

**"Points are for No Trump"**  
Saying by Yoda (Marla Chaikin):  
**The James Bond Moonraker Bridge Hand**

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*Principle: In suit contracts, **distributions** can be **extremely important**, and indeed may be the most important feature of hands. And suit contracts (e.g., 4 of a Major, a small Slam) can be made given certain distributions with substantially fewer High Card Points (HCPs) than many commonly accepted guidelines suggest (e.g., **26+** for game in a Major, **29+** for game in a Minor, **33+** for small Slam).*

**The "Moonraker" Hand**

In the movie "Moonraker," James Bond, British Secret Service agent "007", and famous ACBL bridge LifeMaster, is playing bridge with his partner, "M", the head of the British Secret Service, against the villain, Sir Hugo Drax. Drax is known to be cheating in previous bridge games, so Bond punishes Drax by "stacking" or "fixing" the deck:

**Dealer:** SOUTH, Bond; **VUL:** N/S

**"M": 0 HCPs**

**S:** T987

**H:** 6543

**D:**

**C:** 76532

**Meyer: 1 HCP**

**S:** 65432

**H:** T9872

**D:** JT9

**C:**

**Drax: 31 HCPs**

**S:** AKQJ

**H:** AKQJ

**D:** AK

**C:** KJ9

**Bond: 8 HCPs**

**S:**

**H:**

**D:** Q8765432

**C:** AQT84

North / South: **8 HCPs**

East / West: **32 HCPs**

### Bidding:

Bond	Meyer	"M"	Drax <sup>1</sup>
7C	PASS	PASS	<b>DOUBLE</b>
RE-DBL	PASS	PASS	PASS

### Pretend Variations on the Situation

**Pretend** that "M", not Bond, "stacked" the deck, that Bond opened 1C, Bond did not know the cards in each hand, and that "M" jumped immediately to 7C. This temporarily pretended premise allows us to see *two important bridge principles*. First, **points are not the whole picture when bidding and playing**. Second, **when there is only 1 line of play with which to make a contract, however unlikely this line of play is to work, it may be best nevertheless to play the hand that way**.

Also think about what Bond would do if Sir Hugo Drax instead had not Doubled; Bond in playing would then have to be guided solely by *statistical probabilities*, because when Opponents do not bid, they give you as Declarer no additional information. But once Drax does indeed Double, does this mean Dax (1) has a lot of Points, but maybe no trump, or (2) ALL the trump (3), or (3) both a lot of points and a trump "stack"??? In any case, once Drax Doubled, during play Bond had to consider Drax the "Danger Player."

### **Possible Trump Holdings by Bond's Opponents Known by Bond Once the Dummy Goes Down**

Bond's LHO Holds	Fewest Possible Club Losses	Bond's 2 Possible Lines of Play	Statistical Probability
KJ9	2		11%
J	1		13%
K9	1		13%
9	1		13%
KJ	1		13%
K	0	1. A, then Q	<b>13%</b>
J9	0	1. A, then Q	<b>13%</b>
None	0	2. Trump Diamond lead. Ruff a Diamond, and lead Clubs to himself, playing each time one card higher than Drax.	<u><b>11%</b></u> 100%

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<sup>1</sup> This James Bond Hand was based on a Hand reportedly held by the Duke on Cumberland, the son of King George III, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Bond knows that he has a **26%** (13% + 13%) **probability** of making his contract if he selects **Strategy #1** once he gets the lead: play the Ace of Clubs, and then the Queen of Clubs. Of course, once he plays the Ace of Clubs, his fate is sealed, for good or bad, and here the King will not drop. But this is the best line of play if (1) Bond had not stacked the deck and thus knew where the cards lay, and (2) Drax had not doubled.

But maybe, if Drax Doubled, as he did here, Bond will select **Strategy #2**, even if he hadn't stacked the deck, but somehow ended up in a **7C** contract Re-Doubled Vulnerable, even though statistically this strategy has only an **11% probability** of success, because this is the only way to successfully make the contract. Bond will go to the Board repeatedly by trumping on the Board Diamonds led from his hand, then leading small Clubs back to his hand, overtaking Drax's Clubs by the next highest Club in his own hand. If Drax had not Doubled, Bond might not do this, but if Drax did Double, Bond might think this is the best line of play!

### **Some Probability Principles**

1. When you and Dummy hold a suit missing an **even number** of cards, there is **less than a 50% probability** of an **even split** (e.g., 1-1, or 2-2, or 3-3), and a **greater than 50% probability** of an **almost-even-but-not-even** split e.g., 2-1, or 1-2).
2. When you and Dummy hold a suit missing an **odd number** of cards, there is **greatest and greater than 50% probability** of a **near-even** split (e.g., 2-1, 1-2, 3-2, 2-3).
3. The more cards there are out, the smaller is the probability of one opponent holding a void while the other opponent holds all the remaining missing cards.

### **LifeMaster Mr. Bond's Actual Bridge Result**

In the ACBL documentary film about ACBL LifeMaster, James Bond, actually Meyer leads the Jack of Diamonds, the top of 3 "touching" cards. Bond ruffs in the Dummy. He then leads from Dummy a small Club, and overtakes at the lowest necessary level in his hand, assuming that Meyer/WEST is void in Clubs, otherwise Bond cannot make his contract. **When a contract can only be made by making *implausible* assumptions, such as a 0-3 Club split with all Clubs being held by Bond's RHO, then that is the way the contract must be played!**

Meyer/WEST indeed shows "out" of Clubs. Bond then leads a low Diamond, ruffing in Dummy. He then leads again from Dummy, leading a low Club. Once Bond overtakes whatever Drax plays. Then Bond leads his remaining highest trump card, thus taking Drax's last Club. Bond then leads his Queen of Diamonds, thus taking E/W's last Diamond. All of Bond's remaining Diamonds are now good, making 7C RE-DOUBLED, Vulnerable, thus obtaining a Bridge Score of **2,660!**

Yes, Virginia, Points Schmoints! **You can, indeed, make a Grand Slam bid even with your Partnership only holding a total of only 8 HCPs!**