

THE BRIDGE WHIST TABLE.

THIRD HAND'S DISCARD AT NO-TRUMP OF MUCH IMPORTANCE.

Statistics of the Frequent Occurrence of the Question—Purposes of the Discard—Should It Be Made From Weakness or Strength—Examples From Play.

When any question of play presents itself for discussion the first thing that occurs to the practical man is to ask himself how important the matter may be.

The old critics poked a good deal of fun at the what authors for devoting so much time and space to the consideration of the grand coup, which was acknowledged to present itself only in about twenty thousand deals.

When a person begins to discuss the question of the discard at no-trump, it seems reasonable that the relative importance of the matter should be understood. How often will he be called upon to discard and how much difference will it make.

It is a matter that he will have to decide upon in many hands or only in about one in a thousand? Will the question of the discard at no-trump present itself to him several times in an afternoon's play, or only about once a month?

THE SUN has collected and examined 1,000 deals in which the original make by the dealer was no-trump and has counted the numbers of times that the third hand would have to use his judgment in the matter of discarding. It may surprise some persons to learn that the proportion of short suits held by the third hand is very large, and that these suits are almost always those which are opened by his partner, or which are immediately started by the dealer's side when he gets it.

It is only about once in ten times that the third hand has no shorter suit than three cards when the original make is no-trump. Here are the figures for the 1,000 deals.

Table showing statistics of suit lengths held by third hand in 1,000 deals. Columns include suit (Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs) and number of cards (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).

This shows that about four times out of every ten no-trumpers the third hand will have a singleton or no cards at all of the suits first opened, and about four times out of ten he will have to discard on the third round of some suit which he has only two cards.

This calculation applies only to the third hand. The numbers of times that the original leader will have to discard will be discussed later, but this case is not quite the same, because he has had a chance to show his suit by his opening bid, and in this case he is directed to his partner's suit by a single discard. Z's play in winning the first round of the suit is very bad, but it is a most common error, especially when the card which would have to be given up on the first round is a possible trick winner.

Z must take the finesse in spades in order to make four tricks in the suit. Even without Z's error in winning the first round of diamonds A and B must win the suit by a trick, and then by two by cards, as this line of play will show:

Table showing a card layout for a bridge hand. Columns are labeled A, Y, B, Z. Cards are listed for Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, and Clubs.

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Trick 2. A sees that Y must take three tricks in clubs, but A can save his spade tenace. A sees that even if the adversary leads hearts he has to get in again on the hearts, and both spade and club tenaces may make against him in that case.

Z gives up the club tenace, so that if A goes out with the suit, Y can hold the trick and come through B with another spade.

Here is a little no-trump ending which illustrates a position that often comes up in actual play.

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Trick 2. The dealer's two eight-card suits are both A-K-J suits, but one is the adversary's and he holds five cards of it. After B discards it is impossible for either adversary to have more than four clubs, so the dealer starts that suit.

Trick 3. It is easy for Z to see that B, who is in the lead of discarding weakness, would not have let go a suit of four to the game unless he was sure of making a small something of that kind, as it is an easy matter for Z to put up his king, refusing to take the finesse, and confident that he will drop the thirteenth club. After that the winning of the game is easy.

Now look what happens if B discards strength.

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