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(59) Hand Evaluation: Double Fits and Misfits

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General

There is more to trick taking (and Hand Evaluation) than just HCP and the size of our trump fit. The most useful part of a fit is that it generally helps make small cards into winners. The more cards we have in a suit the easier it is to set up. The worse our fit is (misfit) the more difficult it is to turn small cards into winners. Since fits (beyond just our trump suit) affect the number of tricks that we can take on a hand, we need to make adjustments to the Law of Total Tricks in order to take this into account.

Double Fits

When we have another fit outside of our trump fit this makes for a more offensively oriented hand. This side fit (called a *Double fit*) will help us take more tricks because it will give us a source of tricks to help get rid of our losers in the other suits. This side fit also helps us reduce our number of losers by producing ruffing values in the other suits (we have fewer cards left over in outside suits when we have so many cards in our two fits.)

The Double Fit reduces our defensive values because the opponents will ruff our winners sooner. This happens because our winners are more likely to be in the suits that we have more cards in – namely, our fits.

Misfits

Just as having lots of fit makes it easier for us to take tricks, the lack of fit makes it more difficult for us to take tricks. When we do not have a fit it becomes more difficult to set up our small cards to take tricks. Thus, we are left being dependent on HCP primarily to produce our tricks.

These misfit hands do tend to take more tricks on defense (are defensively oriented) because partner's shortness in our suit results in length in our suit by the opponents. Thus, the opponents end up having more losers in our suit.



When we have a misfit type hand we will often end up in Notrump – since this is where we often end up when we do not have a Major suit fit. This is not a good thing, but just a byproduct of not finding a Major suit fit. Notrump is better played when we have a minor suit fit – it is easier to take tricks with a suit to setup (more than just HCP to help us take tricks.)

When we are thinking about 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 the suit will be more difficult to setup and thus we know that partner's hand is not likely to play as well as they are expecting. Partner will then overbid their hand (because it is playing less well than normal) and so we need to underbid our hand to compensate. We subtract points from our hand for a misfit.

- We subtract one point for a singleton in partner's suit.
- We subtract 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 are about fit. They are about fits of all kinds -- Trump fits, Side Fits, and Double/Triple Fits. Think about more than just points when you are trying to evaluate your hand for tricks. Thus, we need to adjust our metrics for evaluating our hand based on these extra fits or lack of fits. Whether we use HCP, length points, or the Law of Total Tricks, these evaluation techniques all need to be adjusted in order to properly evaluate our hand.