

## SPOTS COUNT

We all love hands with aces, kings, and queens. But sometimes small cards count just as much. Here are three hands in which success depends upon paying attention to spot cards. Success or failure depends upon recognizing the value of a four, a three, and a deuce, respectively. Let's start with the four.

This hand comes from Marty Bergen's column in the November Bridge Bulletin.

7 3	
6 4	Simple auction,
A K Q 3 2	1NT 3NT
7 5 3 2	
A 10 9	
A 10 9 7	
9 8 6 4	
A Q	

Great news. West leads the Jack of Clubs, and East plays the King. You count your tricks. One spade, one heart, two clubs and five diamonds. Easy/peasy. Right? WRONG, unless you ask what could go wrong.

Look at the diamond suit. Even if you play the 9, 8, and 6 under the ace, king and queen of diamonds, your four of diamonds is too big. You cannot get to the dummy. If only that card were in the dummy, and you had the two or three.

What can you do about it? Of course if the opponents cards split two/two, you can play a third one to your hand, and end up in the dummy to run the suit. But this does not work if they are 3/1, and nothing works if they are 4/0. What can you do if they are 3/1?

You cash the queen of clubs, and East follows. So West started with five clubs. You play a diamond to dummy, and both follow. So you can get five diamonds if the suit does not block. But when you play the king, West shows out. HORRORS!!!!

But you were ready for this. You play a club from dummy, and throw away your four of diamonds. West cashes three clubs, but then has to put you in. You play

to dummy, cash your diamonds, and still have two aces, making 3. In fact, East has to make five discards, and if he tries to protect the queen of hearts, you might make an extra spade trick, not likely but possible. Here you gave up a couple of club tricks, but got two diamonds in return. Well done.

Here is a hand from the Richmond paper, where you must recognize the importance of a three.

10 7	You get to three no trump, and
Q J 10 4	West leads the 5 of spades, you
K 6 4 2	play the 10, covered by the
7 6 5	queen.
A K 5 4	
2	
A Q 8 3	
A K 4 3	

You count your winners. Two spades, two clubs, and if diamonds split, four diamonds. You passed all of your college math classes with honors, and you count and count, and only come up with 8 tricks. Using your advanced counting ability, you realize that you are one trick short and start looking for a place to get that trick. Hearts look good. If you can get to the dummy three times, you can set up a heart trick for number nine. You lead the deuce, and East takes the ace and returns a spade. You win, and try to find two dummy entries. Well there is the king of diamonds, and ???????. Then you see it. The four of diamonds in dummy. Oh, what a nice card the three of diamonds is. You cash the ace and queen of diamonds, both opponents follow. You are home. You play the EIGHT OF DIAMONDS to the king, play a high heart, and after they take their spades, you play the three of diamonds to the four, and cash the high heart. Making three. To make this contract you needed to watch your spot cards, and get rid of that annoying eight, of diamonds in your hand, so that you can get to dummy with the three and the four.

And here is the reconstruction of a hand I played in an internet game. My RHO opened one heart, I overcalled one no trump, and all of a sudden, I found myself in 7 no trump. Thank goodness I had the deuce of hearts. Here are all of the hands.

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

My turn to apply my math skills. I need 13 tricks and I only have 12, 7 clubs, two diamonds, two hearts and a spade. The only way that I could see to make this contract was to set up my deuce of hearts. For his opening bid, I figured that East had to hold all of the rest of the honors, and even then, he would be pushing it. So he had to hold his king and queen of spades, or I would make my jack.

When you need to put pressure on your opponents, you cash all of your winners. So I won the Ace of hearts, cashed the king, cashed my two top diamonds and started running my clubs. On the fifth and sixth clubs I threw the 8 and 9 of spades. This was the position at this point.

5	
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5	
5	
Immaterial	K Q
	Q
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A J	
2	

Now I played the last club and East was finished. He threw the Queen of hearts, and I played the Jack of spades, and won the last two tricks with the ace of spades and the 2 of hearts.

Spots count. Keep track of them. Unblock them, use them as entries, use them as a threat card against an opponent. They can come in very handy.

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