

Hold Up the Trump Ace

By Giorgio Belladonna

Giorgio Belladonna is one of the all-time great names in the game of bridge. Born in 1923, he unfortunately died in 1995, and the game lost not only a great player but also one of its great gentlemen, both at and away from the table. He won the World Teams Olympiad three times and the Bermuda Bowl no less than thirteen times. He is the only player to have participated in all sixteen Italian world victories. Dorothy Francis, frequent bulletin editor, tells a nice story about him. Following a slight altercation after which Giorgio felt he owed Dorothy an apology, a large bouquet of flowers arrived at Dorothy's door with the simple note: 'Bella Donna Belladonna.'

The most powerful card in bridge is the ace of trumps. When you, as a defender, are fortunate enough to hold this card, you must be sure to put it to the best possible use.

A general does not necessarily commit his crack troops to the battle right at the start, and you too should quite often hold back the ace of trumps until it can play a decisive role. In this deal you are West:

Board 8
West Deals
None Vul

	♠ 10 9 6		
	♥ 10 3 2		
	♦ A Q J 5		
	♣ A K 2		
♠ A 7 4 2	N	♠ 5 3	
♥ K Q J 8 6	W E	♥ 9 7 4	
♦ 9	S	♦ 10 6 4 3 2	
♣ Q 10 5		♣ J 8 7	
	♠ K Q J 8		
	♥ A 5		
	♦ K 8 7		
	♣ 9 6 4 3		

West	North	East	South
1 ♥	Pass	Pass	Dbf
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
All pass			

You lead the king of hearts and South wins with the ace. If South can force out the ace of trumps he will have ten easy tricks. A resourceful declarer will not lead trumps from his own hand, for this would make it plain that he had a strong sequence. South is likely instead to cross to dummy with a club or a diamond and lead a low spade to the king.

Suppose that you release the ace. In this case the contract will be made. You can cash the queen of hearts and continue with the jack, but South simply discards a losing club. Now he can win any continuation, draw trumps and claim the contract.

Now suppose instead that you hold up the ace of trumps on the first round. Declarer continues with a second trump but you duck this also. South is helpless. If he plays a third trump, you win and play hearts, forcing South to ruff with his last trump. In this case you beat the contract by two tricks. If South abandons trumps after two rounds you eventually make your small trump by ruffing and South winds up with nine tricks.