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This Week in Bridge

(334) Double Fits and Misfits – Adjustments to the LOTT

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Level: 1

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General

The ways that we use our cards to take tricks are extremely varied. Evaluating our hand's ability to take tricks is about more than just counting our HCP and the size of our trump fit. The most useful part of having a fit is that it usually helps turn small cards into winners. The more cards we have in a suit (the larger our fit), the easier it is to "set it up". The worse our fit is, the more difficult it is to turn small cards into winners. Since having a fit (beyond just our trump suit, which the LOTT takes into account) affects the number of tricks that we can take on a hand, we need to make adjustments to the Law of Total Tricks. We call this a double fit. Let's look at how double fits and misfits affect our bidding.

Double Fits

When we have both a trump fit and a fit in another suit (both being at least 8-cards) our hands become more offensively oriented. The second fit will help us take more tricks because it means we are able to produce tricks from our small cards in both the trump suit and this side suit.

Having a double fit also reduces our defensive values because the opponents can ruff our winners sooner. The larger fit we have in a suit, the more likely one of the opponents is to have shortness. For example, if we have a 9-card ♠ fit and a 9-card ♣ fit and we defend a ♥ contract, the best we can do is take two tricks in each suit (if they both split 2-2). It is much more likely that we only get three or even two total tricks in our suits on defense, since at least one of the opponents is likely to have a singleton.

Misfits

Just as having multiple fits (especially large ones) makes it easier for us to take tricks, the lack of a fit makes it more difficult to take tricks. When we do not have a fit, it becomes more difficult to develop our small (and even large) spot cards into tricks. This makes us far more dependent on HCP to produce tricks.

A hand with no fit, which we call a misfit, tends to take more tricks on defense than offense. This is because partner is likely to be short in our longest suit. That leaves the opponents with length in that suits and those cards are often losers.



When we do not have a fit, we often end up in notrump. This is not a good thing, but just a byproduct of not finding a Major suit fit. Notrump usually plays better when we have a minor suit fit. It is easier to win tricks when we have a long suit to set up. This gives us a way to take tricks other than with our honors. When the hand is a misfit, we often need more HCP in order to make 3NT, because these are our only resource for producing tricks.

When we are considering how to evaluate our hand in the face of a misfit, we need to adjust our values down based on our holding in partner's suit. If we have shortness in partner's suit, then that suit will be more difficult to set up and thus the hands are not likely to play as well as we would expect. Partner will slightly overbid their hand (because it will not play as well as normal) and so we need to downgrade our hand to compensate. *We subtract points from our hand for a misfit.*

- We subtract about one point for a singleton in partner's suit.
- We subtract about two points for a void in partner's suit.

These *adjusted values* will more accurately reflect the way that the two hands (ours and partner's) fit together.

Conclusion

Tricks are about more than just HCP. Tricks often come from fit. They are about fits of all kinds - trump fits, side suit fits, and double or triple fits. You need to consider more than just points when you are trying to evaluate your hand. Thus, you need to adjust your hand evaluation process metrics for these extra fits or lack of a fit. Whether you are using HCP, length points, support points, or the Law of Total Tricks, all of these evaluation techniques need to be adjusted for fit in order to properly evaluate your hand.