



MARTY BERGEN'S

SECRETS TO WINNING BRIDGE

Number 4

Hand Evaluation

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Good Distribution in Suit Contracts

"Players who count points and don't take note of distribution are a menace."

Terence Reese, legendary player and writer

Certain distributions are wonderful, and should cause you to upgrade your hand as soon as you pick up your cards. Here are a few of my favorites.

5-4-3-1 is a very underrated distribution.

You have three suits you're willing to play in, and your 5-card suit will provide a source of tricks.

"5-5 come alive." "6-4, bid more."

These hands get even better after you find a fit. You'll get 10 cards in two suits only 10% of the time!

 1♦ – 1♥
 2♥ – ???

1. ♠ A 10 9 3 ♥ A 10 8 5 2 ♦ 7 6 4 ♣ 4

2. ♠ 6 ♥ K 10 9 7 2 ♦ 7 4 ♣ A 8 6 5 3

3. ♠ 8 6 ♥ Q 7 5 4 3 2 ♦ A 10 7 5 ♣ 9

8 HCP; 7 HCP; 6 HCP. So what? Bid 4♥ with all three hands. In addition to trump length, what do these hands have in common? A lovely singleton. They're not rare, but only 1/3 of your hands have one.

Of course, if I'm delighted to pick up a singleton, it stands to reason that I am passionate about voids. And I am! **Hands with voids take a lot of tricks.** I refer to this as "the magic of voids."

In so many deals involving experts and non-experts alike, the same theme rings true over and over again.

Players with voids don't bid enough. And because only 5% of your hands will include a void, when you do get one, not only should you be super-aggressive, but you can even be passionate. Once you find a fit, how many points should this passion translate into? I'll address this on pages 21-22.

Nine is a lot better than Eight

I have always maintained that the most underrated factor in bridge is the 9th trump. We all learned: "You need eight trumps to be happy in a suit." However, on many hands, if you really want to be happy, you'd better have nine.

No declarer is happy if a defender has four trumps. **This annoying split is three times more likely with eight trumps than it is when you have nine.**

Here are 3 examples of the power of the 9th trump.

1. 1♠ – 1NT
 2♥ – 3♥
 ???

♠ A K 6 5 4 ♥ 10 8 7 3 2 ♦ A 7 ♣ 3

Bid 4♥. Your hearts are not very imposing, but knowing that your side has at least nine means that it is not a problem. In fact, **on this auction, opener should bid 4♥ whenever he has a fifth heart.**

2. You open 1♠ and partner makes a 4-card limit raise (whether a standard 3♠ or a Bergen Raise).

♠ A 9 7 5 3 ♥ A Q 10 7 ♦ 5 ♣ 6 4 3

Some of you wouldn't have opened. Fair enough. However, that is no longer relevant. You should bid 4♠ like a shot. **After partner's 4-card limit raise, if you have a singleton or a void, don't pass.**

3. West	W	E	East
♠ K J 8 6	1NT	2♥	♠ 10 9 7 4 3
♥ A 5 4	3♠	4♠	♥ 7 3
♦ 6 2	Pass		♦ A J 7 5 3
♣ A K 7 2			♣ 5

You *don't* need 17 HCP to jump after a transfer. All you need to "Support with Support" are four trumps and a hand that isn't soft.