnerable-- especially if it is in spades or in hearts with very few spades.		
"Average" 3-level Preempt	**7-8 losers**	**5-10 HCP**
Most strength in long suit. No more than one outside Ace or King.		

With simple raise of major, Responder will have 9 losers (although sometimes 8). Opener needs 6 losers to make Help Suit Game Try. With 5 losers, bid game. With more losers, pass!

With limit raise of major, Responder should have 8 losers (occasionally 7). Opener should bid game with any 6 loser hand. With 7 losers, game is against the odds but some 7 loser hands may have enough appeal to take a risk. Kantar says that the 5-3-3-2 Opener should not go opposite a LR without NT values in HCP.

NT raises are usually based on HCP. However, with a very weak 9-loser hand, it is OK to go to game opposite a 2C followed by 2NT Opener. E.g., xx Jxxxxxx xx xx.

When partner opens a Weak Two, Rule of 17 applies. Aces and Kings are much more important than Queens and Jacks. With a balanced hand, you need a good chance of taking 4 to 5 tricks in your hand or 6 Losers. (Partner is likely to have 5 winners in her suit or 8 Losers by LTC.) With distributional hands, and a big fit, think in terms of cover cards and visualize partner's hand. If partner opens 2S and you hold Kxxx x KQxx Axxx, you have a good chance of losing only 1 heart, 1 diamond, and 1 club. Bid game.

Opposite a 3-level preempt, you want at least 2½ quick tricks to raise to game in major. Expect partner to have 8 losers, so go to game with 6 losers. Again, need Aces and Kings more than Queens & Jacks.

To *bid* over opponent's Weak Two, should have 7 or fewer losers. Over Weak 3, 6 or fewer losers. To be forced to 4 Level, 5 or fewer losers. The more balanced the hand, more you should think of DEFENSE.