(60) Hand Evaluation: Fitting Cards and Wasted Values

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Level: Intermediate / Advanced   robert@advinbridge.com

General

When we are evaluating our hand we want to consider how our hand fits together with our partner's hand. This is about Fits (suits that fit together) but it is also about the way our honors fit together with partner's honors. This leads us to the idea of *Fitting Cards* and *Wasted Values* (misfitting cards.)   Both of these are valuable tools for helping us re-evaluate our hand.

Note: One thing we learn with experience is that Aces are wonderful cards that are undervalued when we only give them 4-points. Meanwhile, Jacks are not good cards and we frequently overvalue them. Part of learning to evaluate our hands is about understanding how to properly value these kinds of cards.

Fitting Cards

When we have points in partner's long suit these points help set up the little cards in that suit more quickly (just as when we have points in our own long suit.)   If we have an honor in partner's suit it will be better than if we have that honor somewhere like a short suit that is not fitting well with partner.

Remember, we want points in our long suits in general. If not in our own suit, then we want them in partner's suit. When we were re-evaluating for length points at the beginning of our hand evaluation (before the auction began) then we only added points to our hand for length when our suit was of a reasonable quality. The same applies when we are re-evaluating our hand based on *Fitting Cards* in partner's suit. By adding points to our hand for this fitting card we are effective adding length points to partner's hand because their suit will play better than they expect.

We upgrading for fitting cards for more than just the first bid partner makes.   As the auction progresses we upgrade our fitting cards in each suit partner shows length in and partner does the same – upgrading their fitting cards in each suit we show length in.

Example

If partner opens 1♠ and we hold Axx in partner's suit this is a great holding and we need to massively re-evaluate our hand. We have a fit, so that increases our value of our hand. We upgrade for this fit and more importantly we upgrade for our fitting card. This Axx goes from 4-points to at least 5-points (we are helping set up partner's suit more quickly. We also want to add ruffing values to our hand (support points) for any shortness we might have in other suits. So if we have a singleton in a side suit, then we need to add about 2 additional points to our hand. So we end up upgrading our hand an additional 3 points when partner opens 1♠ (1 point for the fitting card and 2 points for ruffing values.)

Wasted Values

Just as points in partner's suits (Fitting Cards) or points in our long suits (length points) are more valuable than normal, points opposite partner's shortness are less valuable than normal. These are called *Wasted Values*.

Let's look at some examples of Wasted Values.
- KQx --- x   This is a lot of wasted values. Partner had one loser in this suit before seeing our hand and our 5 HCP left them still having one loser.
- Kxx --- x   Partner had one loser in this suit before seeing our hand and our 3 HCP left them still having one loser.
- Axx --- x   This may not seem like Wasted Values, but it is. We covered partner's loser in that suit with our ace. But our Ace is not doing its full job. Remember an Ace is supposed to take a trick and help set up small cards underneath it. Here it does not do that. So it is somewhat devalued – Wasted.

We would much prefer to have these points in other suits that are opposite partner's length – so that they fit together with partner's length and honors.

When we are evaluating our hand for Wasted Values we want to think about what types of cards are useful in which situations. Not all HCP are created equal. Queens and Jacks are worst opposite partner's short suits (almost useless in suit contracts.) Queens and Jacks are more valuable in our own long suits or opposite partner's long suits. Ace and Kings are bad when they are opposite partner's short suits, but they do not lose all of their value. They still have a reasonable chance of taking a trick. Thus, we do not devalue them completely. Queens and Jacks are most likely to be wasted values since they are wasted opposite many more holdings. These Queens and Jacks are more useful opposite balanced hands – where partner has some length in all of the suits. This is why Queens and Jacks are often thought of as *Notrump Cards* and Aces and Kings are often thought of as *Suit Cards*.

Conclusion

One of the ways that we make use of this information (in terms of fitting cards and wasted values) is to find out a lot about partner's shape. Splinters are some of the most useful bids in this way – they show a fit, show shortness, and show values all in one call.   This allows us to re-evaluate our hand using Fits, Fitting Cards, and Wasted Values.

One of the most important parts of good hand Evaluation is being able to visualize the hands. Visualize partner's hand and think about the way our hands fit together – both in Fitting Suits and Fitting HCP. This visualization will allow us to think about how the play is likely to progress and allow us to properly re-evaluate our hand for how useful it is going to be for partner.