

Developing Tricks in No Trump By Maritha Pottenger

When playing No Trump, it is very tempting to cash all your Aces and Kings and then look around for how to get a few more tricks. Usually, this is a big mistake!

If you cash Aces and Kings of suits in which you do not have many cards, you are actually setting up later tricks for your opponents. For example:

You hold: ♠ A K ♥ Q J 10 8 ♦ K J x x ♣ K x x
Dummy: ♠ x x ♥ K x x ♦ Q 10 x x x ♣ A x x

The opponents are likely to lead a black card (club or spade). **If you cash your Ace and King of Spades, you will set up anywhere from 3 to 5 tricks for the opponents!!!** (They have nine spades between them. The best break you can hope for is that spades divide 5-4 in the opponents' hands. In that case, you get 2 spade tricks and they get 3 as soon as your Ace and King are gone!)

If you attack Diamonds first, as soon as your opponents' take their Ace, you have 4 diamond tricks and they get only 1 Diamond trick!

Here is another example:

You hold: ♠ A Q x ♥ Q x x x ♦ K Q x x ♣ K J
Dummy: ♠ K x ♥ J 10 x ♦ J x x ♣ Q 10 9 x x

If you cash your Spades early, you will set up one or two spade tricks for your opponents. (They have eight Spades between them.) **You should attack Clubs first.** Once, you force out the Ace of Clubs, you will get 4 club tricks. Play the King of Clubs first (SHORT SIDE first when setting up long suits); then play the Jack of Clubs.

After you have your club tricks, set up some diamond tricks by playing to the Jack first (to force out the Ace). Then your King and Queen of diamonds will be good.

Don't worry about the Heart suit. If they opponents attack it, they can take the Ace and the King, but then you will have two tricks (Jack and Queen), so they are actually doing you a favor.

Your challenge is to set up your Club and Diamond tricks *before* the opponents can set up their Spade tricks.

Another example:

You hold: ♠ Q J x ♥ K x ♦ K J 10 x x ♣ A K x
Dummy: ♠ 10 x x x ♥ A Q x ♦ Q x x x ♣ J x

The opponents are likely to lead a Heart or a Club. **If you cash your Ace, King and Queen of Hearts right away, you set up anywhere from 1 to 3 heart tricks for the opponents** (depending on how their eight hearts are divided). **You should attack Diamonds immediately.** As soon as you knock out the Ace of Diamonds, you have 4 diamond tricks.

Last example:

You hold: ♠ A K Q ♥ x x x ♦ K J 10 x x ♣ K J
Dummy: ♠ x x ♥ Q J x x ♦ Q x ♣ Q 10 9 x x

The opponents are likely to lead spades. **If you cash your Ace, King, Queen, you set up 1 to 3 tricks for them.** You should **attack either Clubs** (play King first, then Jack) **or Diamonds** (play small to the Queen first). Once you eliminate the opponents' Aces in the minor suits, you get 4 tricks in each minor suit.