

Winning Team Game Strategy

March 17, 2019

299er Tournament

Presented by: Debbie Romero

Types of Team Games

- **Stratified Swiss Teams** (both limited & open)
 - Overall winners in three strata (A, B, & C)
 - Good for a wide range of field sizes
- **Bracketed Swiss Teams**
 - Good for larger-sized fields
 - 7-9 teams per bracket; we bracket from bottom up
 - Only play against teams closest to your team level
 - Winners in every bracket (Gold at Regionals & NABCs)
- **Knockouts**
- Team Game Strategy applies to all these types.

Make Your Contracts!

- Don't try for an overtrick if it means you could potentially go down.
- Don't duck if you can't afford for the opponents to make a dangerous switch.

Make Your Contracts

Contract is 3NT by South; Opening lead is the 8 of clubs.

North Deals

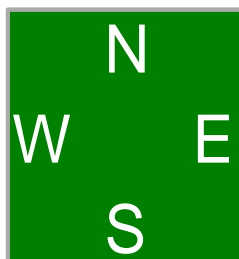
None Vul

♠ K Q 4

♥ Q J 7

♦ 7 6 3

♣ A 7 6 5



♠ A J 3 2

♥ A K 10 9

♦ K 8 5

♣ Q 2

Make Your Contracts

Contract is 3NT by South; Opening lead is the 8 of clubs.

Don't duck to the Q. Take the ace & cash your 9 tricks.

North Deals

None Vul

♠ K Q 4

♥ Q J 7

♦ 7 6 3

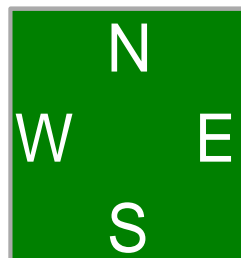
♣ A 7 6 5

♠ 9 8 7

♥ 6 2

♦ A Q J 4

♣ 10 8 4 3



♠ 10 6 5

♥ 8 5 4 3

♦ 10 9 2

♣ K J 9

♠ A J 3 2

♥ A K 10 9

♦ K 8 5

♣ Q 2

Make Safety Plays to Ensure Your Contracts

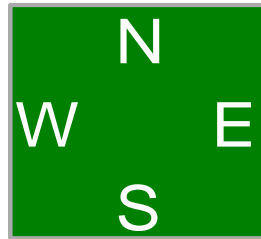
- “A **Safety Play** is the play of a suit to cope with an unfavorable break & to minimize the danger of losing the contract.” (Encyclopedia of Bridge)
- A **Safety Play** is defined as “the surest line to make the contract, disregarding extra tricks that might be made in some other way.” (Bridge World glossary)
- A **Safety Play** involves “playing in such a way as to lose a trick with average breaks in order to avoid losing additional tricks with bad breaks.” (Marshall Miles)
- Unlike in pairs games, **overtricks are secondary concerns** in Team Games. Making your contract is the primary goal.
Count your tricks & think about what could go wrong!

Safety Play

Guarding Against a Bad Trump Break

Contract 4S by South; Lead AKQ of Hearts then 4D

North Deals ♠ A 9 4
N-S Vul ♥ 6 5 3
 ♦ 10 7 3 2
 ♣ A 8 6



♠ K Q 10 7 6 3
♥ 9 8 7
♦ A
♣ K Q 3

Guarding Against a Bad Trump Break

Contract 4S by South; Lead is AKQ of Hearts then 4D

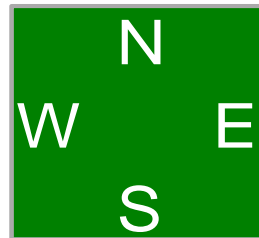
Play spade K to enable a 2-way finesse if 4/0 break.

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ A 9 4
♥ 6 5 3
♦ 10 7 3 2
♣ A 8 6

♠ J 8 5 2
♥ A K Q
♦ J 9 5 4
♣ 9 2



♠ —
♥ J 10 4 2
♦ K Q 8 6
♣ J 10 7 5 4

♠ K Q 10 7 6 3
♥ 9 8 7
♦ A
♣ K Q 3

Extreme Safety Play

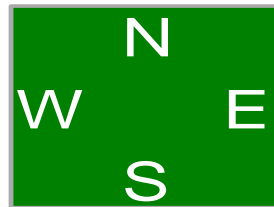
Guarding Against a Bad Suit Break, No Entry

Contract 3NT by South, Opening Lead QD

North Deals

Both Vul

♠ 4 3
♥ 7 4
♦ 9 6
♣ A K Q 6 5 4 2



♠ A K 7 5
♥ A 8 5 2
♦ A K 2
♣ 8 3

Extreme Safety Play

Guarding Against a Bad Suit Break, No Entry

Contract 3NT by South, Opening Lead QD

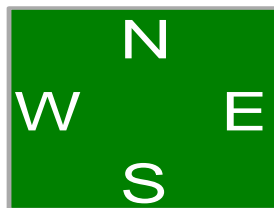
Lead a club & duck (play small) in case 4/0 break.

North Deals

Both Vul

♠ 10 2
♥ J 9
♦ Q J 10 8 5
♣ J 10 9 7

♠ 4 3
♥ 7 4
♦ 9 6
♣ A K Q 6 5 4 2



♠ Q J 9 8 6
♥ K Q 10 6 3
♦ 7 4 3
♣ —

♠ A K 7 5
♥ A 8 5 2
♦ A K 2
♣ 8 3

Safety Play: Yes or No?

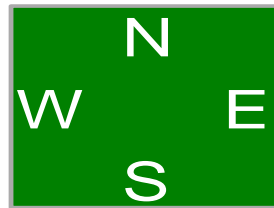
No Outside Dummy Entry

Contract 6NT by South, Opening Lead QD

North Deals

Both Vul

♠ 4 3
♥ 7 4
♦ 9 6
♣ A K Q 6 5 4 2



♠ A K 7 5
♥ A 8 5 2
♦ A K 2
♣ 8 3

Safety Play: Yes or No?

No Outside Dummy Entry

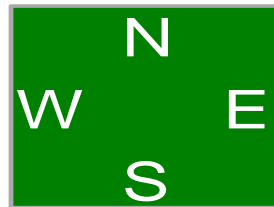
Contract 6NT by South, Opening Lead QD

No Safety Play. Play for 3/1 break to make slam contract.

North Deals

Both Vul

♠ 4 3
♥ 7 4
♦ 9 6
♣ A K Q 6 5 4 2



♠ A K 7 5
♥ A 8 5 2
♦ A K 2
♣ 8 3

Play in the Safest Contract

- Play in what seems to be the safest contract, even if it is not the highest scoring contract.
 - making 3NT = plus 400 nv or 600 vul
 - making 4H or 4S = plus 420 nv or 620 vul
 - making 5C or 5D = plus 400 nv or 600 vul
- No difference in scoring in teams with making 4 in 4S for plus 420 or making 4 in 3NT for plus 430.
- **Your goal is not to go down! Game swings can cost the match.**

Try to Beat Opponent's Contract!

- Don't worry about giving the opponents an overtrick or two if there's a chance to beat the contract.
- 4H vulnerable making 5 instead of 4 is only a 30 point extra loss. You lose 650 instead of 620.
- 4H down 1 keeps opponent from making 620. You go plus 100 instead of minus 620.
- The reward or payoff is huge for setting the opponent's game contract & much greater than the risk of overtricks.

Beating Opponent's Contract

Contract is 4H by South. Opening lead is the A of spades (A, 2, 4, 8). West continued with the 6 of spades (6, 3, 9, K) won by declarer's King.

North Deals ♠ Q J 7 3 2

N-S Vul ♥ Q 8 5

♦ 8

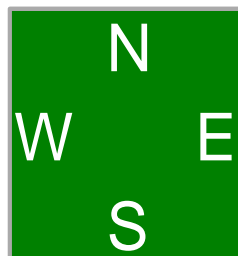
♣ A K J 5

♠ A 6

♥ K 6 2

♦ A 7 6 4 3

♣ 10 9 7



Beating Opponent's Contract

Contract is 4H by South. Opening lead is the spade A, then the spade 6, won by declarer's King. Partner played the 4 & 9 of spades.

After winning the Heart K, underlead your Ace of diamonds for a ruff.

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ Q J 7 3 2

♥ Q 8 5

♦ 8

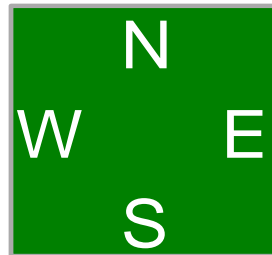
♣ A K J 5

♠ A 6

♥ K 6 2

♦ A 7 6 4 3

♣ 10 9 7



♠ 9 5 4

♥ 7 3

♦ K 10 9 5 2

♣ 8 6 2

♠ K 10 8

♥ A J 10 9 4

♦ Q J

♣ Q 4 3

Let's Score the Hand

- Board is a push (no advantage for either side) if both sides go down in 4H or if both sides make 4H.
- Board is a big game swing in your favor if you set 4H, down 1, & your partners make 4H. ($100 + 620 = +720$)
- Board is a big game swing loss for your side if you let opponents make the contract & opponents set your partners. ($-620 + -100 = -720$)

Bid all Close Games to Avoid Big Game Swings

- Much more important to bid vulnerable vs. non-vulnerable games
 - Vulnerable:
+620 versus +170 for a part score is 450 gain which is a game swing.
 - Non-vulnerable
+420 versus +170 for a part score is only 250 gain
- If you're close to game, just bid it or make a game try!

Don't Bid "Iffy" Slams

- Only bid small slams with 50% or greater chance of making
 - opponents may not bid the slam at all
 - you don't want to lose points (620 or 420) for a game score if the slam is "iffy"
- Don't bid grand slams unless you can count 13 tricks.
- Slam decisions often decide the match given only 6 or 7 boards per match.

Don't Compete Too High for Part Scores

- It's risky to compete for part scores, especially vulnerable.
- If opponents can make a part score in a major suit, that is a loss for your team of about 110 to 140
- If you compete vulnerable and get doubled, you turn a part score loss into a loss of 200 if down 1, or 500 if down 2, or 800 if down 3
- **Be conservative to avoid game swings!**

Don't Double Opponent's Part Score Contract

- Doubling opponent's part score into game is very bad.
- Don't double unless you can set the contract by at least 2 tricks with tricks in your own hand, not partner's hand.
- Only count outside aces & trump tricks as setting tricks. Don't rely on tricks in your own suit supported by partner. Opponent could be 2-suited & void or short in your suit.
- Doubling game contracts is less risky, but same doubling rules apply.

Winning Team Strategy Summary

- Make your contracts!
 - Don't try for overtricks if you could go down.
- Make safety plays to protect against bad suit breaks.
- Play in the safest contract for both games & part scores.
- Try to defeat the opponent's contract even if it gives up overtricks. The reward is greater than the risk!
- Bid all close games & slams, especially vulnerable. Only bid a grand slam if you can count 13 tricks.
- Don't compete too high for part scores.
- Don't double part score contracts unless a 2-trick set is practically guaranteed by tricks in your own hand.

Presentation available at www.unit143.org

Link in 299er Tournament Box on Home Page

Team Game Scoring

- Scored in IMPs (International Match Points) vs. Masterpoint scoring for Pairs
- IMPs are then converted to Victory Points
- Can be scored using the 20 or 30 Victory Point Scale, shown on inside left of ACBL team score sheet & on inside bottom of pairs score sheet
- Trend now is to use 20 point scale (makes team scores closer & more competitive)

Good Luck & Have Fun!