

PULLING TRUMP
PULLING TEETH
Part II

In part one, of what I believe will be a three part series, I presented several hands in which declarer should (or in one hand should not) delay in pulling trump, as there were other uses for the trump suit. In one hand there was a cross ruff that gave declarer at least four extra tricks. There were hands where declarer needed to use the trump suit for transportation to set up a long suit. But there was one hand that looked like a cross ruff for the defense, and at least a few trump had to be drawn.

I repeat, drawing trump is like pulling teeth. Sometimes you have to do it promptly, the pain is so great; but always you want this to be the remedy of last resort. On every hand you need to - before you make a dental appointment, or tie a string to your tooth, and to the door handle - go through the fundamentals, and do it before you play to the first trick.

How many winners do I have.

Where can I find extra winners.

How many losers do I have.

How can I get rid of some of them.

What can go wrong.

Do not let that growing pain in your mouth take your attention off of these fundamentals. See if you can save the tooth before you decide to extract it.

Here is a hand from Linda's Saturday game two weeks ago. We went over it on the following Monday. There were all sorts of contracts, but most players were in 4 hearts. Two brave souls got to six, but neither made it. Let's see what went wrong. We went over the play on Monday,

but no one made the critical play. The play should be the same in four hearts or in six hearts, but especially if you got to six hearts.

4
K Q J 9 5 To make it interesting, you are in
K 9 3 six hearts, and they lead a spade.
A K 10 4

A J 8 4
A 10 5
J 2
Q J 7 5

How many winners. TEN - four clubs, five hearts and one spade.

How many losers. TWO - The diamonds. Actually three diamond losers in dummy. Nobody thought about that, as you will see. Where can you find two more winners.

Here are some things new players miss. If you trump spades in the dummy, you do not get extra tricks. You were going to make those hearts in dummy anyway. Don't make that mistake.

Some players pulled trump and led the jack of diamonds for a finesse. THAT IS NOT A FINESSE. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE THE TEN, IT CANNOT WIN. If West has the queen, he will cover, and if you play the king, and if East has the Ace, the ten is still out, and you have two losers. If East has the Queen, you will lose the trick, and the ace is still out. The actual finesse is to play West for the Ace. If he has it, you will make your king, and now will have 11 tricks. But, what about trick 12. If you pulled trump, you will have to extract the tooth, because there is now no alternative. But, if you put off playing trump, you are home. So you win the ace of spades at trick one - good play - and lead a diamond to the king. If West goes up, great. Your king is up. He plays a second spade, and you ruff in dummy, cash the king of diamonds, and now trump a diamond with the ace of hearts, cash your hearts, your clubs and make 6. We watched several lines of play. Not one declarer trumped a diamond in the hand with the short trump suit. Even if you were only in four, that should be your line of play, as making that extra trick will be a top board. REMEMBER,

trumping in the hand with the fewest trump gives you an extra trick. If they overtrump, you break even, since you had to lose that trick anyway.

Remember when you were a kid, and you were sharing a pack of gum with a friend. We did not worry about tooth decay back then, and there was no such thing as sugarless gum. Remember there were five sticks in the pack, and sometimes you would flip a coin for the last stick. You would flip and say “call it.” Your friend would always say “heads I win, tails you lose.” If you let it go, he would get the gum, and years later he would be at the dentist’s when his teeth rotted away. There are some hands that work for you in almost the same way, actually heads I win, tails I break even. Those are very good odds.

Mimi and I were playing in a recent online game, and she had this hand. I will show you the whole hand, to make the play easier to follow. She had edited the Pulling Teeth part 1, and must have had it in mind when she played this hand.

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

K Q 10 9
 A Q 10 9 8
 A 10 7
 3

East opened one club in third seat and we got to four hearts. West led his singleton, and Mimi was in

the dummy at trick two. She started to pull trump. She played small, and put in the queen. West took the king and led a spade. She won in dummy and played a second heart, and the Jack came up. The “comfortable play” at this point would be to pull a third trump with the ten, and take her winners, but she had a diamond loser, which she would have liked to trump in dummy, so she played out her spades. This was a

heads I win, tails I break even play. If West had to follow, she could pitch a diamond from dummy, cash the ace of diamonds, trump a diamond in dummy come back to her hand by trumping a club, pull the last trump, and make six, losing only the king of hearts. She got a 92% on the board for making the overtrick. The visit to the dentist could wait, at least until the next hand.

A 6 2
 4 3
 A 9 8 5 4 3 2
 7

8 5 3
 A 9 7 6
 Q
 10 9 8 6 2

9 4
 J 8 5 3
 K J 10 7
 K Q 5

K Q J 10 7
 K Q 10
 6
 A J 4 3

When you are hot, you're hot. Mimi was in four spades. West led his singleton diamond. Mimi

won in the dummy and decided not to pull trump. She played a club to the ace, trumped a club, and played a heart to the king. West won and should have played trump, but played a club instead. Mimi ruffed in the dummy noting that the queen and king of clubs had fallen and that her jack was good, so she played a heart to the queen, trumped the ten of hearts with the Ace of Spades, trumped a diamond with the ten, pulled trump, and made six. There were 86 pairs in the game, and she was the only one to make six, for a 100% on the board. The defense probably left the table feeling like they had been punched in the mouth. Again, the comfortable play would have been to draw trump, but then even if you guessed to play a heart to the ten, you would only make 9 tricks. You needed to trump clubs in the short hand to get extra tricks, and trumping the third heart with the ace of trumps gave her a top.

Yes these are online hands, and maybe crossruffs are more prevalent on line, but look at this hand from the Richmond newspaper.

K 9
A K 9
K Q 7
J 8 5 3 2

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

The opponents are silent,
and we get to 6 diamonds.
West leads a spade and East
wins the ace and returns a
spade. Your tooth starts to
ache, since you have 11
tricks at no trump, and if
you don't make this contact
you are getting a zero.
What do you play at trick

two. So you pitch a heart or a club? It matters which one you choose.

WINNERS - 11, one spade, two hearts, six diamonds, two clubs. LOSERS - the ace of spades, one heart, one club. You can get rid of one loser on the king of spades, and maybe the queen of clubs will be doubleton. Not likely but what else can you can do?

Don't be in a hurry to pull that tooth. If clubs are no worse than 4/1, you can set up a long club in dummy, but you need three entries, and you only have two entries in hearts. Well, it is safe to pull two rounds of trump, but it turns out that East has three.

Oh, what did you pitch on the king of spades? If you pitched a heart, you cannot set up the clubs if the queen does not fall. I hope you had decided to try to set up the clubs, and pitched a small club from your hand. Now you cash the ace and king of clubs. If everyone follows, you can pull the last trump, in dummy, with the king in the dummy, and trump a club to set up the suit. If the suit splits 4/1, you have to hope the hand that is short in clubs is the hand that does not have the last diamond. If it does, too bad, you had no chance. This time West showed out on the second club, but East had the third diamond. Play a trump to dummy, trump a club, heart to dummy, trump a club - and now your fifth club is good, and you can pitch the heart. Trip to dentist avoided once again. You are learning not to worry so much about drawing trump when you need to use the trump for other things, a crossruff, transportation, or just because there is no reason to do so, like in this hand from an online game.

Q 8
7 6 5
K Q J 9 6 2
J 8

K 5 4
A K 9 4 3
A 8
10 9 2

We were in a very tame two hearts. When you get in and play trump, they split, so you can only lose one spade, one heart, and two clubs, it would appear. Unless, of course, they can pull your third heart, and run clubs, for three club losers. Maybe you should try to trump a club before you play trump.

The actual declarer pulled two rounds of trump, and then tried to trump clubs in dummy but West won the second club and pulled the last trump and cashed a third club and the ace of spades. Making two, for about 12% on the board. Actually cashing the two top hearts was okay, but after that declarer should leave the last trump out and start to run diamonds. If the defense ruffs in, they cannot pull the last trump, making three. Even better, if the hand with the third trump has to follow to three rounds of diamonds, you can pitch two clubs from dummy and make four, losing only one club, one heart and one spade, and if the hand with the long trump has to follow to four rounds of diamonds, you can pitch all of the clubs from dummy, making five. Actually on this hand, her opponent could ruff the second diamond, and hold you to three, but you would get 55% instead of 12%. Here you have control of the hand, and the hand with the long trump cannot harm you.

If you got all of these hands right, you could say, as they did in the old commercials, "Look Mom, no cavities."

These plays take some thought, but all hands take some thought. And the time to think is before you play to trick one. You need a plan, and perhaps a plan B if the first one does not work.