

for trumps when he might have gone game with a legitimate declaration. The dealer's tactics being to bid spades with a view to shifting when it came around to him again, the adversaries' tactics were to refuse him this opportunity to change and it became necessary for the dealer's partner to "pull him out" of his one spade bid. This led to the established convention that if the dealer bid one spade, third hand must overcall it, so as to give the dealer a chance.

If the third hand had anything he named the suit. If his hand was very bad he conveyed that information by bidding two spades. While this opened the door for the dealer to shift, it also shut the door on his refuge, because the penalties on a bid of two spades are unlimited. If the dealer let it stand at two spades, having nothing, he was in for a heavy loss, with no possibility of anything but the most trifling gain, as he was laying odds of 25 to 1 on his ability to get eight tricks out of two worthless hands. If he shifted he often went deeper into the hole, as he had no idea what he was doing, his partner's bid simply declaring weakness in high cards without naming any suit in which he might have at least length.

Some surprising things happen when the adversaries sit tight and wait for their prey in this manner. Here's a hand which is worth considering.

Hearts 10 7 5 2  
Clubs 10 9 7 4 3  
Diamonds None  
Spades 9 6 4 2

Hearts K J	Y	Hearts A Q
Clubs A Q 8 2	A B	Clubs K J 5
Diamonds K 9 8 5	Z	Diamonds A Q 7 4 2
Spades A K Q		Spades J 7 3

Hearts 9 8 6 4 3  
Clubs 6  
Diamonds J 10 6 3  
Spades 10 8 5

Z bid one spade, A passed, although he had a no trumper, and Y bid two spades, to show that he had nothing, but to give the dealer the conventional opportunity to bid what his hand was actually worth. B passed, so as to let the dealer go deeper into the hole if he wished to, but the dealer passed and A doubled. All having passed, A led three rounds of trumps and the only trick Y and Z made was the nine of spades. Having undertaken to win eight tricks and getting one only, they lost 700 points.

While it is quite true that A and B could have made a grand slam at no trumps with forty aces, that is a long way from 708 points in penalties and spade honors. The sad part of the hand is that had either Y or Z known that his partner had so many hearts they could not have lost more than one trick, even if hearts had been doubled, and it is very unlikely that either adversary would have doubled with only two trumps in hand. A few doses of this kind will soon make it apparent that there should be some way of making third hand leave things alone when the dealer does not want to be "pulled out."

Several systems are now on trial that have this for their object. The most radical theory of all seems to be that the dealer should never name a suit, not even spades, unless he is actually strong in it, strength in auction bridge, it must be remembered, being a term

which is confined to aces and kings on the first round of the bidding. Length in suit is not shown until the final calls. If the dealer has a sure trick in spades, says this school he should name spades; not otherwise. On the same principle that he names other suits that have sure tricks in them, he should call spades, making no exception for that suit. The old way to show great strength in the spade suit, with nothing to support it, was to bid two spades originally, so as to distinguish it from the weak one—spade bid. The idea of the two spade bid is to coax the partner to go no trumps if the spade suit will help him out. One in clubs had the same invitation in it and meant great strength.

According to the new school one in spades is enough to show strength in it, and the only thing to do with an all round worthless hand is not to name any suit, because there is no suit that has a sure trick in it. As the dealer must make a bid of some kind the only thing left for him is to bid no suit; that is, no-trumps.

This may seem like madness to some but it can be supported by some very ingenious arguments. A no-trumper cannot lose any more than a spade, as the penalty is only fifty points in either declaration. The no-trump call has the great advantage that even if the adversaries know it means weakness, if they want to play their cards they will have to bid two tricks in anything they name. Another and a special advantage is that is never deceives the third hand, who has none of the old difficulty of guessing whether the one spade meant weakness or only waiting. The no-trump bid effectually shuts him up and tells him that it is not necessary to pull the dealer out, and that if he bids he will have to do the work on his own cards.


One of the effects of evolution is seen in the dregs left in the average bridge player's mind of his respect for no-trumpers. To bid no-trumps on nothing strikes him as absurd and conjures up visions of fearful losses, but these are largely imaginary. Take the example hand printed above and suppose that the dealer had bid one no-trump on Z's cards. It is doubled and A-B make a grand slam. Horray! What of it? The dealer undertook to make seven tricks. He made none. Loss, 700 points, exactly as it was when he bid one in spades and his partner pulled him out.

Those who did not like this system, or who never heard of it looked around for some other way out of the dealer's difficulties with his partner and they hit upon the plan of reversing the old order of things and bidding two spades on the bad hands and one spade on the strong spade suit. The trouble with this system, which was used for a long time by the Boston players, was that in order to pull the dealer out of his weak bid the third hand, having nothing himself, was obliged to bid three spades, and as three spades are worth six points it forced the dealer to go two tricks in clubs or diamonds and limited him to hearts or no trumps for single trick bids, laying him open to attack.

As things evolved further experience pointed out to the Boston players that

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