

The Moysian Trump Fit
(May 17, 2021)

A normal trump fit usually consists of at least eight trumps between the two hands. But, lesser holdings (5-2 or 4-3) sometimes produce an excellent result. If you can ruff losers in the **short hand**, usually you will score well on such hands.

Players don't enjoy playing in the 4-3 trump fit (better known as the Moysian Fit); but, it is not uncommon when they can't make 3NT (no stopper in one suit) or five of a minor because their hands are not strong enough to take eleven tricks.

The Moysian Fit refers to a declarer's 4-3 major suit trump holding. Although difficult to play, you many times find yourself playing in the Moysian Fit. The biggest challenge is that one of the opponents often has equal (64%) or more trumps (16%) than you have.

If the **master hand** (the one holding four trumps) is forced to ruff, it now has fewer trumps than one of the defenders. The defender can (and will) draw declarer's trumps and take control of the hand. The opponents will cash their winners. You are helpless to do anything to stop them.

Basically, the declarer's problem is how many rounds of trumps to draw. This strategy could prove a disaster if the trumps break unevenly between the two opponents. We are going to find that with many Moysian Fits, it's often wise to establish a side suit or to crossruff the hand or to throw a loser on a loser. Anything to avoid losing trump control.

Many times you are better off not drawing a third round of trumps. A much better strategy is to start cashing winners in the other suits—let the opponents score their trumps as ruffs. If one opponent has both remaining trumps, he can ruff and pull one more round of trumps. But, you still have one trump left in the master hand.

Just how did you end up in a Moysian Fit?!!!!

At times, a strong 4-3 fit may offer the only chance for game, as seen in example one below:

Example 1.	<u>North</u>		Contract: 4H
	AJ983		
	K54		Opening Lead: King of clubs
	A942		
	8		
	<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>	
	Q1076	42	Losers: Spades = 0
	72	J983	Hearts = 1
	Q106	K3	Diamonds = 3
	KQ765	J1042	Clubs = 2
	<u>South</u>		Total Losers = 6
	K5		
	AQ106		
	J875		
	A93		

Notice that there are but 8-tricks likely in a 3NT contract against any good defense. In a four heart final contract, however, club ace, ruff a club, spade to king, ruff another club, heart king, spade ace, spade jack (overruff, if necessary), pull two rounds of trump, go to the dummy with the diamond ace, and dump a diamond on the losing spade, winning ten tricks.

Another way to end up in a Moysian Fit is that your partner may have raised with three card support and a singleton. Let's look at example two below:

Example 2.	<u>North</u>						
	3						
	AJ2		Bidding:	W	N	E	S
	AJ763				1D	P	1H
	K874			P	2C	P	2NT
				P	3H	P	4H
	<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>					
	KQ106	J9854					
	7654	83					
	95	Q108	Losers:	Spades = 2			
	Q102	AJ9		Hearts = 0-1			
				Diamonds = 1			
				Clubs = 3			
	<u>South</u>						
	A72						
	KQ109						
	K42		Total Losers:	= 6-7			
	653						

Contract: 4H

Opening Lead: King of spades

West led the king of spades and declarer quickly took advantage of dummy's singleton: Ace of spades; spade ruff (with heart ace—an unblocking play); heart to nine; spade ruff; diamond to king. The remaining trumps were drawn; but when the diamond finesse failed, the declarer went down one. He still fared better than he might have at three notrump (likely down two); but, he should have succeeded in making the 4H contract. Where did he go wrong?

Moysian fits are delicate contracts. With only a slight superiority in trumps, declarer must time the play carefully to keep control of the hand. After winning the ace of spades, declarer should immediately lead a low diamond to dummy's jack—if the finesse wins, that's great; but, if it loses, there is no damaging return. East wins the queen of diamonds and returns a diamond. Declarer wins the king of diamonds, ruffs a spade with dummy's ace (unblocking play), draws four rounds of trumps (throwing clubs from dummy), then runs the diamonds to make four hearts.

In example two, declarer used the **controlled playing strategy**, which usually is best when playing in a game or slam contract. The necessary unavoidable losing tricks are easy to identify (queen of diamonds). Declarer is able to maintain control of the play of the hand by timing of trump removal, using the ace of hearts as a control.

The other strategy often used in playing Moysian Fits is the **Scramble-Trick-Taking Strategy**. This strategy is usually best when playing in a part score contract, especially ones in which winners are easily identified. The basic strategy is to pitch declarer's losers on dummy's winners or by crossruffing.

NOTE: At all costs, whether you are using either of the two methods, you should avoid trumping in the master hand, if possible.

Example three illustrates the scramble-trick-taking strategy.

Example 3.	<u>North</u>		Contract: 2H (North is master hand)
	5432		
	QJ87		Opening Lead: 6 of diamonds
	94		
	KJ2		
	<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>	Losers: Spades = 3-4
	98	AQJ10	Hearts = 2
	K9	A542	Diamonds = 1
	KQJ75	1086	Clubs = 0
	8764	105	
	<u>South</u>		Total Losers: 6-7
	K76		
	1063		
	A32		
	AQ93		

NOTE: The only good thing about this hand is that N/S stayed out of NT.

Analysis of the Hand:

Before playing to Trick 1, declarer takes stock of her losing tricks: 3-4 in spades, 2 in hearts, 1 in diamonds and none in clubs. Losing tricks should be counted from the standpoint of the master hand (four trumps in the North).

The opening lead (6 of diamonds) was taken by South's ace. Because North does not have the top heart controls, she should play the scramble-trick-taking strategy.

At Trick 2, she leads a small diamond, taken by West's jack. West leads back a small diamond. North must not ruff; but, discard a small spade instead. Should West continue with a fourth diamond, declarer can throw another spade, ruffing in the dummy (the short hand).

If West leads a spade, it is great for the declarer. West's best return is a club—trying to make the declarer guess the spade situation. Eventually, declarer loses two diamond tricks, the A/K of hearts and the ace of spades to make her contract of two hearts.

Example 4.

	<u>North</u>	
	A52	Contract: 4S
	A32	
	2	Opening Lead: A of Diamonds
	KQ8642	
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>
Q1086		J9
J87		10954
AK108		QJ765
107		J9
	<u>South</u>	Losers: Spades = 2-3
	K743	Hearts = 0
	KQ6	Diamonds = 3
	943	Clubs = 0
	A53	Total Losers = 5-6

With no stop in diamonds, you end up in the 4-3 spade fit. Five clubs might be easier (loser in spades and diamonds); but, four spades is the final contract. It will score higher than 5C if you can make it.

With such a weak trump suit, it is not practical to draw trumps and run the clubs pitching the diamond losers. If trumps don't split, it is unlikely you would have the opportunity to pitch the diamonds before the opponents draw dummy's trumps and cash their diamond winners.

A better option is to ruff diamonds in the dummy. As soon as the opponents see the dummy (singleton diamond), they are most likely to switch to a trump. You need to preserve dummy's little spades for ruffing purposes. Win the ace of spades in the dummy, cross to your hand with the king of hearts, and ruff a diamond. Return to your hand with the queen of hearts to ruff your third diamond. Get back to your hand with the ace of clubs and cash the king of spades, pitching a club from the dummy.

At this point, you have two trumps outstanding, and you have no losers outside of trumps. If the trumps are split 1-1, you can lead a third round and collect both at the same time and make an overtrick. However, if one opponent has both remaining trumps, leading a third round of trumps could be a disaster. He will win, draw your last trump and cash lots of diamonds to set the contract.

Leave the trumps outstanding and start cashing club winners. The opponents may score their trumps separately; but, those are the only two tricks they will get. You make your contract. If they ruff a club and play a trump, you still have a trump with which to ruff a diamond and continue cashing your winners in hearts and clubs to make the contract.

In conclusion, Moysian Fits are delicate contracts. With only slight superiority in trumps, declarer must time the play carefully in order to keep control of the hand.

In general, declarer should attempt to:

- a) Maintain a stopper (control) in the short suit, sometimes requiring a holdup.
- b) Maintain enough trumps in the master hand to avoid losing control of the short suit --the suit being led by the opponents trying to force the declarer to ruff.
- c) Pitch losers (loser on loser) from master hand to maintain trump parity with the opponents trumps.
- d) Avoid drawing trump without first or second round control.

Using the guidelines provided above, let's look at one further example.

Example 5. A104
 J74
 KQJ53
 84

Bidding: W N E S
 1D P 1S
 3H P P X
 P 3S P 4S
 All Pass

West	East
32	8765
AKQ1086	95
7	1062
9632	KQJ10

KQJ9
 32
 A984
 A75

Contract: 4S

Opening Lead: Ace of hearts

The bidding is over. You find yourself in a four spade contract. West leads the A, K and Q of hearts. East discards the K of clubs on the lead of the queen of hearts. How do you plan the play of the above hand to make four spades?

Losers: Spades = 0 (if the spade split is at least 4-1)
 Hearts = 2
 Diamonds = 0
 Clubs = 2

Total Losers = 4

Note: There is no need to fret that 5D is a much better contract on this hand. You know that you have two heart losers and two potential club losers. You can PITCH one club loser on the diamonds. Because you have to lose the other club anyway, why not pitch it on the third heart (loser on a loser play)? If West continues to lead hearts, you can ruff in the short hand and draw four rounds of trumps. You make your contract as long as the trumps divide 4-1.

One final observation is that the pitching of a loser on a loser play allowed you to make this contract. If you have any notions of trying to ruff the second club loser, you may not make the contract. East's four trumps could present a problem.



Assignment: You are North in a contract of 4H. Plan the play.

North

Q10
K834
K10874
J4

West

872
75
Q32
Q1075

East

A653
J1094
96
AK8

South

KJ84
AQ6
AJ5
963

Contract: 4H

Opening Lead: Ace of clubs

Next Week: The Endplay