

The Mississippi Heart Hand

Board 5	♠ 10 5 4 3 2			
North Deals	♥ —			
N-S Vul	♦ 5 4 3 2			
	♣ 5 4 3 2			
	♠ —	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 2px;"> N W E S </div>		♠ J 9 8 7 6
	♥ 8 7 6 5 4 3 2			♥ —
	♦ A K Q J 10 9			♦ 8 7 6
	♣ —			♣ 10 9 8 7 6
	♠ A K Q			
	♥ A K Q J 10 9			
	♦ —			
	♣ A K Q J			

It will be seen that a diamond lead holds South to six tricks in a heart contract, and a game cannot be made in any denomination. South can make nine tricks in a spade contract, or ten tricks in a club contract.

An equivalent hand was given by Hoyle in 1747, and the modern version was given by Thomas Mathews in 1804. It was probably used by the card-sharps of the Mississippi River steamboats during the Civil War period, who hoped to persuade South to make a heavy bet on the odd trick with hearts as trumps. It grew in favor among the professional cheaters in the days of bridge whist. As doubling and redoubling could continue infinitely, the odd trick in a low-stake game could become worth \$10,000 (or as much as the client was considered good for) with the help of sufficient redoubles. Charles M. Schwab is reported to have paid off not less than \$10,000 on this hand.

From *The Official Encyclopedia of Bridge*, Frey-Truscott, editors; New York, Crown Publishers, Inc., (c) 1971, pp. 286