

Funbridge Masterclass: Be Hungry for Overtricks at Matchpoints

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Ways to Improve Your Matchpoint Scores

- Respect the vulnerability in competition
 - Avoid overbidding with balanced hands when vulnerable.
 - Be very aggressive to compete when non vulnerable
- Double the opponents more often
 - When you are entitled to a plus score, do not let the opponents steal from you. It's important to double them to cover for your plus.
- Prioritize plus scores over bidding aggressive games and slams
 - The field does not bid games with fewer than 25 points or slams with fewer than 33 points. You are better off staying low and winning the hand in the play.
- Be Hungry for Overtricks
 - When you are in a normal contract, do not settle for just making. Rather than setting a goal for making, instead focus on getting as many tricks as possible.



No Need to Bid Close Games

It is better to stay low to secure your plus score and focus on taking overtricks.

Should We Invite?

WEST

NORTH

EAST

YOU

	1♣	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	??

♠ **QJ43**

♥ **A42**

♦ **AT76**

♣ **T2**

At Most 25 High Card Points

When partner rebids 1NT they are showing 12-14 points. 25 point games are usually touch and go. They often need a finesse or some good breaks in order to make.

We are trained to get to 25 point games because of the big game bonus. At IMPs, when scoring difference matters, that is important.

At matchpoints there is much less incentive. Instead, you are usually better off staying low and trying to take some overtricks.

Game contracts with 25 Points and two balanced hands will usually be at best a touch-and-go contract

Correct Bid:

Pass

Win the Hand in the Play

Pair		Contract	By	Result	Score		Matchpoints	
N-S	E-W				N-S	E-W	N-S	E-W
1	1	1N	N	=	90		2	6
2	3	1N	N	+1	120		5.5	2.5
3	5	3N	N	=	400		8	0
4	7	1N	N	=	90		2	6
5	9	1N	N	=	90		2	6
6	2	1N	N	+2	150		7	1
7	4	2H	N	=	110		4	4
8	6	1N	N	+1	120		5.5	2.5
9	8	3N	N	-1		50	0	8

This traveler is a typical matchpoint struggle where North opens 1NT showing 15-17 points, and South must decide if they should invite with their bad eight point hand.

As you can see, only two pairs reached 3NT. The one who made it earned a top, while the one who failed got a zero. In contrast, North/South pair six earned 87.5% for taking 9 tricks without risking a zero. This illustrates one of the key factors when playing matchpoints: every trick matters!

You don't need to bid aggressive games to do well, and you have to take every trick on defense, no matter how unbeatable the contract may be.

Should We Invite?

WEST

NORTH

EAST

YOU

	1♣	P	1♥
P	2♥	P	??

♠ QT4

♥ JT42

♦ AQ87

♣ Q2

25HCP + 8 Card Fit at Best

This is another similar spot that I just love to pass.

We have at most an 8 card heart fit and at most 25 HCP between us. This means game will be very close to make.

If we invite, we risk playing in 3♥ down 1 or 4♥ down 1. By stopping in 2♥ we secure our plus score and then can focus on taking as many tricks as we can.

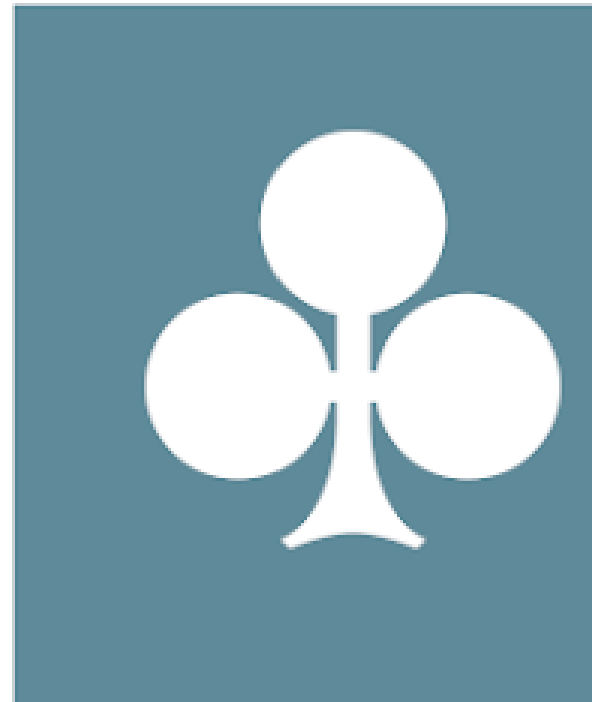
The key to both this hand and the previous one is being balanced. With more distribution you still want to push to 25 point games.

Correct Bid:

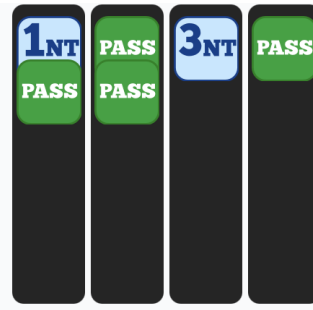
Pass

Stop Settling for “Making My Contract”

When you are in a normal contract, you should have a hungry mentality to get as many overtricks as you possibly can. Taking more tricks is the number one way to improve your scores at matchpoints.



If its better than 50-50. Its worth the risk.



We have 9 top tricks (2 spades, 2 hearts, 1 club and 4 diamonds). We look for where we can get more.

Clubs is the only suit we can find extra tricks. We start by finessing a club which will lose to an honor. West will then continue hearts knocking out our last stopper. At this point, with hearts wide open, should we finesse clubs again?

The answer is yes. The likelihood of one of two club honors being with east is 75%. This means that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time we will take extra tricks and only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time we will take fewer tricks. This is a bet you want to take every single time.

We also aren't even sure the opponents have more than 2 heart tricks available even in the worst case with west holding the KQ of clubs.



Use the Bidding to Assess Risk

Their heart lead is going to knock out our only heart stopper. When we count our tricks we have 9 easy winners and a potential spade finesse for 9. Is it worth the risk?

The answer is 100% yes. If we count our total points we have 27. East opened the bidding and therefore must have the king of spades.

When you have a finesse available that risks your contract, it's important not to just default to not taking it. Instead look for clues that may make the finesse more likely to succeed. In this hand we use the opponent's bidding to decide whether to take a finesse that risks your contract.

The diagram illustrates a bridge hand with the following components:

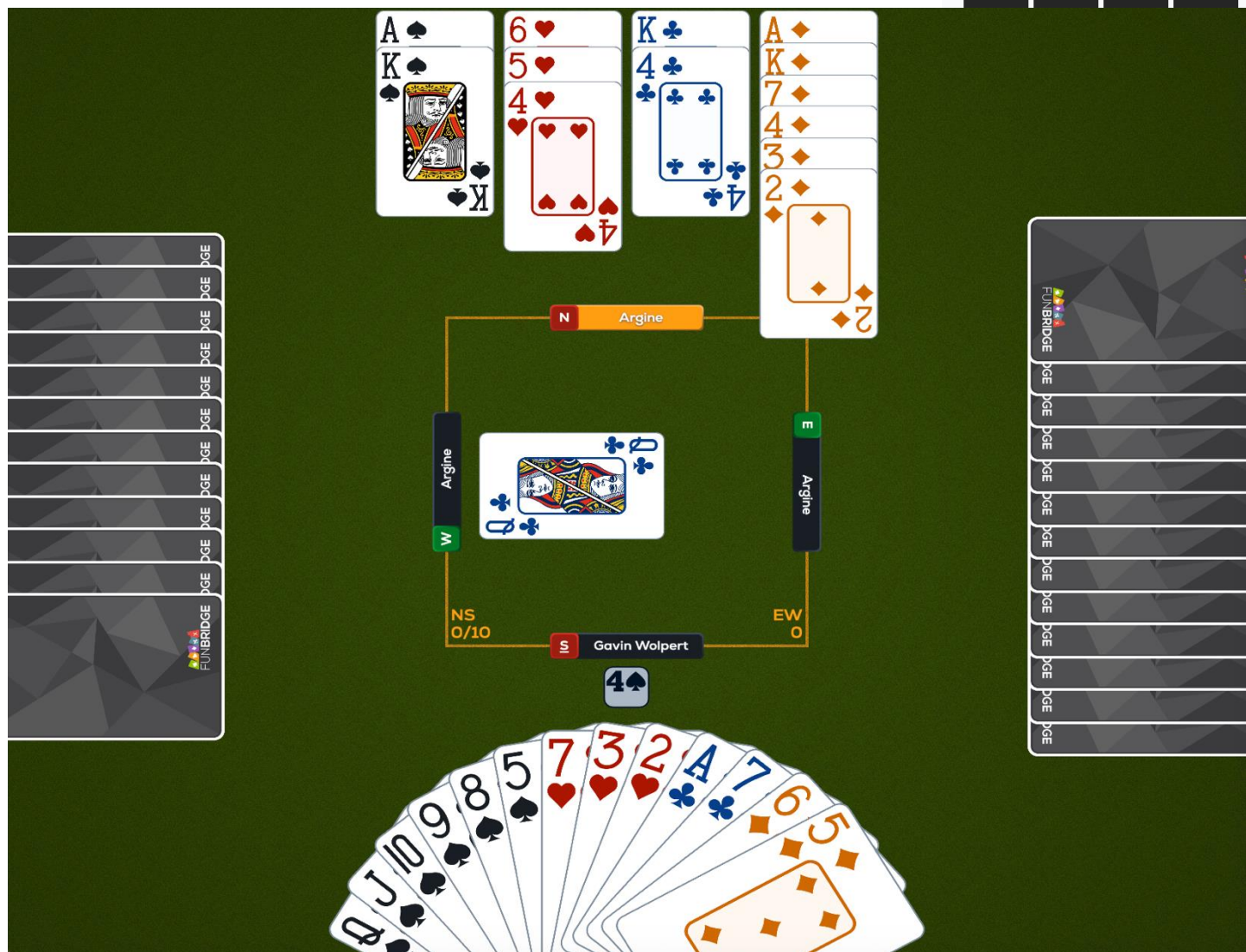
- Hand Layout:**
 - North (Argine):** 5♠, 4♠, 3♠, 2♥, A♣, K♣, 6♣, 5♣, 4♣, K♦, 8♦, 7♦, 7♦.
 - South (Gavin Wolpert):** A♠, Q♠, 2♠, A♥, 7♥, Q♣, J♣, 7♣, 2♣, A♦, 6♦, 3♦, 2♦.
- Bidding:**
 - North: 1NT (PASS)
 - West: PASS
 - North: 3NT (PASS)
 - East: 1♥ (PASS)
- Trick Count:** NS 0/9, EW 0.
- Lead:** A♥ (Heart lead).
- Trick 1:** A♥ (South) vs K♥ (North).
- Trick 2:** 7♥ (South) vs 2♥ (North).
- Trick 3:** Q♣ (South) vs J♣ (North).
- Trick 4:** J♣ (South) vs 4♣ (North).
- Trick 5:** 7♣ (South) vs 5♣ (North).
- Trick 6:** 2♣ (South) vs 6♣ (North).
- Trick 7:** A♦ (South) vs K♦ (North).
- Trick 8:** 6♦ (South) vs 8♦ (North).
- Trick 9:** 3♦ (South) vs 7♦ (North).
- Trick 10:** 2♦ (South) vs 7♦ (North).

Be Hungry for Overtricks.

If you are playing imps and your goal is to make the contract you want to reduce all risk of going down. To have nearly zero risk for your contract, you must win the king of clubs, cash the two spades from dummy and then cross to your ace of clubs to finish drawing trump. You then lose 3 hearts.

At matchpoints we want to take the maximum number of tricks, which in this case is all 13 of them. In order to take all the tricks, we need to set up the diamonds, draw trump and then return to dummy. We must instead win the ace of clubs at trick 1, cross to the AK of spades. Then we play the ace, king of diamonds, ruff a diamond and draw trumps. Finally, we return to the king of clubs which we left as an entry to enjoy the diamonds.

In order to take the overtricks, we needed to risk the king of diamonds being ruffed. 3-2 break = 68%



Plan with Greed.

We want to adopt a planning process that focusses on taking as many tricks as we can. Avoid the thought “I am in 2♠, I need 8 tricks”.

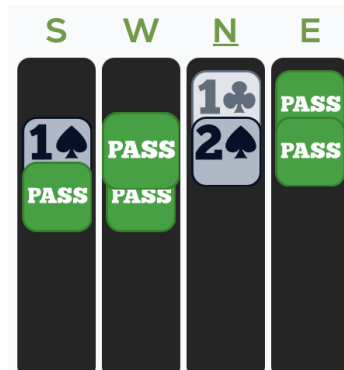
In trump contracts, I focus on counting my losers in the long trump hand. Here we have 3 heart losers, 1 club, 1 diamond and we don’t know about spades.

We can’t avoid losing at least one heart and one diamond. The club loser is avoidable, either by finessing it, or more safely by discarding on the 3rd diamond. Two of our heart losers can be avoided by trumping them in dummy.

We need to make sure we knock out the ♦A before they play a club. We also need to make sure we play a heart while we still have two trumps in dummy.

With those thoughts in mind we plan our order. First knock out the diamond so we can throw our club away. Next we play a heart before drawing trump. This ensures they cannot draw a 3rd trump from dummy. Once we have lost a heart, we can draw trump when we regain the lead and start ruffing our last two heart losers.

Focus your energy on avoidable losers.



A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of several concentric, overlapping circles in various shades of green, creating a thick, organic ring-like shape.

Declarer Play Important Points to Remember

- Build a thought process that is about getting rid of as many losers as you can (or taking as many tricks as you can).
 - Some losers are unavoidable. Once you see that a loser cannot be ruffed or discarded, you can focus your energy elsewhere. This will help you have a more efficient planning process.
- Be willing to risk your contract for the right price.
 - If you are in a normal contract, any overtrick that is more than 50% likely to succeed is a worthwhile gamble. If you have an edge, take it!
 - If you have already gained a trick, perhaps from a favorable lead, then you should be a little more careful about risking your already good result.
- Listen to the Bidding. It can guide you on whether to risk tricks to try to take more tricks.