

YOUR MISSION IS Matchpoints Vs, Imps

Part of working out how to play a hand is remembering what you are trying to accomplish. If you are playing matchpoints, and you are in the contract that everyone is going to be playing, you want to make the most tricks of anyone playing the contract. If you are in a game, and you don't think that many pairs are in that game, you want to make the contract; overtricks become unimportant. If you are in three no trump, but others will be in four spades, you might take unnecessary risks, in order to make four, because plus 400 will be a bad score.

If you are in a team game, and you are in game, you want to play safe, do not worry about overtricks, just make certain that you make the contract.

The bidding is over. The lead is made, and the dummy comes down, and you are ready to play. When you evaluate the contract, and the way the you are going to play it, the first thing that you need to do is to determine the goal. Here are some hands that make that point.

J 3		
7 6 5	SOUTH	NORTH
9 6 3	2 NT	3 NT
K J 9 5 2		

A K 7 3	West leads the Jack of
A K 8	Hearts
A 10 5	
A 6 3	

You have seven tricks. You need to bring home the club suit. At duplicate, playing matchpoints, you would lead the ace and finesse with the Jack. If West holds the queen, or if the suit splits 3/2, you take nine or ten tricks.

But if you are in a team game, it is important that you make the contract. Suppose that West holds four clubs to the queen, You are going down in a cold contract. You need to protect against this, Lead the Ace of Clubs, and play a club to dummy and put in the 9. When East shows out, come

back to your hand, and lead a club to the jack. Making four. You could afford to make this play, because you have two spade stoppers.

But, suppose that West found the “amazing” lead of the seven of diamonds, East plays the jack, you hold up until the third round, and find that East started with five diamonds. Now the mission changes. You cannot afford to let East back in. Now you have to take the finesse with the jack of clubs, because you cannot let East win with the ten. Here, it does not matter whether you are playing teams or matchpoints.

K 2	
K J 9 8	You are in six hearts, and
A 10 3	West leads a trump.
A K J 2	

A 9 8 5 3
A Q 10 7 6
4 3
4

When dummy comes down, you count 13 tricks, ten in high cards, and then a cross ruff, making 7. Yes that would be your plan if you were in 7, but your mission is to take 12 tricks, not thirteen. The only danger is that one of the opponents will trump one of your winners, and lead another trump. Now you have only 11 tricks.

Take the safety play. Cash the King of spades, and lead to your hand, and duck. You are rewarded West discards on the second spade. If you had played the Ace, he would have ruffed, and played a heart. West held:

4
4 3 2
K J 9 7 5
10 9 6 5

Should you always take a safety play like this one? It depends on your mission. If this is a team game, you must make the slam, so you take the safety play. If you are in matchpoints, and you judge that everyone will be in slam, plus 980 might not be a good score, if everyone else makes

1010 for making the overtrick. If you judge that many players will not be in slam, take the safety play.

K 2	
J 6 4 3 2	You are in six spades.
A K 5 4	West leads the Jack of
J 6	Diamonds.

A Q J 7 6 2
 A 9
 8
 A K 4 3

You have reached 6 spades with 30 HCPs, which includes two worthless jacks. If trump split normally, and nothing bad happens in clubs, you can take all thirteen tricks; six spades, one heart, two diamonds, two clubs, and two ruffs in the dummy. But, remember the mission. If you make this slam, you get a good score at matchpoints - few pairs are going to get there - and if you go down, you get a terrible score at matchpoints or in a team game.

You have counted winners, 13. Losers, 0. What can go wrong?

Here is the entire deal.

	K 2	
	J 6 4 3 2	
	A K 5 4	
	J 6	
J		10 9 8 5
K 8 5		Q 10 7
J 10 9 6		Q 7 3 2
Q 10 8 5 2		9 7

A Q J 7 6 3
 A 9
 8
 A K 4 3

As you can see, when you trump the third club, East will overtrump, and return a trump. Now you still have a club loser, and no place to put it.

What can you do about it? Trump with the King. East cannot overtrump and kill the dummy.

Are you out of the woods? Not quite. One of the E/W players may have 4 trump, and you still have a club loser. Now What????

Trump your way back to your hand, and trump your club in dummy. Yes, East will win the trick, but he will only have 3 trump left, and your suit comes home. If you are an aggressive overbidder, and if you make it to 7 spades, you would have to play to trump both clubs in dummy, and hope spades are no worse than 3/2.

This is not Mission Impossible, Keep an eye on the mission, and play for the possible.