

With Long Trumps, Bid More – with John Koch

Hypothesis

With long trumps and *good distribution*, plan to bid more. Ten trumps and 20 high-card points or less are often enough for game. For this reason you should discard your preconceptions about point requirements for game, or revise them.

The Evidence

(1) ♠ 6	♠ 10 5 4 3	Op.	Resp.
♥ K 9 7 6 5 3	♥ A 10 8 4 2	1♥	4♥
♦ 3	♦ J 8 5		
♣ A K 9 7 6	♣ 2		

Fifteen combined points between the hands but plenty for 11 tricks.

(2) ♠ K 10 8 2	♠ A J 7 6 4 3
♥ A Q 8 2	♥ 9 5 2
♦ 10	♦ 8 7 3
♣ Q 9 3 2	♣ 2

South	West	North	You
1♦	Dbl	2♣	4♠

This time there are sixteen points in the two hands but the contract needs only a successful finesse against the opening bidder for game.

(3) West	East
♠ K 10 9 8 4 3	♠ A Q 6 5
♥ Q 10 8 4	♥ 3
♦ K 9	♦ 5 4
♣ 3	♣ 10 9 7 6 5 2

West	North	East	South
1♠	Dbl	3♠	1♦
4♠	Dbl	All Pass	4♥

The diamond ace was right and the defense did not lead trumps early, so four spades made easily. Game on a combined 14 points, with four wasted.

Ten-card fits also justify bidding to the four-or five-level in a minor.

(4) West	East
♠ 10 8 7 5	♠ 3
♥ 6	♥ J 7 5 3
♦ A Q J 3	♦ 9 4
♣ A 9 7 3	♣ K J 10 8 5 4

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	2♥
Dbl	Rdbl	4♣	4♥
5♣	Dbl	All Pass	

The ♦K was with South, so five diamonds made. Sixteen points is enough for a freely-bid five-level contract.

Ten-card fits play wonderfully in slam. Here is a hand Paolo Ranaldi and I played at Rochester:

(5)	♠ A 7 3 2
	♥ J 7 4
	♦ 6 4 3
	♣ 9 7 2
♦K led	
	♠ 4
	♥ A K 10 9 8 3 2
	♦ A
	♣ K Q 10 3

South	West	North	East
1♣ (strong)	1♦	Dbl (5 points)	2♦
3♥	4♦	4♥	Pass
4NT	5♦	Pass (1 ace)	Pass
6♥	All Pass		

The ♦A won the first trick, but unfortunately West showed out on the ♥A. I crossed to the ♠A, and led ♥7 to discourage a cover, and East ducked. Now the ♣10 was finessed to West's ace. I ruffed the diamond return and played on clubs. The jack fell doubleton, so the ♣9 became the twelfth trick. Had East had ♠Jxxx, the hand

would still have made (after he ducked the heart) by ruffing the fourth club in dummy. The ten-card fit resulted in a 21-point slam.

The above slam is great if North's ace was in clubs. It became dicey when his ace proved to be in spades and trumps broke 3-0. But here is a 23-point slam from the 2008 Beijing World Bridge Games:

- (6) ♠ A 9
 ♥ K 10 9 8 7
 ♦ 7
 ♣ K Q 10 9 5
- ♠ Q 5
 ♥ A Q 6 3 2
 ♦ 6 5 3
 ♣ A 7 2

Fantoni and Nunes for Italy reached slam easily for a 13-IMP gain.

Thesis

The theme here is that 5-5 or 6-4 combinations are incredibly powerful. Bidders should go out of their way to identify these fits and bid them to the hilt if they have side singletons.

Direct Jump to Four

A key benefit of five-card major-suit openings is identifying big trump fits immediately. When partner opens one of a major and you have 5 cards in his suit, it is almost always right to jump to four of his suit immediately *so long as you do not have strong prospects for slam*.

Eli Culbertson established these requirements for a direct jump in his *Blue Book* in 1943:

- 1 to 1½ honor tricks;
- 5 or 6-card trump support;
- singleton or void in the hand.

Here are examples from Culbertson's *Blue Book*:

- (7) ♠ 6 ♠ 9 8 6 5 3 2 ♦ 5 ♣ K Q 6 5 4
- (8) ♠ Q 8 7 5 2 ♥ 6 ♦ A 7 6 5 3 ♣ 8 2
- (9) ♠ 10 8 6 5 3 2 ♥ — ♦ K 8 6 ♣ 9 8 6 2

Charles Goren simplified these rule, requiring five trumps and a singleton and setting a top limit of 9 high card points.

Here is a hand from his *Goren's New Bridge Complete* (1958):

- (10) ♠ 7 ♥ K J 6 5 3 ♦ Q J 10 4 2 ♣ 3 2

Modern bidders have relaxed even these standards. Here are three examples from the 2008 Beijing World Championship:

- (11) ♠ 9 7 6 5 2 ♥ 5 3 ♦ Q J 7 5 4 ♣ 5

Partner opens one spade. Three RHOs double, one passes. You bid four spades in every instance.

- (12) ♠ Q 6 5 4 ♥ Q J 8 6 3 ♦ — ♣ J 7 6 5

Partner opens on heart on a 5-3-3-2 eleven-count. All four men and women finalists raised to four hearts with this hand. The opponents can make five diamonds for +600 but can't conveniently enter the auction.

- (13) ♠ 10 8 ♥ Q 10 9 5 3 ♦ Q 9 5 2 ♣ A 9

Seven of the eight competitors jumped to four hearts. The singleton requirement has gone by the boards. Everyone makes it, once doubled. Four spades by the opponents goes down one but the sacrifice is hard to find at the four level.

Overcall Light Hands with Good Suits

It is necessary for partnerships to have bidding mechanisms to show their ten-card combinations. One way is to overcall good suits even without much on the side. In "Mike's Bridge Lesson" in the April 2010 *Bulletin*, Mike Lawrence advocates *against* overcalling an opposing one club opening with this hand:

- (14) ♠ A Q J 9 8 ♥ 4 3 ♦ 8 7 3 ♣ 9 3 2

He called the following hand a "very minimum one heart overcall:"

- (15) ♠ 6 3 ♥ A K J 9 4 ♦ 7 6 3 2 ♣ 7 3

suits. You should also have firm agreements when the opponents have bid two suits and you have length in the unbid suits. Assume this auction:

North	Partner	South	You
1♥	Pass	2♣	?

There are three possibilities to show two-suiters:

- Double = undefined suit lengths and good strength
- Michaels = two-suiter with 7 losers
- Two notrump = two-suiter with 6- losers

Both vul.	♠ K 9 7 3	
	♥ Q J 7 3	
(14)	♦ J 3	
	♣ A K 7	
♠ Q 6		♠ 8
♥ A K 8 5 2		♥ 6
♦ K Q 10 8 7		♦ A 9 6 4 2
♣ 5		♣ Q J 10 6 4 2
	♠ A J 10 5 4 2	
	♥ 10 9 4	
	♦ 5	
	♣ 9 8 3	

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	2♠
2NT	3♠	5♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Over South's weak jump shift, West has two choices: two notrump to show the red suits with 6- losers, or three clubs with the reds and 7 losers. North competes and East shows his 11+-point hand by jumping to five diamonds, which is an easy make.

No one vul.	♠ A K 8 7	(15)
	♥ K Q J 10 3	
	♦ Q	
	♣ 10 6 4	
♠ Q J 10 5 2		♠ 6
♥ 6		♥ 9 8 7 4
♦ A 8 7 5 2		♦ K J 9 6 3
♣ J 8		♣ K 5 3
	♠ 9 4 3	
	♥ A 5 2	

♦ 10 4
♣ A Q 9 7 2

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	2♣
2♥	2♠	4♦	4♥
5♦	Double	All Pass	

East has eight points plus the club king and is fully entitled to jump to four diamonds. The key to these hands is that 20 HCPs may be enough to offer a good play for eleven tricks, and 15 may offer a good sacrifice.

Introducing a New Suit

When the bidding has reached the four or five level and your side has an agreed suit, it is often more descriptive to introduce a new suit at the higher level than to compete in your own suit. There are two primary reasons for the new suit: it may be a cuebid inviting slam; or when your side is clearly sacrificing, it may offer a better lead option if the opponents bid on.

Playing in Lake Geneva against a top team from Chicago, you are vulnerable and you hold:

(16)	♠ J 10 5 3
	♥ K J 8 6 3 2
	♦ 7 5 2
	♣ —

The bidding has gone:

<i>Partner</i>	<i>RHO</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>LHO</i>
1♦	Pass	1♥	1♠
3♥	4♠	?	

You have four working HCPs but the real value of your hand is closer to 14 points (five for shortness in clubs and five for length in hearts). You should be visualizing slam in hearts at this point, but it is suggested that you bid five clubs along the way. When the opponents later sacrifice in six spades, partner heeds your lead direction and gives you four club ruffs along with his three red winners for +1400 (and you still lose an IMP).

