

PULLING TRUMP
PULLING TEETH

Did you ever have a toothache? If you have, I would bet that you did not tie a string to it, and slam a door, and try to pull it out; at least not right away. Even if you went to the dentist, the last thing that you would have wanted to have happen, is to have her pull the tooth. You would only pull it if it were absolutely necessary.

Pulling trump is very much the same thing. You should not start pulling trump until you have looked to see if there is a better use for them.

I joined Linda on Monday, when she went over hands with her newer players. This one caught my attention.

10 9 8
Q 10 6 5 4
———
K 10 8 7 3

A K 6 2
A K 9 2
A Q 10 7 6
———

While there were many different auctions, some players opened two clubs with South's hand, (this hand should be opened one diamond, it does not have enough tricks, as an unbalanced hand, to open two clubs) most pairs reached 4 hearts. As we will see, although the hand should make six hearts, some pairs went down in four hearts. Some went down one trick or two, and one went down three. Only one pair reached 6 hearts, and that pair went down several. They must have been thinking about pulling that sore tooth, because they started by pulling trump.

Go back to our three basic questions. How many winners do I have. If you pull trump, you have five heart winners, two spade winners and a diamond winner Down two.

Next question, how many losers. One spade loser, 4 potential diamond losers, and lots of club losers.

Final question, what can I do about it. Look at those trump spots. You can trump diamonds in the dummy and clubs in your hand. Suppose that they lead a club. Trump in your hand with a small heart, and do not pull

the tooth. Cash your outside winners. When you start a cross ruff, cash your outside winners first. Ace of diamonds, pitching a spade from dummy, ace and king of spades. Everyone follows. You are almost home. Trump a diamond in dummy and trump a club in your hand with a small trump. Both follow Now you are home. Trump a spade or diamond in dummy, trump a club with the king of hearts, trump a diamond in dummy and trump a club with the ace of hearts. You made four extra tricks by trumping in your hand. You still have the queen and ten of diamonds in dummy, and West has the jack. When you trump another club, this time with the dummy's ten, the ten wins, you pull a trump with the queen, and give up the last trick to the jack of hearts. Poor West, when you started to ruff in dummy at the end, he played before you, and your trump were higher than his. A simple cross ruff. You get a top board. Only one pair out of 12 made twelve tricks.

This is the full deal.

	10 9 8		
	Q 10 6 5 4		

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

Sometimes you can use the cross trump technique, even when one hand is short in trumps. I watched a good player play this hand in an on-line game. I won't tell you how they wound up in one diamond, but they did. Yes it is a terrible contract, but still you have to give your best shot.

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

 K 8
 A 9 6
 J 9 5 4 2
 K 6 3

You are in one diamond. They lead a diamond, East takes the King and leads a club. The ace and queen are behind your king. West takes two clubs and gives East a ruff, East having started with a singleton. They have the first four tricks, and they still have the ace and ten of diamonds. You have to put up with that toothache for a

while. You cannot afford to lead trump. East leads the queen of spades. Win the king of spades in your hand, play a spade to the ace, and trump a spade. Now comes the key play. Forget about the queen of hearts. Play the ace and a heart to the king, and trump a club. You know that you cannot be overtrumped, because West still has a club. This is the position at this point.

6
 J

 J

You exit with a heart. If West started with the queen,

 6
 J 9

 ?
 K 10

if West wins, whatever he plays, assures you of a diamond trick. If East wins, whichever diamond he plays first, you are assured of getting a diamond trick. You have taken two hearts, two spades, and three

diamonds, seven tricks. You get a plus score. The actual declarer took the heart finesse, and when it lost, she got stuck in her hand and had to lead a diamond. East won the Ace and ten, down two. You are so excited to have made the hand that the ache in your mouth is forgotten, at least until the next hand.

From The Richmond Times - Dispatch

Q 9 2	You are in a very reasonable four spade
A 4 2	contract. You have five spade winners, two
K 5	heart winners and two club winners. But
A 10 8 6 3	you can lose a heart, and four diamonds.
	What can you do about it?

A K J 10 8	
K 5 3	The ace of diamonds might be in the West
7 6 4 2	hand, and if you can lead towards the King,
K	one loser goes away, and if you can trump a

diamond in the dummy, another one goes away, and you can throw a heart from your hand on the Ace of clubs, after cashing your king, so you do not have a heart loser. If either of the diamond losers goes away, the contract is cold. They lead a spade, and all of a sudden, that tooth starts to ache again, that molar way in the back of your mouth. You realize that you might not get to trump a diamond, because they have found the killing trump lead. That ache reminds you not to be in a hurry to pull trumps. See what else you can do about your diamond losers. And then it comes to you. You might be able to set up a club trick, if they split 4/3, which happens more than half or the time. So, you win the spade in your hand, with the ten, saving the eight for a dummy entry, cash the king of clubs, and now you make your diamond play. Too bad, East takes the ace, and plays a second spade. Win in the dummy - both follow, leaving only one trump out, cash the ace of clubs, and trump a club. When everyone follows, you are home. Play a spade to dummy, trump a club, and go back to the dummy with the ace of hearts to pitch away a diamond on the long club. Making four, as the pain in the back of your mouth subsides.

Cross ruffs work both ways. The bad guys can get them going also, and when that happens, particularly when you can prevent it, it feels like you were punched in the mouth, and all of your teeth hurt. Look at this hand from a recent on-line game.

A K 10 2	I opened one diamond, and my partner bid
3	one spade. Even though I only had 14 HCP,
A K 5 3	they were great points, all matching aces and
10 8 5 3	kings. With a singleton heart, I evaluated my
	hand at at least 17 support points, and
9 8 7 5 3	jumped to three spades. My partner bid 4
K J 8 7	spades. I am certain that her mouth began
Q 2	to ache when she saw the dummy. She had
K J	a lot of work to do. She needed spades to

split, and to guess the club suit, and perhaps to find the Ace of hearts in the East hand, or guess to put in the queen if East played low. Not an easy hand. West led a diamond, perhaps the 6. When they lead your suit, warning flags should go up. Usually the lead of your suit is a singleton. She won the diamond on the board, and started the cross ruff, leading a small heart. East played low, and she correctly played the jack. East would have taken his ace if he had it, since there was a singleton in the dummy.

West won the ace and gave his partner a diamond ruff. East cashed the Ace of clubs and gave his partner a club ruff, and my partner wished that she had gone to the dentist instead of playing that hand. Perhaps the lead of the diamond should have alerted her to pull two rounds of trump. If she guessed hearts correctly, and guessed clubs correctly, she only needed one ruff in the dummy. And if spade split, or the queen came down, she had plenty of tricks. If she got clubs wrong, and spades did not split, she was going down anyway. Even if spades did not split, if the hand with the ace of hearts did not have the third spade, she could still crossruff and make the hand.

The moral of all of this is to take good care of your teeth, and of your trumps.

COMING SOON - PULLING TEETH, PART TWO