

## The Law of Total Tricks

All sequences and bidding developments in this book , are conceived in line with the LTT . Jean René Vernes was the first to postulate the LTT . Marty Bergen acted then as a divulgator and finally Larry Cohen wrote two very successful books about it.

The Law , as it is usually called, has made a revolution in the Bridge game.

A couple of years ago Mike Lawrence ( *ex Dallas Ace* ) and Anders Wirgren ( *a Swedish analyst* ) published a book , “ *I fought the Law* “ with the declared goal to dismantle the Law credibility and to propose important and innovative amendments to it.

According to statistical data supplied by the Authors , in 70% of times the Total Tricks Number ( TTN ) is equal to the Number of Total Trumps ( NTT ) , as required by the Law , or equal to the Number of Total Trumps +1 .

So 70% of times  $TTN = NTT$  or  $TTN = NTT + 1$  .

Statistical data concerning  $TTN = NTT$  and  $TTN = NTT + 1$  are added up because , as far as the contract defensibility is concerned , it makes no difference.

It has to be noted that Lawrence-Wirgren statistical data are calculated based on the plain application of The Law , without corrective action , such as double fit or hand purity, suggested by Larry Cohen.

Application of corrective action tends to increase Law accuracy by about 15% .

The supposed amendments , proposed by the authors , that is SST ( Short Suit Total ) and WP ( Working points ) seem to be far from convincing .

We have to keep in mind that The Law is meant to be applicable only to competitive bidding , that is when both sides compete and HCP are divided about 20 / 20 or , at the most , according to Vernes - Cohen, 15 – 25.

Under these circumstances , players should calculate the total number of cards present in the two shortest suits on their side : this looks to me like quite difficult to be achieved.

As far as WP are concerned , authors suggest not to simply count the HCP but to evaluate HCP on their own merit : this is certainly wise , but hardly innovative . That a Queen in a doubleton is worth less than 2 HCP , seems to be close to a well known understatement.

Equally discounted , even if appropriate , are the continuous encouragements to evaluate the shape strength and not only the number of trumps. Any bridge player knows that a 6520 is worth far more than a 4333 with same number of HCP.

To make a long story short, it seems to me that “ *I fought the Law* “ could be re-named “ *A lot of noise for nothing* “ .

The Law application is certainly not 100% gold bullion , and has to be handled with care , with all the suggested corrective actions and with an eye to vulnerability.

When the Law is handled as suggested , it is a reliable ( 85% ) tool in competitive bidding and a solid reality that the Lawrence- Wirgren book does not even manage to scratch.