The Law of Total Tricks

WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO USE IT

"The total number of tricks available to both sides on a given deal is equal to the sum of the number of trumps of each side's best fit"

Example 1 /1b
Example 2 /2b

Analysis for 18 Total Tricks

(Tricks) : Contract Bid : Result		
(10) 4♠= **-420**	Clearly, bidding 5♥ on example 2 was a mistake. The law suggests it is always a losing action.	(8) 5♥X -3 **-500**
(9) 4♠ -1 **+50**		(9) 5♥X -2 **-300**
(8) 4♠ -2 **+100**		(10) 5♥X -1 **-100**

When Does The Law Apply

Competitive Partscore Auctions

- When the HCP are evenly balanced, trump length/strength dictate the success of various contracts

Count trumps via bidding rules & negative inferences

LOTT Corollaries

- Raise to your level of trumps
  - 8 trumps = 2 level
  - 9 trumps = 3 level
  - 10 trumps = 4 level

- If you have a fit, the opponents almost always do, too
  - Here is the one small exception. Notice how much “work” goes into this example

More Adjuncts to LOTT

Consider Penalty Doubles w/ 4 Trumps

The 5 Level Belongs to the Opponents

4 Spades Over 4 Hearts
(when the law says so – here it says no)

Bid In Doubt On Extreme Hands

Adjustments

- Don’t bid beyond the “level of trumps” without
  - Strong trump suits
  - Wild distribution / 7+ card trump suit
  - Favorable vulnerability when bidding on is either makeable or a better sacrifice

Consider this as “adding” ½-1 trick to the total trick count

More Adjustments

Mentally deduct ½-1 trick for

- Flat Shape
- QJs in their suits
- Really weak trump suits

What About Notrump?

Add 7 tricks to your total number of trumps when the opponents intend to play in NT

This works provided that the “NT” side has the same tricks in both contracts

Adjustments given for long running suits, distribution

Examples of Bidding Application LOTT

Preempts/Sacrifices

Overcalling Opponent’s 1NT

Balancing

Support Doubles

Negative Doubles

QUESTIONS?