

WHEN TO PULL TRUMPS IMMEDIATELY & WHEN TO DELAY PULLING TRUMPS

By Maritha Pottenger

Pull Trumps Immediately:

- 1) When the **opponents are threatening to ruff**. (For example. You open 1H. Partner bids 2C. You bid 2H. Partner bids 4H.) The opponents lead a small club and dummy comes down with AQJ10x of clubs. Do NOT finesse. Pull trumps immediately. LHO almost certainly has a singleton and is eager to ruff clubs.)
- 2) **You have a long side suit on which to pitch losers**. (For example, You hold AKQxx xx AKJxx x. Your partner has xxxx Ax Qxx Axxx. Don't mess around with something foolish like trumping clubs in your hand. Just pull trumps and run your diamonds. If trumps are no worse than 3-1 and diamonds no worse than 4-1, you can pitch a low heart from dummy and row your small heart in dummy, making 7.)
- 3) **You have a side suit which can be developed and sufficient transportation to do it**. (Suppose you hold: AKxxx Kxx xx Ax and dummy has Qxx AQx AKxxx xx. You have 5 spade tricks if they break 3-2, 3 hearts, 2 diamonds & 1 club. However, you have enough entries to trump diamonds twice, setting up the 5th diamond—to pitch your losing club—if the diamonds break no worse than 4-1. Pull 3 rounds of trumps ending with Queen on dummy. Play AK of diamonds and trump a diamond. Return to Ace of hearts and trump 4th diamond—if needed. Use Queen of hearts to get back to dummy for final time and cash the good 5th diamond.)

Delay Pulling Trumps:

- 1) If you need to **ruff loser(s) in the short hand** (usually dummy), you may have to do that BEFORE you pull trumps. [If there is a transfer sequence over NT, your hand may be the short trump hand.] An example would be Qxx Kxxx Kxxxx x in dummy with your hand being AKxxx Ax Ax Axxx. On a club lead, immediately take Ace and trump a club in dummy. Return to your hand with the Ace of hearts and trump another club. Return to your hand with the Ace of diamonds and trump a 4th club with the Queen of spade. Cash the King of hearts and trump a heart to your hand. Then, lay down the AK of spades. You can probably make 6—losing one spade.
- 2) If you **need to develop a pitch quickly for a loser**, you may have to do that before pulling trumps. If you hold KQJ109 AKx xx xxx and dummy has xxx xxx KQJx AQ10 and the opponents lead the Queen of hearts, you are in danger of losing a heart and cannot afford to play trumps. (They will take their Ace and knock out your last high heart.) You must immediately play a diamond toward the KQJx, making sure that you can pitch a heart loser on a diamond (after you drive out the Ace of diamonds).
- 3) You **need trumps for transportation**. Suppose you hold Qxxxx AQJx AQ Kx and dummy holds: AKx 10xx xx Qxxxx. You need to take both the heart and diamond finesses, and the only entries to dummy are in the trump suit. So, play queen of spades and then spade to the Ace. Try the diamond finesse. If it wins, return to dummy with the King of spades (hopefully, trump are 3-2) and run the 10 of diamonds. If it works, continue with low diamond to the jack (or queen).

Sometimes you can safely pull one or two rounds of trumps before trumping losers in the short trump hand. Sometimes you cannot pull any rounds of trumps. Sometimes you have to give up one round of trumps (or give up one round of a side suit) before you go about your ruffing and (eventually pulling trumps).