Notrump Techniques

Maintaining Those Dummy Entries

When you are declaring a notrump contract your first task after the opening lead, is to plan the play. You count winners in a notrump contact and determine what techniques to use to get the needed tricks. But an equally important element to consider is whether you have the necessary entries to each hand in order to take advantage of the tricks you counted on winning. That is the topic of the eight boards in today's lesson.

Board 1 (PAB23-1) Dealer is North; declarer is South

The modern way of showing a balanced hand of 25 points is to open 2 ♣ and rebid 3NT over responder's reply. This becomes the final contract. In this hand. West will lead the ♣3.   Declarer has 3 top tricks: 2 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 1 club (given the lead). The other 3 tricks must come from dummy's diamonds. But how to get there? The only entry to the dummy Is the ♣10. If declarer thoughtlessly plays a low card under East's ♣A, there is no way to get there. He must ditch either the king or queen under East's A. That is, he unblocks the clubs before he unblocks the diamonds. He will win East's heart return with the ♥A, unblock the ♦AK and lead a low club twice. West can't stop him from getting there.

Board 2 (PAB20-5) Dealer is East; declarer is West

East opens a preemptive 3♦. It might be difficult to find your way to 6NT, but one way is for West to respond 5NT. This is called the Grand Slam Force. He is asking East to bid 7♦ with 2 of the top 3 honors; otherwise, bid 6♦. After East's 6♦ rebid, West corrects to the higher scoring 6NT. Assume North leads the ♠Q, the top of his sequence. West counts top tricks. There is 2 spades, 3 hearts, 2 diamonds and 1 club. He needs 4 more tricks and they must come from diamonds. Again, there is an entry problem. If the diamonds split 2-2, there is no problem. A more likely split is 3-1. Although, the common practice is to lead the high card from the short side first, this is a case where that would spill defeat. Declarer must lead a low diamond to dummy's ♦9. If South wins the ♦Q,

declarer can win the return and overtake his ♦K with the ♦A, running the diamonds. If South ducks the first diamond, declarer leads a low diamond to this ♦K and forces his way into the dummy using the dummy's ♥10.

Board 3 (PAB 36-7) Dealer is South; declarer is South

WEST	NORT	EAST	SOUT
			P
P	2♣	P	2♦
P	3NT	P	P
P			

North
♠AK3
♥AK54
♦K752
♣AK

West
♠Q1096
♥6
♦QJ10
♣86543

East
♠J82
♥Q9873
♦A98
♣72

South
♠754
♥J102
♦643
♣QJ109

3NT North
NS: 0
EW: 0

South opens 2♣ and rebids 3NT again to show the big 25-27 point hand. This time West leads the ♥7. Standard leads in the 6-8 range are very telling. Using the Rule of 11, declarer can tell how many cards higher than 7 are in the East hand. He subtracts 7 from 11 and gets 4. There are 4 cards higher than the seven in the North, East and South hands combined. Since he sees all 4 of them, he knows that east cannot beat the dummy's ♥10. However, there is a bigger problem. He has only 8 top tricks and the clubs are blocked. In order to use the extra 2 clubs in the dummy he needs an entry. Therefore, he must ignore the "gift" of the opening lead and win that trick with the ♥A. Now he can unblock the clubs and force his way into the dummy by leading the two small hearts from his hand.

Board 4 (PAB 36-8) Dealer is West; declarer is West

WEST	NORT	EAST	SOUT
2NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

North
♠KJ74
♥J9
♦K9754
♣82

West
♠AQ105
♥AK63
♦A82
♣K4

East
♠63
♥52
♦QJ10
♣QJ10763

South
♠982
♥Q10874
♦63
♣A95

3NT West
NS: 0
EW: 0

West opens 2NT and his partner raises to 3NT. North leads the ♦5. Declarer has only 4 top tricks: 1 spade, 2 hearts and 1 diamond. Obviously, he must get the additional 5 tricks from clubs. However, the opponents will surely duck the first ♣K lead. Now he will need a side suit entry to the dummy to run the clubs. This must come from the diamonds. The ♦10 will hold the first trick, but declarer must overtake it with the ♦A. Now he can use the two low diamonds in his hand to force his way into the dummy.

Board 5 (PAB 37-3) Dealer is North; declarer is South

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N  North
   ♠KJ9
   ♥K763
   ♦KQ2
   ♣943

W  West                 E  East
   ♠762                    ♠Q1054
   ♥542                    ♥QJ1098
   ♦AJ10                   ♦85
   ♣KQJ10                  ♣76

S  South
   ♠A83
   ♥A
   ♦97643
   ♣A852
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WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
P	1♥	P	2♣
P	3NT	P	P
P			

3NT North
NS: 0
EW: 0

North open 1♦ and rebids 2♣ after South's 1♥ response. South has an opening hand himself and jumps to 3NT. West leads the ♥Q. This has the most potential for the defense, despite South having bid the suit. Declarer has 2 spades, 2 hearts and 1 club. He needs 4 more tricks. The diamond suit looks like the most viable. If declarer leads a diamond from the dummy and goes back to the dummy for another finesse, East should take the second diamond. Then he should lead the ♣K to knock out the dummy's last entry and the declarer's diamonds get blocked in his hand. He used the entries in the wrong order. On the third trick he should go to the dummy with the ♣A and take the second finesse. East can win and cash his 3 clubs, but declarer will win the next trick, cash the ♦Q and use the ♠A to get to the dummy to run the remaining diamonds. When you have two entries to the dummy, use the "removable" one first.

Board 6 (PAB 36-4) Dealer is East; declarer is East

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N  North
   ♠AKJ4
   ♥AJ
   ♦AKQ105
   ♣A8

W  West                 E  East
   ♠85                     ♠Q972
   ♥K8653                  ♥Q92
   ♦J974                   ♦8
   ♣KQ                     ♣J10964

S  South
   ♠1063
   ♥1074
   ♦632
   ♣7532
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WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		P	2♣
P	2♦	P	3NT
P	P	P	

3NT North
NS: 0
EW: 0

This is another case of a 25-27 point hand opening 2♣ and rebidding 3NT. This time, the lead is the ♣J, the top of a sequence. Declarer counts 7 top tricks. He needs the two diamonds. He starts the diamonds from the top and gets the bad news on the ♦K. If he can get to the dummy he can take the marked finesse. He can do this using the ♠10. He should lead the ♠J from his hand. If North or South covers with the ♠Q, the ♠10 becomes an entry. If both defenders duck, declarer only needs one more diamond. He should return to diamonds and hope the defenders can't take enough tricks to defeat the contract.

Board 7 (PAB 40-8) Dealer is South; declarer is South

	N North		WEST	NORT	EAST	SOUT
	♠A54		P	2NT	P	3♦
D **8**	♥K2		P	3♥	P	3NT
	♦AK87		P	P	P	
	♣AQ63					

W West		E East
♠83		♠K9762
♥A764		♥83
♦QJ109		♦63
♣J92		♣K1085

	S South
	♠QJ10
3NT North	♥QJ1095
NS: 0	♦542
EW: 0	♣74

South opens 2NT and North transfers into hearts by bidding 3♦. South accepts the transfer, but when North shows it was only a 5-card heart suit by rebidding 3NT, South passes. West leads the ♠6. East can't beat the dummy's ♠10. Declarer knows, by now, that the only way to the dummy after the hearts are set up is by leading up to the ♠QJ. He must win this first trick with the ♠A. Now when East wins the second heart, declarer will have a way to run the rest of the hearts.

Board 8 (PAB 26-1) Dealer is West; declarer is East

D	N North		WEST	NORT	EAST	SOUT
	♠K542			P	3♣	P
1	♥765		3NT	P	P	P
	♦Q865					
	♣43					

W West		E East
♠A109		♠QJ8
♥QJ1042		♥3
♦AK94		♦32
♣K		♣AJ109872

	S South
	♠763
3NT West	♥AK98
NS: 0	♦J107
EW: 0	♣Q65

West opens a preemptive 3♣.This is optimistically converted to 3NT by East. South leads the ♠2. The declarer has 2 spades (given the lead) 2 diamonds and 2 clubs. The rest of the tricks can come from clubs if he can maintain entries to the dummy. Here again, he must eschew the gift of the first spade and win the trick with the ♠A. Now, he must overtake the ♣K with the ♣A and run the clubs until an opponent takes the ♣Q. He can now force his way into the dummy through the spades to use the rest of the clubs.

In summary, the plan the declarer makes must always include a nod to the entry situation. If dummy has a long suit and few honor cards, declarer must consider how he is going to get to them after they are set up. Often it's a case of maintain those dummy entries.