

WHOSE TRUMP SUIT IS BETTER? by Maritha Pottenger

When each partner has a trump suit to offer, several major considerations arise.

Obviously, **you usually prefer a major to a minor** (because game is cheaper). However, if no trump is an option, that is the cheapest game in town. When you have a “source of tricks suit”--even if it is a major, you may be better off playing 3NT sometimes.

If one partner's hand is much, much weaker than the other partner's, you should usually play in the trump suit of the weaker hand. This is because the weaker hand can use the high cards in the stronger hand, but has few high cards to offer the stronger hand. The weaker hand's long suit will usually be useless (or almost so) to the stronger hand.

Another consideration is that a **4-4 fit will often yield one trick more than a 5-3 trump fit.** (This is particularly crucial in matchpoints. In IMPs, you might prefer the 5-3 fit in case you get a 4-1 break—better trump control.) So, for most pair events, consider playing in a 4-4 fit rather than your 5-3. Sometimes this can even be the difference between a game and a slam.

When you do not have an eight card fit with each other, but no trump is impossible because one suit is known to be totally open, you may have to choose between a 4-3 fit and a 5-2 fit. **Generally the 5-2 fit is safer as it has more trump control.** If, however, you know that **you are ruffing the wide-open suit in the SHORT trump hand with the 4-3 fit, it may still be doable.** Making game in 4 of a major is still possible with 4-3 fits when your four-card suit is robust and you can “take the tap” (a forced ruff) on the short side of the table. Usually a successful game in a 4-3 fit has a running minor for a source of tricks (and a substitute trump suit to ram through one opponent if you get a bad trump break.) A secondary minor fit is helpful with the 5-2 major fit as well.