

My Bridge and Yours



Frank Stewart
franks@fayette.net

Non-system bidding issues — part 2

Trump suit valuation

Most players rely on the 4-3-2-1 point count. They count extra points for useful short suits *after* they find a trump fit in another suit. The true value of shortness depends on the degree of fit and how much wasted strength lies opposite the shortness.

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2 ♣	2 ♥	3 ♣	?

♠4 ♥J53 ♦A96543 ♣763

South's singleton is worth less than usual because the auction marks North with spade length and strength.

West	North	East	South
1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	4 ♦	Pass
5 ♦	All Pass		

West	East
♠ 4	♠ A J 8 3 2
♥ A Q J 6 2	♥ 5
♦ Q J 7 3	♦ A 10 6 4
♣ A 6 3	♣ J 5 2

East's singleton heart, where West was known to have length and strength, was more a liability, especially when East held only four trumps. East should have settled for a raise to 3 ♦.

West	North	East	South
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	2 ♥

♠6 ♥J964 ♦AQ97 ♣AJ95

In a Spingold match, South signed off at 3 ♥. His trumps were weak, and North was likely to have duplicated values in spades. North held:

♠KJ108 ♥Q532 ♦43 ♣KQ6.

3 ♥ made. At the other table 4 ♥ went down.

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♠	
3 ♣	Pass	Pass	?

(a) ♠KJ4 ♥KJ54 ♦6543 ♣53
(b) ♠KJ43 ♥KJ5 ♦6543 ♣54

The difference between an eight-card fit and a nine-card fit is significant. Possession of a ninth trump is often enough to influence you to compete at the three level. To bid 3 ♠, you would prefer (b).

West	North	East	South
Pass	2NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	1 ♠

(1) Forcing raise.
(a) ♠AKQJ2 ♥K43 ♦93 ♣K102
(b) ♠AK832 ♥AQ3 ♦93 ♣K102

Hand (b) is better for slam purposes. Hand (a) suffers from duplication in trumps. Since North's response promises four-card support, you won't need the ♠J to draw trumps.

West	North	East	South
3 ♥	Pass	?	

(a) ♠K4 ♥A93 ♦AQ4 ♣J8642
(b) ♠K4 ♥AQ3 ♦A43 ♣J8652

Prefer (a). The ♥Q in (b) is wasted.

More Wasted and Working Values

You count points to estimate the value of your hand as dealt. As the auction progresses, your values may get better or worse.

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥	
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	?

(a) ♠K4 ♥10642 ♦A6 ♣Q8642
(b) ♠83 ♥KQ52 ♦J6 ♣K8652

Hand (b), which has wasted heart strength opposite North's probable void, is worth only a chance-giving raise to 3 ♣. Hand (a) may produce 6 ♣! Give North a suitable hand:
♠A952 ♥— ♦KJ532 ♣AK53
and you may make seven.

West	North	East	South
1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	?

(a) ♠A8753 ♥Q86 ♦KJ ♣843
(b) ♠KQ862 ♥864 ♦J5 ♣KJ5

Hand (a), with fitting honors, is worth at least an invitational jump to 3 ♥. Some of the black-suit values in (b) will be wasted; North may have a singleton spade. A bid of 2NT would be aggressive.

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	?

(a) ♠Q43 ♥A432 ♦Q432 ♣32
(b) ♠A43 ♥Q432 ♦Q432 ♣32

Bid 4 ♠ only on (a). The ♠Q is bound to be a useful card, but the value of the ♥Q in (b) is unclear. □