

# **TRAVIS-T(ip) #1**

by Barbara Travis

## **MAKE USE OF DUMMY'S TRUMPS**

When you are first taught to play bridge, you are taught to draw trumps. You learn that if you don't draw trumps your opponents get to make undeserved tricks with their little trumps (and also your partner gets cross with you!).

After a few months of playing bridge, people suddenly realise they can use their trumps separately. However they are inclined to trump with their long trump suit in their own hand. This is usually an inappropriate use of the notion of trumping. I say that it makes you feel good but doesn't achieve anything. In fact, what it does achieve is to weaken your trump control of a hand. Let's look at a hand and see what happens:

<b>DUMMY</b>	<b>DECLARER</b>
<b>Q10x</b>	<b>AK9xx</b>
<b>xx</b>	<b>AKxxx</b>
<b>Axxx</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Axxx</b>	<b>xx</b>

You are playing in 4S on DK lead. People who have discovered ruffing tend to play as follows:

Trick 1: win DA

Trick 2: lead a diamond and trump it

Trick 3: go to dummy's CA

Trick 4: lead a diamond and trump it

Tricks 5-7: you now draw trumps, removing all the opposition trumps.

Unfortunately at this stage you also have no more trumps! Now you will only make two more tricks, the HA and HK, then the opponents win the remainder and you've gone down by 1 trick.

If, on the other hand, you learn to make use of DUMMY'S trumps rather than trumping with your own trumps, you will make more tricks in the long term. What you need to do is to identify DUMMY's short suit (outside trumps) rather than your short suit. Let's replay the hand above on that basis:

Trick 1: win DA – and stop and plan.

Question: "Does dummy have a short suit?" (I word it, "Have I got a job for dummy's trumps?")

Answer: Yes – hearts!

Trick 2: lead a heart to HA

Trick 3: HK, all follow (8 hearts have gone)

Trick 4: small heart, trumping with S10 if LHO has followed (trump as high as you can afford)

[If everyone followed 11 hearts have gone, making your last 2 hearts into winners.]

Trick 5: having completed your job for dummy's trumps you now draw trumps – SQ first

Tricks 6-7: finish drawing trumps with SA and SK

Tricks 8-9: lead your 2 small heart winners

Trick 10: lead to the CA

Tricks 11-12: you have 2 long spades (trumps)

Trick 13: your club loser

So you've just made 12 tricks instead of 9 tricks on the hand.

Think about the notion of using dummy's trumps this way:

You started the above hand with 5 trump tricks. If you trump with your long trumps you still take 5 trump tricks. But if you trump with dummy's shorter trumps you make 6 or 7 trump tricks.

<b>DUMMY</b>	<b>DECLARER</b>
<b>9xx</b>	<b>AKQJ10</b>
<b>AKx</b>	<b>xx</b>
<b>xx</b>	<b>AKx</b>
<b>xxxx</b>	<b>xxx</b>

You are playing in 4S:

If you trump a heart in your hand you do not give yourself any extra trump tricks (you started with 5 trump tricks and still have 5 trump tricks).

If you trump a diamond in dummy you give yourself an extra trump trick (you now have 6 trump tricks).

### **DECLARER PLAY PLANNING:**

1. When playing a suit contract, you should start by asking yourself:
  - a. *Have I got a job for dummy's trumps?*
  - b. This entails identifying dummy's short suit (not your own shortage).
  - c. When you decide you do have a job for dummy's trumps, you must NOT lead trumps until you have finished doing the ruffing in dummy.
2. So find dummy's shortage - or create a shortage in dummy:
  - a. You may have to lose a trick or two in dummy's short suit.
  - b. You may have to 'move the shortage' from one suit to another.
3. If you can afford to trump high, do so. Don't risk an over-trumping if you have spare high trumps in dummy.
4. Note: Take any discards before losing the lead!
5. After you have taken ALL the ruffs you need in dummy, THEN draw trumps.
6. If you have no need to trump losers in dummy – just draw trumps.
7. Then cash your winners or create your winners.

What this does, in effect, is 'find your losers' for you and you are converting losers to winners by trumping them. You hear people tell you to count your losers in a suit contract but it's hard to do so when you first play bridge. By identifying where you have a length and dummy shortage, you are actually 'counting losers'. By trumping them you are eliminating those losers but if you've already drawn trumps you can't trump those losers.

### **MORE EXAMPLES:**

<b>DUMMY</b>	<b>DECLARER</b>
<b>KQxx</b>	<b>AJ109x</b>
<b>xx</b>	<b>AJxx</b>
<b>Jxx</b>	<b>AK</b>
<b>Jxx</b>	<b>xx</b>

You are in 4S and the opponents lead top clubs. You can trump the third club. Have you planned how to play the hand?

If you 'count your losers' you will see 3 possible heart losers together with the 2 club losers you already have. Then again, you can look at dummy and see a heart shortage (see – it's the other way to find those losers that you aren't too good at identifying). Rather than drawing trumps and then working on the hand, you should plan to trump those little hearts with those big spades.

\* If you draw trumps and they are 3-1, then you will only have one trump left in dummy to trump 2 losers! \*  
 So once you have trumped that club, lead the HA and then lose a heart (or duck a heart first – either is okay). Then you will trump TWO hearts before drawing trumps. You have to complete the job for dummy's trumps before you finish removing the opponents trumps or you will run out of trumps in dummy.

On the next hand the opponents opened 1H and raised to 2H before you made the sensible bid of 4S. It's a 'sensible bid' because you cannot expect many points from partner if you think about it (there are only 40 points in the pack) and so you can hardly expect partner to participate in the auction:

<b>DUMMY</b>	<b>DECLARER</b>
<b>J2</b>	<b>AKQ10xxx</b>
<b>J10xx</b>	<b>void</b>
<b>109xx</b>	<b>Jx</b>
<b>xxx</b>	<b>AKxx</b>

You are playing in 4S and you get the expected heart lead, which you trump. What is your plan?

You always have 2 diamond losers and you have 1 or 2 club losers. Can you do anything about either of these suits? In diamonds you simply cannot avoid the 2 losers; in clubs perhaps you can avoid a second loser.

One option is to rely on clubs breaking 3-3, which is anti-percentage (odds of that happening are in fact 35.5%). The second option is to identify clubs as dummy's short suit in terms of your hand and plan to trump the fourth club! That means you cannot afford to lead trumps or you will have no trumps left in dummy.

Trick 1: H lead, trumped

Trick 2: CA

Trick 3: CK

Trick 4: lead a club and lose it. If clubs break 3-3 all is well and your last club is a winner. If clubs have broken 4-2 you pat yourself on the back because you are going to trump the last club (loser). If clubs are 5-1 you could not make the hand!

Trick 5: astute defenders will lead a trump – seeing that you are making a void in dummy and therefore planning to trump... Make sure you win any trump lead in your own hand and keep the SJ; after all if you try to trump with the S2 they can easily over-trump you, whereas the SJ is high.

Trick 6: lead the losing club and trump with SJ.

Trick 7: get back to hand ASAP, i.e. hearts, and remove any remaining trumps.

Now you made 8 spade tricks – 7 in hand, 1 in dummy – and 2 club tricks, making your contract.

<b>DUMMY</b>	<b>DECLARER</b>
<b>AQxxx</b>	<b>KJ10</b>
<b>10xx</b>	<b>Axx</b>
<b>Jxxxx</b>	<b>xx</b>
<b>void</b>	<b>AKJxx</b>

This hand is from the recent Pairs with an Expert. The results are varied, and largely depend on whether the expert or non-expert ended up as declarer! The experts made 11 tricks and the non-experts made 8-9 tricks. Let's see why.

After a 1NT opening by the big hand, they ended up playing in spades. (Sometimes the declarer was the weaker hand if partner opened 1C!)

This time, though, the 'dummy hand' is in fact declarer, with the shorter trumps. So you need to sort this theme out – and after a transfer sequence, usually the declarer has the shorter trumps so is the 'dummy's trumps'.

Trick 1: heart lead, win with HA

Trick 2: CA, discarding a heart loser

Trick 3: CK, discarding a heart loser

Trick 4: start the job for dummy's trumps – your short suit is diamonds, so lead a diamond and lose it

Trick 5: win whatever they lead – they should lead a trump to make it more difficult for you to ruff

Trick 6: lead another diamond and lose it

Trick 7: another trump back, win in dummy so you are in the right hand for trumping purposes

Trick 8: lead a diamond and trump it. The diamonds break 3-3, so now dummy's diamonds are winners (11 diamonds have gone)

Trick 9: return to dummy ASAP to remove the last trump and now you have the remaining tricks.

Making 11 tricks.

Of course, if you forgot that your hand was the 'dummy's trumps' then you probably trumped some clubs or hearts in dummy. That made dummy run out of trumps before you had the diamond suit established so you only made your 8 top tricks (or perhaps 9 along the way, as many did).

In summary, if you are playing a suit contract, start off by training yourself to see if you can/need to do any job with dummy's trumps. And if you are playing bridge and hear your opposition declarer say to themselves, "Have I got a job for dummy's trumps?" you know they have been to my lessons!

Happy bridging and may you make more tricks as declarer.