

### **Playing techniques and tactical patterns:**

In order to achieve a strategic goal (which for the solo player is always to win the game, and for the opponents is either to "bend" the solo game or to avoid a high win level), various tactical patterns are used. The opponents try to disrupt the presumed winning plan of the solo player and to harmonize the counterplay. The solo player wants to "disarm" the counterplayers and inhibit their harmony.

Some playing techniques have proven themselves, the explanation of which will perhaps only elicit a tired smile from the skat professional. For the casual player, the short descriptions will make the following explanations easier to understand. I will mention some main techniques without a fixed separation between solo play and counterplay, explain them briefly if necessary and clarify them with examples if necessary. After that, I would like to present games in which the various playing techniques are applied in practice.

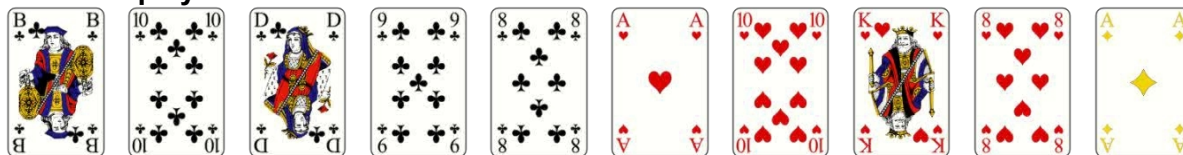
### **Trump draw and tempo game**

In color and grand games, the solo player usually tries to play as early as possible, i.e. after as few tricks as possible (tempo!), remove the opponent's trumps from the game in order to build up a trump monopoly. Afterwards, one's own counting cards can be brought home safely and opponent's counting cards can be poked without danger. He usually achieves this goal by drawing trumps early. There are different opinions about the different methods of trump deduction, but no patent remedy. Optimal trump management is the be-all and end-all of successful play, especially with critical hands. Whether it is better in a particular case to draw the trumps from the top (strong Jack) or to make an underdraw (weak Jack or Trumpflusche), whether one rather uses the method "small-big-small" or goes a completely different way, depends on many factors, mainly - but not only - on one's own hand and here especially on the strength of one's minor suits. Good players take care not to weaken themselves too much in their trump moves, so that they do not become "withdrawable". This danger of the other party taking all the remaining trumps from the solo player regularly arises when you have used your strong trumps early to draw trumps and then discover that the remaining opposing trumps are strong and sit unfavorably.

### **Replacement Trump:**

Games with low trump length (= few trumps) and/or low trump strength (= weak trumps) are only promising if you have at least one strong minor suit. If the Soloist gets into trump trouble, he usually draws his longest strong minor suit (e.g. Ace-10-King) from the top to save his real trumps and to force the opponents to serve or jump. The cards of this minor suit become substitute trumps for the Soloist, because the opponents can only take them if they sacrifice a trump for them. This allows the Soloist to maintain his trump dominance. The trump dominance, even if it is only scarce, is very important for active game control.

Here's an example: Middlehand had no bidding, and backhand had passed after bidding 22. You play clubs in forehand after pressing 10 of spades and queen of spades (of course you could press differently, but that is not the issue here).

**Forehand plays cross**

After...

1. 8 of clubs, 7 of clubs, king of clubs = - 4
2. 7 of diamonds, ace of diamonds, 8 of diamonds = + 11
3. Jack of clubs, 7 of hearts, jack of diamonds = + 4

...it is clear that Hinterhand is leading the remaining 3 trumps, namely Jack of Spades, Jack of Hearts and Ace of Clubs. An experienced player would have guessed this 5:1 trump distribution already at the first trick. Whoever spares the ace of trumps without having the strongest jack must be very strong in trumps. If you were to continue playing trumps, your trump-strong opponent could take away your remaining trumps. You would only get to play - if at all - if a heart card were played later.

So now you switch to your "spare trumps", namely the heart flute. You play the ace of hearts, and if it runs, also the 10 of hearts. The chances that the ace of hearts and the 10 of hearts will run, by the way, are not bad, because the middle hand has already sent off a luke of hearts. This could be an indication that this cue was blank and that the queen of hearts and the 9 of hearts are in the backhand of the strong opponent. With these 24 eyes in hearts, plus the ace of diamonds, the 4 eyes from the third trick, and the depressed 13 eyes, you would already have 52 eyes on your account. You continue with King of Hearts and have a good chance of winning.

The opening with the jack of clubs would have been weaker

1. Jack of clubs (?), 7 of clubs, Jack of hearts (!) = + 4

An excellent bluff: Hinterhand leads the 3 small jacks as well as the ace of clubs and king of clubs, and with the addition of the middle jack fools the solo player into thinking that the trump distribution is rather even - which encourages the soloist to make a second (disastrous) round of trumps:

2. 8 of clubs (?), 10 of diamonds, king of clubs = - 14

Now backhand could take all trumps from the solo player and continue with spades. The solo game would no longer be salvageable.

However, if the solo player does not have a longer strong suit, then the only way to deal with a trump shortage is to use the

**"Walk across the villages"**

The solo player has recognized that he is in trump trouble or will soon be. However, he has no closed minor suit (such as ace-10-king) and therefore cannot resort to substitute trumps. Then he can try to go "over the villages", i.e. he draws the solids (aces and established 10s) of his minor suits and hopes to get the necessary eyes to win the game - without regard to the trump distribution and the remaining supplementary hand. So you try to take as many eyes as possible from each village (in each suit).

However, one usually chooses the risky course only if one has recognized that one cannot achieve success with less dangerous techniques. When you go over the villages, you let your pants down, so to speak, i.e. you have hardly any chance of winning after a full has been tapped, because you have no tactical backup plans afterwards. If, however, you consciously plan for a full, then it is a tactical measure in its own right. In this case, it is not really a case of "going over the villages".

If the direct passage over the full is not sufficient, because you still have an ordered 10 in the hand, for example, which you have to bring home, then perhaps the play-off still helps...

### **Playback and insertion:**

The game is not yet decided, and the solo player still has an incomplete, unsettled minor suit, such as an ordered 10 or an ordered ace. If the solo player succeeds in bringing the opponent to the game with the counterpoint of this weakness (ordered 10, ordered ace), then he has the chance to build up a fork, so that his ordered 10 is played up to him or his ordered ace is given the opportunity to cut. He can also use this to put himself in the backhand, in order to discard a card cheaply afterwards, for example, or to hide a high trump counter, which he would not be able to bring home in any other way.

This tactical maneuver of insertion (giving the outplay specifically to a particular opponent) is intended to prevent the solo player from having to open his weakness himself. Of course, such a play involves certain risks, especially when there are still opposing trumps in play. Moreover, the Soloist cannot always predict with certainty which opponent will take the trick. Then this maneuver is called "play off". However, one must take such risks when there is no better winning option.

The tactical goal of the insertion/removal by the solo player is therefore regularly to

- build a trump or color fork (possibility of cutting).
- to obtain a dropping option,
- to have an ordered 10 released or
- to hide a high trump counter.

As we will see later, or as we already know, the insertion can also be an extremely effective weapon for the opposing party. The counterparty wants to achieve that the solo player has to compete with his weakness himself and does not get a chance to discard this weakness. It might also be possible to prevent a discard by a bid that is heavy on the eyes, but then perhaps those very eyes would be missing in the end.

### **The nailing:**

If a player in the middle hand trumps a played card so high (usually with the strongest trump card still in play) that the player in the backhand cannot take the trick under any circumstances, he has "nailed" the card. This is usually done when the player needs the eyes of the played card to win the game or when he wants to take the trick now and therefore wants to exclude being overtrumped. A typical example:

The opponents still have two trumps. The solo player already has 55 eyes and, in addition to a trump louse, the jack of clubs. Now he is presented with the king of a free suit in the middle hand. The king is of course nailed with the jack of clubs, and the solo player has won his game. If the Soloist were to lay his trump luke, he could be overtricked, which would still cause him to lose his game.

A less typical example:

Middle hand has pushed 10 of clubs and queen of diamonds and plays grand.



Forehand starts with ace of clubs. If the Soloist "routinely" tricks with the Jack of Diamonds, he risks being overtricked (-15):

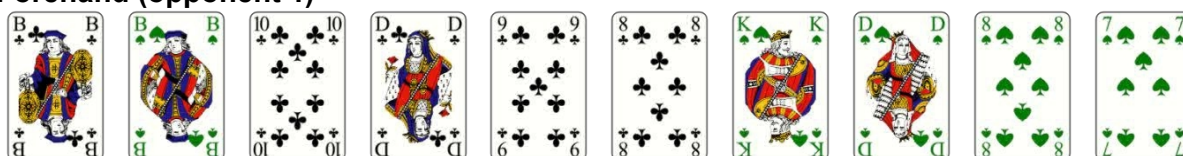
1. Ace of clubs, Jack of diamonds (?), Jack of spades = - 15
2. King of diamonds, ace of diamonds, 8 of diamonds = - 15 (- 30)
3. Diamonds-10, Diamonds-9, Hearts-10 = - 20 (- 50)
4. Cross King...

The solo player may give away two more tricks, namely spades-7 and hearts-8....

However, if the Solo Player nails the Ace of Clubs with the Jack of Clubs (+ 13), he wins for sure if he continues with a Jack move. He already has 26 eyes, including the Skat, and also nails the Ace-10 of Spades, Ace of Hearts and Jack of Hearts (+ 34), and will receive at least 1 picture from his opponents in addition to these 60 eyes.

For the other party, too, there are typical situations that require nailing. I have fond memories of a game I played in Salou in 2008:

#### Forehand (opponent 1)



#### Middle Hand (Solo Player)



#### Hindquarters (Opponent 2)



Middlehand had come into the game at 40 after Forehand had held 36. Backhand was no longer interested in playing out its check game because of the double irritation.

Middle hand played heart hand:

1. King of spades, Ace of spades, 10 of hearts = - 25
2. Ace of diamonds, Jack of spades (!), 9 of spades = - 13 (- 38)

A strong decision. Opponent 1 could have whiffed 10 of clubs here, but that would have been speculative. There is already a winning plan, and it runs via "spade-cut". So ace of diamonds is nailed now, no matter whether the solo player serves afterwards or not. Therefore, it would have been even clearer if opponent 2 had drawn the 10 of diamonds instead of the ace of diamonds in the second trick, because then opponent 1 would not even have the idea of possibly not taking a trick and perhaps whitewashing or discarding a card. One should not deviate from a working winning plan without a compelling reason. The rest was a matter of form:

3. Queen of spades, 10 of spades, 7 of hearts = - 13 (- 51)
4. 10 of diamonds, jack of clubs, 8 of hearts = - 12 (- 63)

### **Delivery:**

The opposing party always tries to bring exactly the opponent to the game who has the supposedly best continuation. A tactical means to this end is the handover, i.e. a card is played which one assumes the other opponent can and will take over. Since there are usually only a few chances to actively bring about this situation in the counterplay, the consistency of the handover is of particular importance. If a successful transfer is an indispensable part of the winning plan, then it must be played consistently, even "blindly" if necessary:

If you lead, say, 10-king in an unsettled suit and are determined to get your partner to play in that suit, then you must also trust that he will lead the ace or trick the suit, and that the solo player must serve. So play the 10, anything else would be half-hearted. This is called a blind pass or a sharp pass. If you have a backup plan in case of a failed transfer, the king may be enough.

If a color transfer is not possible, in rare cases you can also try a trump transfer, if the trump situation allows this at all. Finally, you can also pass the initiative by a planned trick if you know or hope that partner does not lead a certain suit and the solo player must serve or cannot overtrump partner.

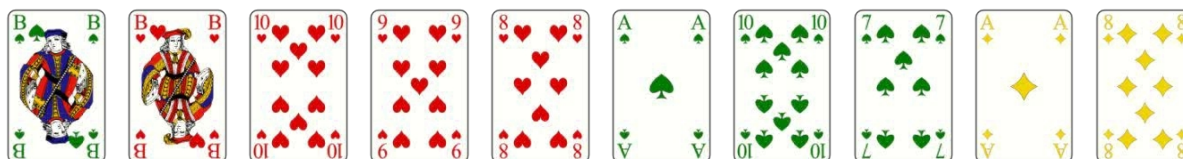
Takeover and handover are important parts of the counterplay and are carefully prepared by experienced Skat players. The often underestimated and seemingly unimportant discards are of particular importance. If, for example, you have queen and 7 of a suit and do not want to come to play in this suit under any circumstances, you will also give the queen on a trick of the solo player, even if you thereby forego a theoretically possible trick and sacrifice 3 eyes.

### **The intermediate train:**

This term is basically not very meaningful. Between what or between whom do you want to draw what? In the usual Skat jargon it describes the following maneuver: With an intermediate move, one interrupts the normal tempo play, i.e. the demand of the trumps, because one fears, for example, that the opposing party might otherwise come to undesirable discards and subsequently stab cards of the solo player.



Middle hand had come to play against forehand for 20 and plays hearts with this hand after pushing two small clubs:



After 1. 9 of diamonds, ace of diamonds, king of diamonds....

... the solo player should consider what might threaten after the usual trump move 2nd Jack of Spades.... After the bidding and the first trick it looks as if the missing diamonds and the jack of clubs are sitting on the right.

After about 2. Jack of spades, king of hearts, jack of clubs

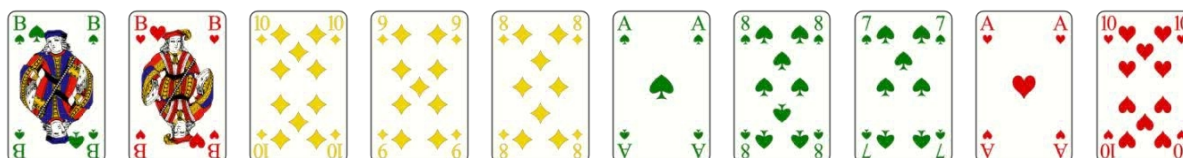
thus threatens 3rd diamond-10, diamond-8... with cross-load and 4th diamond-queen... with discard/overtrick or discard/spade. The consequence could be that this puts the 10 of hearts or the spades in danger.

Here offers the intermediate train

2. Ace of spades... an,

to first bring home the ace, explore the spade distribution and keep the initiative. Whether you play a jack or 10 of spades or some other card after that is another matter.

The need for intermediate moves becomes even clearer when you are hit in a hollow ace in the first trick and lead ace-10 in a second minor suit.



1. 9 of spades, ace of spades, king of spades

Here it seems urgent to play the hearts before continuing with trumps, because over two more spade tricks opponent's heart cards could be discarded. Of course, you are in a better situation as a solo player if you can claim the trumps from above. Then you can do without the intermediate move (which always carries a certain risk as long as trumps are still out).

### The stitch renunciation (stitch sacrifice):

Here, a party deliberately foregoes a safe trick by an unforced discard or by underdrawing because it

- subsequently wants to bring in more eyes with fewer stitches or
- wants to cause the other party to commit a mistake that the other party could not otherwise commit or would be highly unlikely to commit, or
- expects an important positional advantage (e.g. dropping position, fork structure)

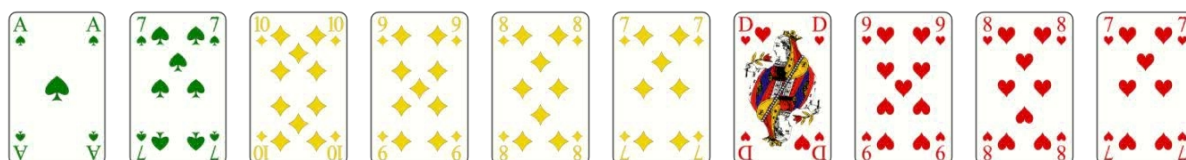
The variants in this regard are unmanageable and offer endless possibilities for creative play. As one top player put it, "If you can only win by making a mistake, you have to give the other party the chance to make the mistake. The classic way to do this is to give away a trump trick if you hope that the opponent who has no trump will whiff exactly the ace whose suit you have the 10 of in your hand.

### Cutting:

This simple technique belongs to the standard and is already known to most skat beginners: One does not take over a played card with the highest own card (which is usually the ace) of this suit, but lays a smaller card, because one hopes for a further or more valuable trick later (usually by conquering the 10). Many good players I know are of the opinion that you should only cut as a solo player if the other party can no longer win or if the cut is absolutely necessary for your own game win. An opponent should cut on the solo player only if winning the game is actually still possible (it makes no sense to cut if you can no longer win a game purely mathematically). The widespread demand that one should "never cut on one's own man" is, in my opinion, wrong. I am of the opinion that the winning plan in the current game phase must decide whether one does so or not.

### Bluffs and feints:

Because of its many unknowns, the game of skat offers an inexhaustible source of feints and bluffs. Even a novice skat player can quite quickly master the basic variations, such as the "pawn trick" at the zero. Forehand finds to this hand:

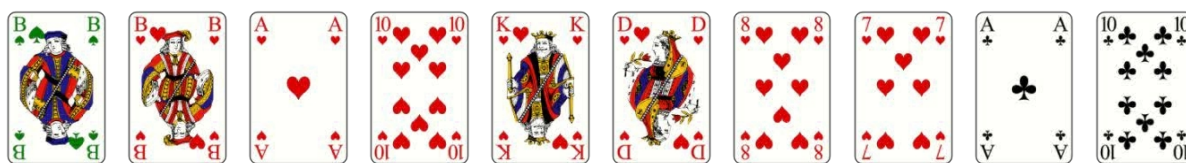


...of all things, the fourth suit: King of Clubs, Queen of Clubs. She pushes these two cards and plays the 7 of spades to the zero. Her hope: "The opponents will assume that the 7 was blank. Hopefully, they won't trust me to lead the ace of spades in the hand and to play it blank. That's why the opponents will hardly continue with spades. and sooner or later bring cross".

Whether this hope will be fulfilled is not known. But does the zero player have a better chance?

In the following game, middle hand got the game only after holding the 36 bid by backhand. The game announcement was clear: heart hand (with planned silent cutter).

Middle hand plays heart hand:



After 1. King of Clubs, 10 of Clubs, Jack of Diamonds = - 16, the Soloist was in trouble.

He saw, of course, that the other party would get off the hook with another fat trick (2 Jacks plus Ace = -15). After taking the second trick with trump-10 (2nd 7 of diamonds, queen of diamonds, 10 of hearts), he had to make a decision before playing out to the third trick. He saw the following 3 possibilities for a successful continuation:

a) Heart-7 (Heart-8)...

Wins when the trumps are distributed 1:1 or there is at least one trump in the Skat.

b) Jack of hearts...

Wins if the trumps are distributed 1:1. Also wins when the trumps are 2:0 and the trumpless opponent has no ace. Loses if the trumps are 2:0 (or if there is 9 of hearts in the Skat) and the trumpless opponent has an ace.

c) Jack of spades...

Wins and loses seemingly like b)

If one were to make the continuation dependent on a particular distribution conjecture alone, then one would have to decide between 3rd heart-lush... and 3rd "jack any"....

Now, however, middle hand had an important piece of information. She knew after the second trick that backhand must have bid a diamond without 3 (it could not be a cross play). Consequently, Jack of Clubs was to be assumed on Forehand or in Skat, which was of decisive importance for the continuation.

The solo player in the middle hand relied on the lack of information of the other party and played

3. Jack of spades...

After all, the opponent behind him, who had previously poked with the jack of diamonds, could not know that the solo player had to play a silent Schneider. He was supposed to assume the normal case (with a ruffed 36: heart hand with 2) and would therefore not immediately whiff an ace on the spade jack. And so it came to pass:

3. Jack of spades (!), 7 of diamonds, 9 of hearts

4. 7 of hearts, ace of diamonds, jack of clubs = - 13 (- 29)

It does matter which jack is drawn. If you like, you can call the move 3. jack of spades (!)... a successful bluff, because the solo player really wants to pretend to the ignorant opponent that he also has the jack of clubs.

3. Jack of hearts... would have been much weaker, because backhand would have wondered why middlehand had played "hand". In a game with three, the hand announcement would not have been necessary. So Hinterhand could have assumed the two highest jacks in Vorhand and perhaps immediately whined ace of diamonds.



Almost a classic is the "bluff from above": Forehand had bid on a risky spade without 5 and had come to play after holding 36. She found Jack of Spades and Jack of Hearts and pushed King of Hearts and 9 of Diamonds. A seemingly hopeless situation?

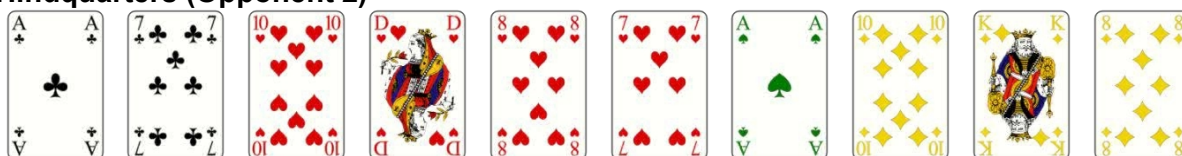
### Forehand (solo player)



### Middle hand (opponent 1)



### Hindquarters (Opponent 2)



### Pressed: King of Hearts, 9 of Diamonds

Forehand played a "Notgrand" and saw their only chance in middlehand leading at least a jack, but not an ace of spades. This was the only way to win the game:

1. 10 of spades (!), jack of diamonds, ace of spades = - 23

What else? Middlehand, looking at her own hand, had to suspect that the solo player had pushed the ace of spades. So she didn't want to run the 10. The bluff from above was successful. The solo player cannot lose now. E.G:

2. 8 of clubs, ace of clubs, 9 of hearts (!)

...and the other party receives only one trick with a maximum of 23 eyes. or

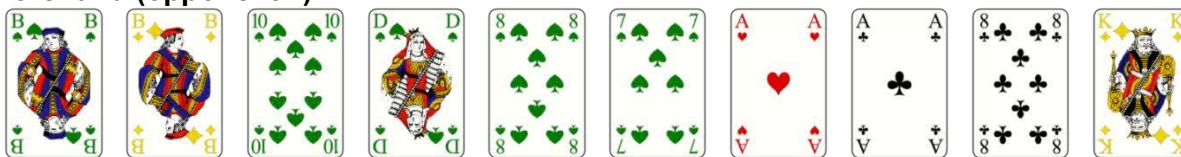
2. Ace of diamonds, 10 of diamonds, jack of hearts with game win for the AS after
3. Ace of hearts, jack of clubs, 10 of hearts (?) (- 46)
4. Queen of clubs, Ace of clubs, Jack of spades

...and the Soloist ends up giving away 9 of Hearts to Queen of Hearts, whereupon only 10 eyes (10 of Clubs) could be ruffed = 61:59.

One of the most beautiful feints in Skat is the moose trick. It is used in emergency situations, for example, when you have lost your way or simply had to bid very riskily for tactical reasons. The method is based on a feigned cut and shows in a special way the connection between winning planning (rescue plan, emergency plan) and a distribution guess.

The following game was won with quite similar distribution by a top player of SV Hillesheim. The original game was presented in the Skat forum [www.32karten.de](http://www.32karten.de):

### Forehand (opponent 1)



### Middle hand (opponent 2)



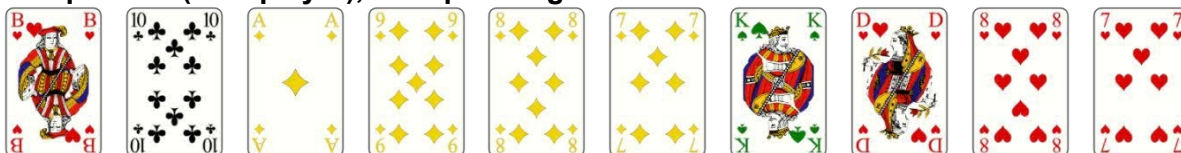
### Backhand (solo player) before taking the skat



### In Skat: Ace of Spades, King of Spades

Midhand passes without bidding. Hindhand first bids to 23, and when forehand holds this, it continues to 33 and then also to 35. Now forehand passes. Backhand finds two highly unsuitable cards with the ace of spades and king of spades: a zero overt is almost impossible to win. Hearts and diamonds are overcalled. What else is possible? Backhand guesses correctly that Forehand had planned a spade play and builds a moose trick on it: She pushes spade ace and heart 10 (21) and plays clubs with the following hand, which looks totally sick:

### hindquarters (solo player), after pressing



### Pressed: Ace of spades, 10 of hearts

The Soloist expects Forehand to open with his suit:

1. 7 of spades, 9 of spades, king of spades = 4 (25)

The acquisition "only" with the king pretends the cut

2. Jack of hearts (!)...

The Soloist hopes that Opponent 1 will take over and play 10 of spades, assuming that Opponent 2 will stab them and the Soloist will have to concede his now bare ace of spades.

2. jack of hearts, jack of spades, king of clubs

Should opponent 2 have gone over with the Jack of Clubs here?

3. 10 of spades, queen of clubs, 10 of clubs = 23 (48)

Everything is going according to "plan", but the solo player has not yet won. If an opponent were now to wonder and complain that the Soloist had not served with the Ace of Spades, then this would, by the way, be considered a "betrayal of cards" - with an immediate game win for the Soloist! You must not make any statements that could give clues about the card seat or the Skat.

4. Ace of diamonds, queen of diamonds, king of diamonds = 18 (66)

It was clear that ace of diamonds - provided both opponents serve - would capture at least both pictures. The moose trick is of course extremely risky, because it relies on a certain presumed distribution structure and a presumed game play. There are hardly any secondary plans. If something had not gone according to plan, the solo player would not have been able to win. Just imagine, if opponent 2 had had the ace of clubs and had hit the 10 of spades in the third trick...

Bluffs and feints should only be used when they are really necessary to win a game or reach a certain win level. You should never use them to make your fellow players look ridiculous. This would be just as unsportsmanlike as the bad habit of pressing 7 on the safe zero overt of 9-8-7 to make fun of your opponents. Skat players sometimes have a brilliant memory, and in skat life you always meet a second time...

### **The mandatory distribution presumption:**

There is a simple logic behind this meaningful term: If the solo player discovers in the course of the game that he can only win with a certain distribution of cards, then he must assume this distribution. There is then no room for other variations. If you can only win a game with ace-king-9 of a minor suit when the 10 is blank, you must play the ace. Whoever still has two minor trumps and knows that 2 jacks are still out, must necessarily play one of his trumps, if he can only win against distributed trumps. If you realize that you can only win your hand if a certain card is in the deck, you must play as if it were in the deck.

This sounds very simple, but seems to cause difficulties in practice. It is astonishing how some players recognize that they can only win with a very improbable distribution, but discard this possibility and the resulting necessary moves because "it is all too rare". It takes some effort to commit to a single winning plan that requires a very specific distribution and fails on any other distribution.

The same applies to the opposing party: Imagine that you are the opposing player at the Grand and see that the Solo player draws two high Jacks on the forehand, thus calling off the Jack of Hearts and the Jack of Diamonds. After the second trick, all trumps are out of play. Now the Soloist continues with a long suit from the top, and you realize after two more tricks that he had to have 5 cards of that suit, so now he still leads 3 cards of the suit.

You yourself have 2 ordered tens and an ordered ace. What do you do now if the solo player continues to torment you with your foreign suit?

Which 10 will you save, and which will you sacrifice? The correct answer is actually quite simple:

You consistently blank your ace and both tens! The grand can only be beaten if you get 6 fulls in the last 3 tricks. Do not believe that the Soloist will end up with 3 frames or even the 10 of your Ace suit in his hand. He has almost certainly pushed his highest vulnerable counting cards. If he still has an ace himself, nothing works anyway. So your tactic is based on the winning assumption that the grand player "must" have three discards in addition to his 7 safe tricks.

As soon as you realize that the game can only be beaten if the solo player does not press a certain card but has it in his hand, then you have to play as if he actually had it in his hand. If you know that you can only win unless the Soloist leads the highest trump, then he doesn't have it! "It only goes like this, so it stands like this".

For the other party, it is extremely important to get a picture of the hand of the solo player - and here first of all of the trump distribution - right from the start. In suit games, by looking at one's own hand and taking the bidding into account, it is often possible to determine after the first trump round how many trumps the solo player must have or how many trumps he may have at most for the game to be winnable for the other party at all. Knowing that the solo player has or must have, for example, a 6-trump or 5-trump, allows a direct conclusion to be drawn about the number of his side cards and reduces the variants to be tested. This makes it easier for the other party to plan a win.

A rather well-known example of the mandatory distribution presumption is the play of the unresolved 10: The opponent is at 39 or 40 eyes, the solids are largely out of play, only one suit was not yet on the table. The opponent who is in the game still leads e.g. 10-Dame-8 of the unresolved suit. If he knows or suspects that the opponent can only take one more trick, then he naturally plays the 10. After all, the game can only be won if a trick with 2 solids succeeds. If the solo player leads or tricks the ace, then it doesn't work anyway.



*Beautiful and rare: Silver Jacks in the collector's box (mintage around 1964).*



## Profit planning

*"Hold fast to the plan you've  
made!  
Especially since your friend is confused by  
your swaying. But it shows clearly how flat  
the path, So follow better thought."*

*(Skat in verse, by Paul Renz, 1888)*

The techniques and basic tactical patterns of game management are often combined and are not subject to any priority constraints. They are used in a goal-oriented manner as components of a specific winning plan. A winning plan may only take into account distributions that can actually lead to success. A solo player who knows that his 5-trump has no chance against a 6:0 distribution should completely ignore this variant.

The following applies to the other party: It should always play to win, and for as long as it is still achievable. Only then, when the game can no longer be beaten, should an attempt be made to get off the hook. In doing so, the opposing party has similar tactical methods at his disposal as the solo player. An opposing player can also nail, bluff, push in, etc. However, the opposing party has additional very special tactical means to attack the solo play. I have mentioned two of these, tactical **teasing** and showing the **opposite suit**, in separate chapters.

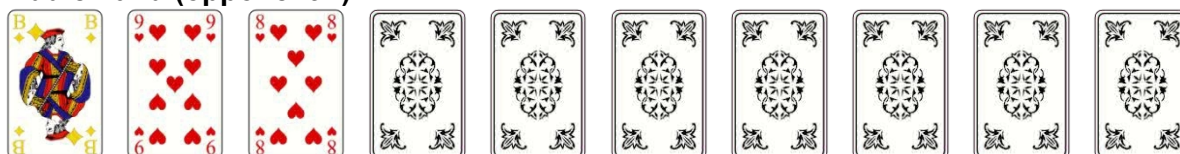
An important tactical tool of the opposite party are the jack signals:

### Showing the red jacks

When the Soloist calls the trumps from the top, it is not always clear to the opponents whether they should concede a red jack or another trump card.

Let's assume the following trump distribution in the heart game, and let's assume Forehand received the game for a ruffed 24.

#### Middle hand (opponent 1)



#### Hindquarters (Opponent 2)



1. Jack of spades, 8 of hearts, king of hearts

Both opponents suspect that the Soloist also leads the Jack of Clubs. After all, 24 were called.

2. Jack of clubs...



If opponent 1 were to concede the 9 of hearts here, then opponent 2 would have to sacrifice his ace in order to make at least one safe trump trick with the jack of hearts afterwards. He does not know that his partner leads the Jack of Diamonds. Therefore, opponent 1 already shows his Jack of Diamonds. He knows that this is worthless anyway if the Soloist also leads the Jack of Hearts. With this information

2. jack of clubs, jack of diamonds (!)... opponent 2 can now concede his jack of hearts without worrying, because he will surely make a trick with the ace.

Similarly, the backhand (opponent 2) should usually concede a Jack of Hearts in the first trick to signal to partner "I have a maximum of two trumps, because if I had two or even three other trumps besides the Jack of Hearts, I would not have laid the Jack of Hearts in the first trick, because I would be giving away a safe trick".

These information moves (showing the red jacks) serve primarily to save the trump full, because one would naturally prefer to make a trick with the ace or the 10 than with a red jack. But they also serve the general enlightenment, which is always an important goal for the other party. It has the handicap that each opponent knows only 50% of his party's weapons, while the solo player has a complete overview of his arsenal and at the same time knows exactly what weapons the other party has - he just doesn't know how the latter are distributed.

Wherever possible, you should try to brighten up the dark side of the distribution. Pure information moves are usually too "slow". The other party rarely makes more than 4 tricks in a game. So it would be a waste to sacrifice a trick or even several tricks just for the exploration of the distribution. When you finally know where your opponent's weaknesses are, it is too late for a successful attack. It is much more economical and efficient to play an attacking move against the solo player and/or to build up a threat and at the same time to clear up a part of the distribution. So if you have several seemingly equal continuations, you should choose the one with the higher information content.

### **Information by Luschen administration:**

This is about the lushness additions or lushness drops by the other party. Unfortunately, no clear procedure has yet been established here. I know some good players who always cast off their luffs from bottom to top, i.e. from 9-8 first the 8. Others distinguish whether the trick belongs to the solo player or not and always give the lowest luff to the solo player and the highest luff to the partner. Still others always cast their luffs from top to bottom, i.e. from 8-7 first the 8, from 9-8-7 first the 9.

Unless you intend to retain some control in that particular suit (pass, play, insert), I think the "top down" discard method is the most effective. If you lay down a 7, partner knows that you are now luff free in that suit. If you lay the 8 and partner leads the 7 himself, then he also knows that you are now luff-free. The same applies to the discard of the 9, if partner has the 8 and the 7 is already out of the game. The solo player may also draw his conclusions from this, but for him these signals are not so clear. Moreover, an information gain is usually more valuable for the other party than for the solo player, because the other party has more information deficits.

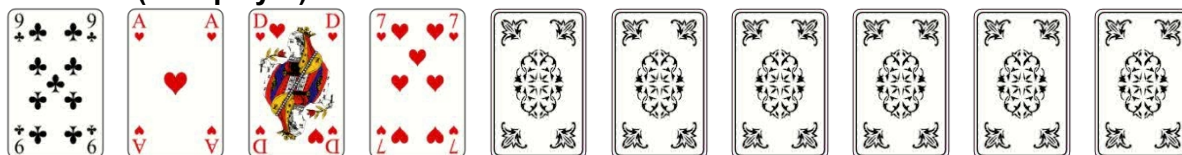
Before we get to the tactical examples, I would like to introduce a special measure of counterplay.

### The blanking of the king:

This is a tactical pattern that can bring about the decisive turn in favor of the other party in the endgame. I mention it because it is hardly known among casual players and is rarely played because of the "king loyalty". Not only the king in three, but also the king simply ordered could theoretically make a trick, which is why it takes some effort to break up this structure.

Let's consider the following situation: The solo player has the occupied ace of the only minor suit not yet played. He plays away his last trump and thus, for tactical reasons, puts himself in the backhand to catch the 10 of this minor suit. The Soloist has only 40 eyes on his account and needs this 10 to win the game. The now "inserted" opponent leads this 10 ordered. His partner has ordered the king. Let us now assume that clubs are trumps and that the cards face down here have already been played:

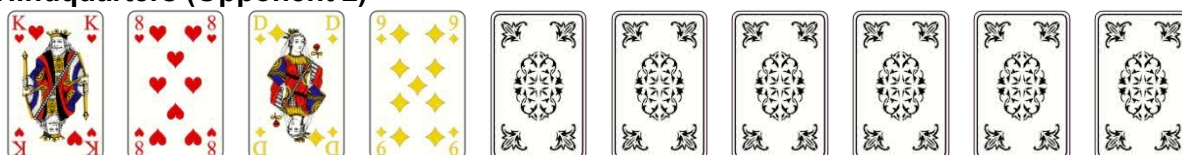
#### Forehand (solo player)



#### Middle hand (opponent 1)



#### Hindquarters (Opponent 2)



7. 9 of clubs, jack of spades... the insertion:

Opposite player 2 must know that the opposite party stands at 43 eyes after the 6th trick and that the suit of hearts was not yet on the table. We also assume that the whereabouts of the two diamonds are clear. Opponent 2 might now be tempted to play in the 7. trick his highest endangered counting card (King of Hearts) to whimper. But he should ask himself why the Soloist played his last trump and put himself in the backhand position. What is he trying to do? Then it should become clear that the Soloist most likely has to lead the Ace of Hearts. If this was with partner, then (after the 2 eyes of the 7th trick) the following trick with ace of hearts and king of hearts would already bring victory to the other party (60). So in this case it would not be necessary to place another picture in the 7th trick. So the danger for the opposing party is that the solo player with his ace of hearts succeeds in making a cut on the 10 of hearts.

The distribution shows: By swarming the king of hearts, the solo player would actually win, because the 10 of hearts could no longer escape him.

The addition of the queen of diamonds would also be profitable for the solo player, because even after that he would catch the 10 of hearts if he played consistently (waiting for the 10 of hearts without any ifs or buts).

Only the immediate blanking of the king with

7. 9 of clubs, jack of spades, 8 of hearts (!) puts the solo player on the losing track:  
Of course, opponent 1 must now first bring forward his standing king of diamonds, so that he can no longer be played in.

8. King of diamonds (!), Queen of diamonds, 7 of hearts

9. 9 of hearts, king of hearts...

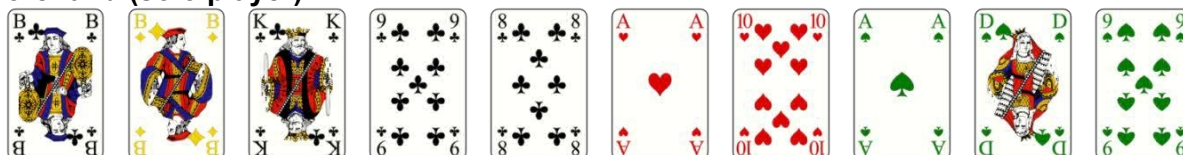
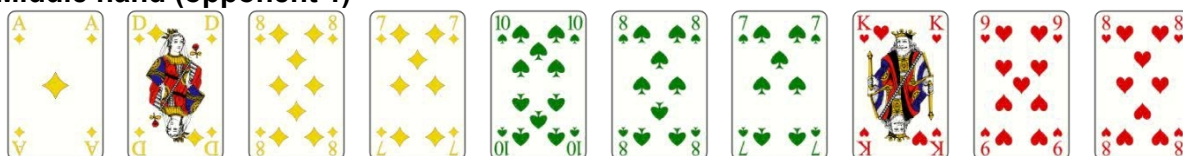
The solo player can now choose whether to lose with 55:65 or with 40:80.

Less experienced players often cling as if paralyzed to a king in three or to their ordered 10, because theoretically they can "take a trick" with it, and hold this 3 or 2 combination to the bitter end. But if you focus on winning the game, then such structures as "ordered 10" and "picture in three" have to be broken up sometimes in favor of an overall plan.

I have mentioned these tactical building blocks (motifs, patterns, techniques - call it what you like) in loose order - without priorities - so that the following examples become more understandable in terms of their tactical structure. I have chosen games that offer chances for both parties and in which tactical patterns and advanced playing techniques play a decisive role. If you are not yet so skilled in analysis, it may be helpful to lay out these games with a real Skat hand and replay them trick by trick. There is no shame in this, by the way. Many good chess players replay sample games and don't do it "blindly", although they could, but use a chessboard with pieces. This makes things clearer and it is easier to concentrate on the essentials of a tactical variation. Very useful for this are also skat editors for the computer, like the unique skat analysis program "Kiebitz" ([www.siegfried-skat.de](http://www.siegfried-skat.de)).



*A "smoke eater" from the early 20th century that can be electrically illuminated from the inside.*

**Tactical motives in practice:****Example TM 1: Color play against a trump supremacy****forehand (solo player)****Middle hand (opponent 1)****Hindquarters (Opponent 2)****In Skat: Diamonds 10-9**

Middle hand bid to 23 and then passed. The no-bid was risky enough. Hinterhand doesn't want to bid 24 because she thinks she can't get the game for 24 anyway. Hinterhand rules out the possibility that forehand and middlehand both bid a zero game, because she herself has two 7s in her hand. If, contrary to expectations, she does get the game for 24, then Forehand would probably have passed on her own suit value, and thus she would probably run against 5 trumps with her planned cross play. But she could hardly cope with that because of her weak side card. So the passing is quite plausible.

Now forehand comes into play for 23. She finds diamonds 10-9, pushes them again (10) and plays clubs. The bidding was unsuspecting, and so Forehand opens with the Jack of Clubs to first claim 2 trumps and keep the initiative. So she plans a normal tempo play. Of course, a trump undercard would also be playable, but that is beside the point here. The first trick...

1. Jack of clubs, 7 of diamonds, 7 of clubs = 2 (12)...

...reveals a very unfavorable distribution. Forehand recognizes: backhand has 6 trumps including ace-10 and two jacks, but it does not even simply bid this suit to 24. This means that middlehand probably leads the missing solids (ace of diamonds, spade-10) - it can hardly be worse. The tempo plan doesn't work because the solo player can't build up trump dominance. So now he goes over the villages with the plan to save his own fulls, to collect as many eyes as possible, and to poke the missing eyes afterwards. An important part of the plan is to capture a trump full from opponent 2.

2. Ace of hearts, 8 of hearts, 7 of hearts = 11 (23)
3. 10 of hearts, 9 of hearts, queen of hearts = 13 (36)
4. Ace of spades, 7 of spades, king of spades = 15 (51)

So far, everything has gone well. The opponent 2 in backhand now still has 5 trumps and a suit card. If the solo player now succeeds in forcing the other party to play (insertion), he knows that he will win for sure, because he will capture a trump from behind.

5. spades-9, spades-10, king of diamonds = - 14

Opponent 1 can now play whatever he wants: the Soloist only has to wait for a trump full from Opponent 2, which he intercepts with the Jack of Diamonds.

Incidentally, it is of no use to the other party if opponent 2 already places a trump full in the 5th trick and continues with, say, 6. King of Diamonds.... Then the Soloist discards his queen of spades and waits for the last trump. In all variations the Soloist can choose "his" trick for the Jack of Diamonds. But he could also play 6th King of Diamonds... with the King of Clubs = 8 (59) and then play 7th Queen of Spades... to make another safe trick with the Jack of Diamonds.

You will have noticed it by now: The key card was laid in the first trick. If opponent 2 holds his trump 7 here and sacrifices queen of clubs for it, he can go to

- 5. 9 of spades, 10 of spades, king of diamonds
- 6. 8 of spades, ace of clubs (!), queen of spades the insertion....
- 7. 7 of clubs (!), king of clubs, 8 of diamonds...

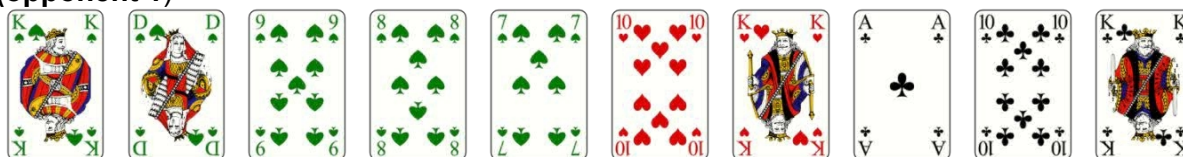
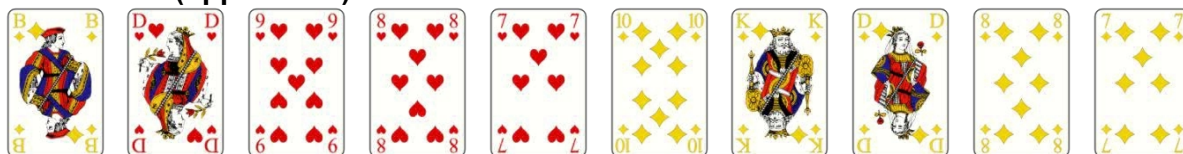
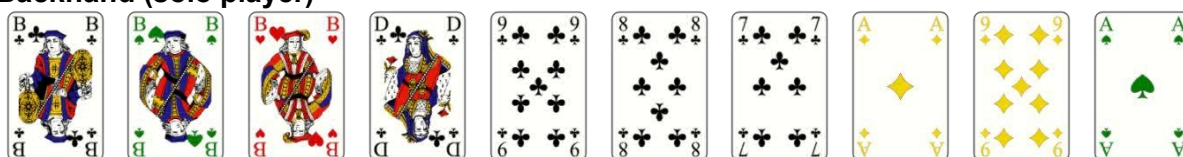
...to make the rest afterwards. Then the solo player loses with 58:62 (not 55:65, because he already received the 3 eyes of the queen of clubs in the first trick).

There are not many Skat players who can plan so far-sightedly at the table within a few seconds - but the queen sacrifice cannot be dismissed out of hand: After all, the opponent 2 already knows after the first card played that the solo player may hardly continue to draw trumps after the first trick, but must and will go over the minor suits. But this is exactly what will lead to the cross player sitting behind him later with the protected jack of diamonds. We find several tactical motifs in this game: tactical attraction, planned tempo play, going over the villages and insertion (or play-off, because the solo player does not know for sure before the 5th trick where spade-10 sits). One could also call the "eye sacrifice" of the queen of clubs a tactical device, if it had been played: The opponent sacrifices 3 eyes in order to reserve the trump 7 for a later steering (insertion).

*"Bring the player into the middle, wherever you can! For according to this good custom, he never knows where he stands. So if the one on the left were to approach the game as often as possible, and the game were to limp, it would be easy to lose it.*

*(Skat book in verse, by Paul Renz, 1888)*



**Example TM 2: A giant in hind forehead****(opponent 1)****Middle hand (opponent 2)****Backhand (solo player)****In Skat: 10 of spades, ace of hearts**

Midhand rices forehand at the following levels: 18, 20, 23, which forehand just holds. She intends to pass if the bidding value is above 23. Midhand now immediately bids 27, to which Forehand passes. Backhand naturally continues to bid and after 59 must also bid 60 to get to the game. Now one could think about picking up the Skat, either to find the Grand or, in case of bad finding, to try a cross play with a silent Schneider. Of course, Hinterhand doesn't know that with the ace of hearts and the 10 of spades there are two monsters in the skat.

She decides to play what she thinks is a safe game of "cross hand".

Because forehand was attentive, it has noticed that middle hand next to the zero value "23" bid only the suit values of diamonds and hearts, but omitted the suit values for clubs and spades. This could mean that middle hand leads neither clubs nor spades. She also guesses correctly that middle hand could hardly lead a spade card in the hand anyway with her planned Null Ouvert hand.

And then the dance begins:

1. King of spades, Jack of diamonds, Ace of spades = - 17
2. King of diamonds, ace of diamonds, ace of clubs = - 26 (- 43)

One could also have played 10 of diamonds here. That would have been more consistent, because the 10 of diamonds is lost anyway if the solo player has no diamonds.

Opponent 1 might now get the idea of playing 3rd queen of spades... because backhand might have bluffed on the addition of ace of spades in the first trick (with the sole purpose that middlehand should not lay a trump on a second round of spades). But since he himself leads 3 trumps and middle hand has already shown her jack of diamonds, she correctly guesses that opponent 2 has no trump left (besides, the latter had omitted the stimulus value 24!).

Therefore, opponent 1 bets that the solo player does not lead spades-10, but rather a lazy card in hearts or diamonds. Since he does not want to bet his only full (hearts-10) blindly and also knows that he cannot save his two trumps anyway, he shifts the duty of disclosure to the Soloist. Let him show himself whether he has hearts or diamonds:

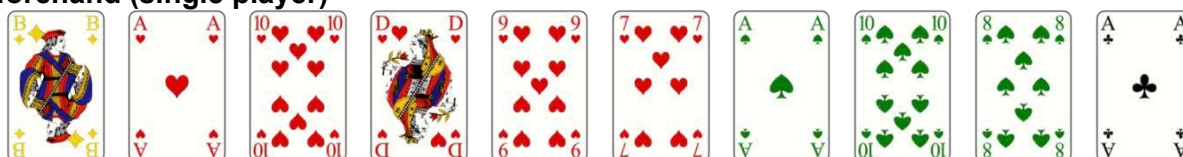
3. 10 of clubs (!), queen of hearts...

The solo player can now do whatever he wants. If he stays under, the 4th king of clubs, queen of diamonds... follows, which the solo player may no longer refuse (otherwise - 63). In any case, the other party gets one more trick with 9 of diamonds, 10 of diamonds and 10 of hearts = - 20 (- 63).

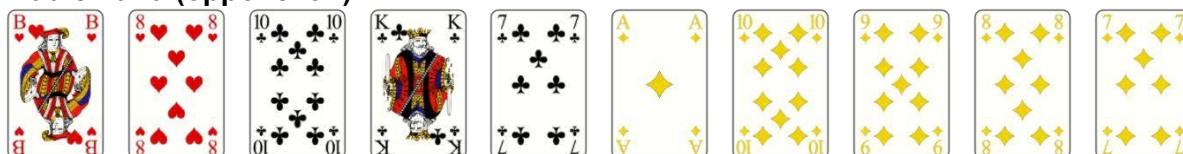
Also in this game there were two tactical motives that were part of a winning plan: The tactical bidding (showing spade freedom and club freedom by the middle hand) and the trump insertion. In this case, the trump insertion was not a spectacular play of beauty, but absolutely necessary to prevent the discard of the 9 of diamonds while at the same time reserving the last full: After all, the 10 of hearts was not allowed to be bid, otherwise a full would have been missing at the end to load on the 10 of diamonds. Incidentally, the insertion would also have been indispensable after 2nd 10 of diamonds (!), ace of diamonds, ace of clubs = - 32 (- 49).

### Example TM 3: Tempo game with mock sacrifice

#### forehand (single player)



#### Middle hand (opponent 1)



#### Hindquarters (Opponent 2)



### In Skat: King of Diamonds, Queen of Diamonds

Middlehand ruffed Forehand in the following increments: 18, 20, 23 and passed when Forehand held 23. Backhand continued to 33 before passing. Forehand picked up the Skat and is now playing hearts after pushing two diamonds. Although the trump distribution is very favorable and the game looks very strong, it must be played carefully. The double counter bidding should be a warning.

1. Jack of Diamonds, 8 of Hearts, Jack of Spades = - 4

Opponent 2 noticed during the bidding that opponent 1 had omitted the bidding value for spades. Moreover, spades is his longest suit.

Since he does not lead a full himself, he thinks he has a chance of winning only by tapping off the single player's full. This is probably in spades. Opponent 2 hopes that his partner will take a trick and continue in diamonds.

2. King of spades, 10 of spades, Jack of hearts = - 16 (- 20)

Opponent 1 now does not dare to play his long diamond ace because he is afraid it would be poked. He doesn't want to play small diamonds either, because that would probably give the solo player a cheap discard. So he tries a blind pass in clubs, so that the solo player can get back to the center. But he doesn't want to risk the 10 of clubs for various reasons:

3. King of clubs, 8 of clubs, Ace of clubs

If the success of the handover was part of the only plan, then actually the cross-10 had to be played. But there are still substitute plans. In any case, the transfer attempt has failed, and now it's the solo player's turn again. He knows that spades are unfavorable and that the king of hearts and jack of clubs are still out. Of course, he only wants to make one more trump trick, which is why he doesn't play a lousy heart, but makes an eye sacrifice:

4. 10 of hearts (!), ace of diamonds, jack of clubs = - 23 (- 43)

Opponent 2 now knows that the Soloist had a 6-trump with Ace of Clubs, Ace of Spades-10 and a still unknown card, probably 8 of Spades. The last theoretical victory possibility is that the Soloist (who of course has also registered the signal stimulus of Opponent 1) may have pressed the louse of spades after all and kept a diamond picture in his hand instead. In that case, a trick with an ace of diamonds, a diamond picture and a black queen would just be enough. This results in a compelling distribution assumption to which there is no alternative. The solo player must now be pushed in, which is done most effectively in trumps. The king of hearts cannot be saved anyway, and the opponent 1 will recognize him as the "last of the Mohicans":

5. King of Hearts, Ace of Hearts...

The correct and good attempt is unfortunately unsuccessful, because the other party makes only one trick with spades-9, spades-8 and diamonds-10 = - 10 (- 53). The rest goes to the heart player. But this does not change the quality of the counterplay!

If the Soloist had carelessly opened with a Queen of Hearts or played a Queen of Hearts in the 4th trick, he would have brought home his 10 of Hearts, but he would have given away one more trump trick and lost the game.

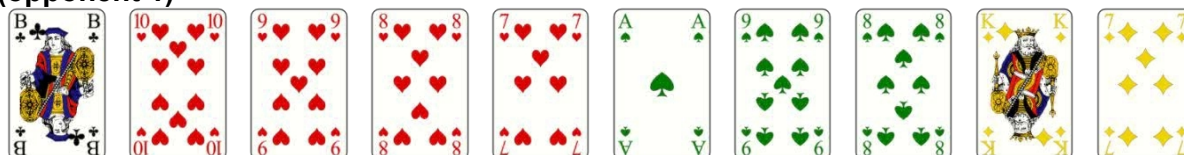
So the eye sacrifice of the trump 10 was only a dummy sacrifice. In reality, it saves a trick and incidentally leads to the conquest of the king of hearts. Playing the trump 10 can also be called a tempo move, because it accelerates the build-up of the trump monopoly, just like the correct opening with the jack of diamonds.

In addition to the tempo move and the eye sacrifice (mock sacrifice) of the solo player, there were also tactical measures by the opposing party in this game: the tactical signal stimulus to indicate the spade freedom, an attempted "blind pass", a compelling distribution assumption and a trump insertion. One might consider the signal bidding questionable or even ineffective, because the solo player could also understand it.

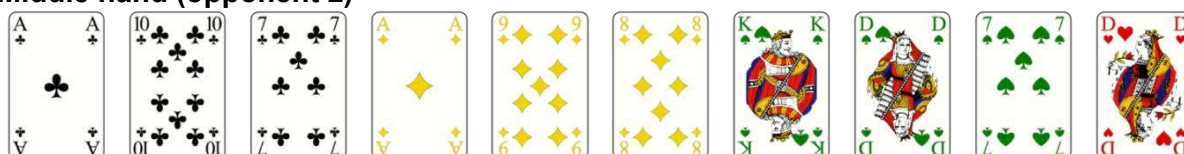
But this game shows that he couldn't do much with the information "spade freedom with middle hand". Was he supposed to push the spade cue and keep a diamond picture on top? Then he would have lost the game...

#### Example TM 4: A hot cut in hind forehand

(opponent 1)



Middle hand (opponent 2)



Backhand (solo player)



**In Skat: spades-10, diamonds-10**

Middle hand had immediately passed. Forehand held 18 and passed at 20. Backhand now plays clubs after pushing spades-10 and diamonds-10.

1. 7 of hearts, queen of hearts, king of hearts (?)

A seemingly harmless cut. The solo player already has 20 eyes in the cellar and now believes he only has to give up a total of 2 tricks.

2. Jack of spades, Jack of clubs, Ace of clubs = - 15

The solo player still hopes to play the opposing party Schneider, namely when only the ace and a louse fall on the queen of diamonds. But it comes quite differently:

3. 10 of hearts, 10 of clubs, ace of hearts = - 31 (- 46)

Opponent 2 now has several options. If the Soloist had a 7-trump, he now leads another unknown card in spades or diamonds. Then a trump insertion would not be a bad choice now. But if the Soloist had a 6-trump, then he still leads 2 unknowns and the partner still has a trump. Then a trump insertion might be disadvantageous, since the solo player could get himself cheaply into backhand and there get an option to cut or discard. One could now also play a clarifying card, which at the same time contains a threat for the solo player:

4. King of spades... ?



This could be disadvantageous, however, if the solo player did not take any more trumps and had an ace of spades. Then he would take the king and give up only 13 points on his spade luke. With 4th spade queen... he could stay under with the same result. So the opponent now plays diamonds, and the ace. A louse makes no sense if you still need 14 eyes. If the Soloist serves the Ace, at least one face will be added (he can't have pressed 10-King-Queen) and the game is beaten. If the solo player tricks the ace, he should end up with a spade trick with at least 14 eyes (a full plus king), and the game is also flat.

Many of you would instinctively draw the right ace of diamonds at this point anyway, without thinking long or considering the alternatives. That's just a good and obvious move. But it doesn't hurt to not only "automatically" find the best move, but also to know the arguments for your own correct choices.

4. Ace of diamonds (!), queen of diamonds, king of diamonds = - 18 (- 64)

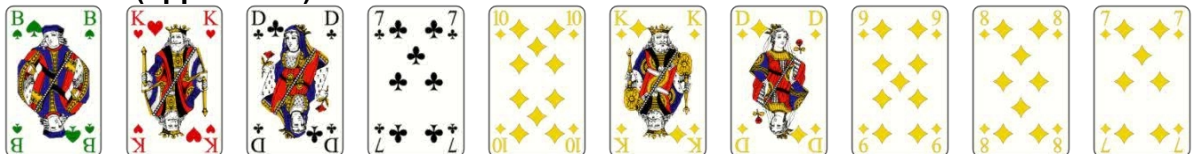
Here, too, it was important to test only those variants that can also lead to success. Everything else is a waste of energy.

You have probably recognized the "mistake" of the soloist: If he does not cut in the first trick, but lays the ace of hearts, then he wins with this distribution. However, even then his cross play is not theoretically safe: after all, with an extreme distribution, 2 trumps and 2 fat suit tricks could go away, to which the solo player would also have to contribute 9 eyes.

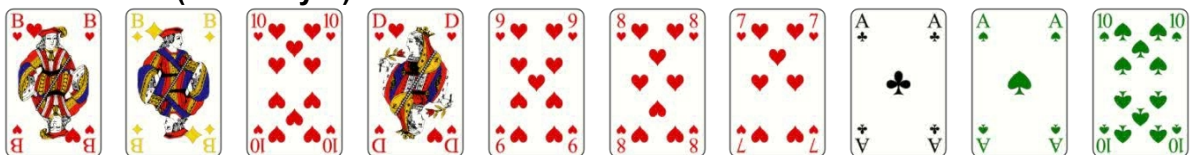
Of course, you have again noticed the game technical patterns: the tactical irritation by forehand (pass to own irritation value), the check of a possible trump insertion and the - here unsuccessful - cut attempt with the king.

### Example TM 5: Release from the predicament?

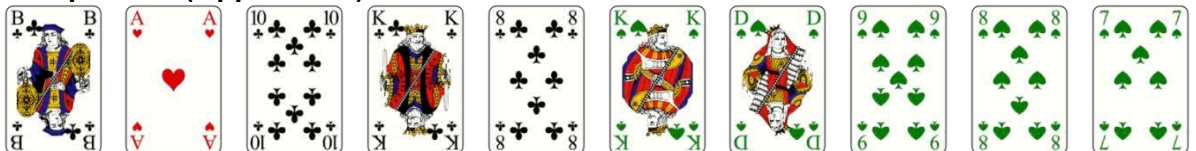
#### Forehand (opponent 1)



#### Middle Hand (Solo Player)



#### Hindquarters (Opponent 2)



In Skat: Ace of Diamonds, 9 of Clubs



Forehand held 18 and passed at 20. Backhand bid somewhat boldly to 33 and then passed as well. If middlehand had known that the ace of diamonds and 9 of clubs were in the skat, she probably would have picked it up to play a grand. But as it was, she played a heart hand.

1. 10 of diamonds, 7 of hearts, ace of hearts = - 21

Backhand could now look for a transfer in clubs (in spades a direct suit transfer is as good as impossible), so that forehand can continue with diamonds again. However, she suspects that the solo player has a rather strong minor card (hand play!), which makes a successful transfer in clubs not very likely. So she looks for the handover by discard and plays her longest suit:

2. King of spades, king of hearts, ace of spades (!) = - 19 (- 40)

A strong bluff! The solo player pretends that the ace was blank. He knows that he is in a tight spot and that now diamonds are threatening again with an overtrick. Afterwards, opponent 2 will come in spades again, and in this case the Soloist hopes that opponent 1 remembers the 2nd trick and does not want to stab into the void with his last trump.

3. King of diamonds, 8 of hearts, jack of clubs = - 6 (- 46)

Opponent 2 might now be bluffed and, looking at the second trick, assume that spades-10 are in the Skat. But he sees no better continuation, because the only alternative 4th of clubs... would be a shot into the blue. So he sticks to his hitherto successful plan:

4. Queen of spades, jack of spades (!), 10 of spades = - 15 (- 61)

Of course, opponent 1 goes along with his partner's plan and trumps the queen with the jack, partly because a normal trump trick (luke of hearts, jack of spades, 1 full) would not be enough to win. The solo player has bluffed well, but unfortunately without success.

Could the single player have prevented his defeat?

1. 10 of diamonds, jack of diamonds (!), jack of clubs = - 14
2. King of spades, king of hearts, ace of spades (!) - the same bluff = - 19 (- 33)
3. King of Diamonds, Jack of Hearts (!)...

The solo player must stop the attack, no matter how. The second spade trick must be prevented. If, contrary to expectations, the Jack of Spades was sitting behind him (why did the Jack of Clubs fall in the first trick?) and the Ace of Hearts was lurking in front of him (why did the King of Hearts fall in the second trick?), then the nailing attempt would have failed. But here the nailing is successful: Opponent 2 can't pass the Jack of Hearts.

4. 7 of hearts, ace of hearts, jack of spades = - 13 (- 46) and the rest goes to the solo player.

The rescue attempt would not have worked if, after the third trick, the Jack of Spades and the Ace of Hearts had been on one hand and the 10 of Clubs and a King on the other. But the solo player should not worry about such loss distributions.

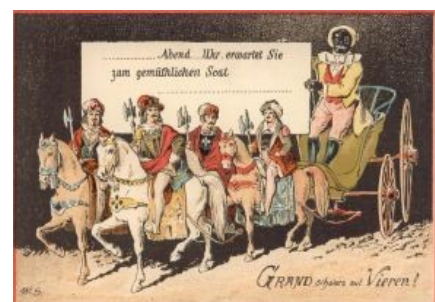
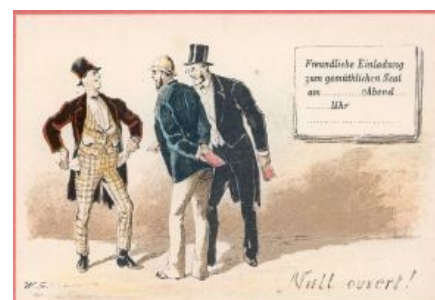
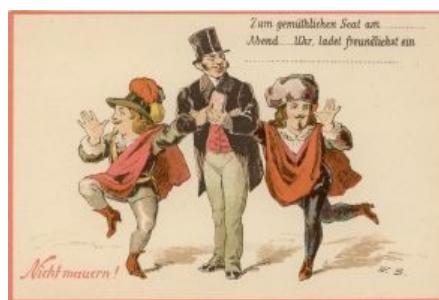
The question in this critical situation must be "How can I still win now?" and not "What do I do if I can't win at all?".

The key question of the whole game is: "Can the Soloist recognize that he has to nail 1. Diamonds- 10... with a Jack?".

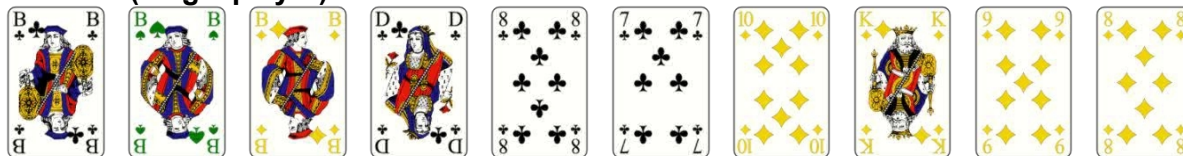
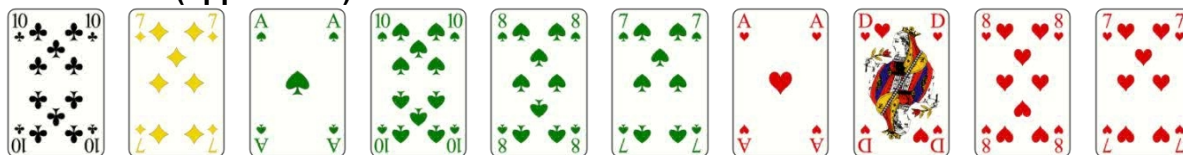
Let's look at the bidding and the service: backhand has bid spades, either with 2 or single hand. So there are at least 4 spades, more likely 5, and at least one big jack. But forehand also bid. She held 18 and passed on 20. This was certainly not a tactical pass to her own suit value, because she could *n e v e r* have planned a heart game. So it was rather a diamond suit with enormous suit length, where forehand did not have to fear that someone else would bid diamonds. From these facts "long spades back, long diamonds front", the unknown Skat, and the opening 1st diamond-10... one must consider the possibility of the overtrick. It is not even necessary to have an ace of diamonds in the skat, a small diamond would do. There are quite a few players who would open, for example, from ace-10-king-9-8-7 against middle hand with the 10. Forehand could even lead 7 diamonds, but no jack. Even then she would not have been obliged to bid more than 18.

If you have recognized the concrete danger of the overtrick, you could therefore come up with the good idea of tacking on 1. diamonds-10... with a jack, in order to finally try the emergency brake with the second jack in the 3rd trick in the case of an overtrick and subsequent spade trick (you have to expect it, and you can't ward it off).

In any case, it is not a waste of trump strength to immediately play the jack on 1. diamonds-10..., even if the backhand would have to serve diamonds. If the trumps are 4:0, you give away 4 trumps anyway. Only with trumps 2:2 can this ugly "ping-pong" (overtrick - trick - overtrick - trick) occur. Against trump 3:1 you should actually always win with the diamond opening, no matter how you trick. The super-GAU 1st overtrick in 10 diamonds followed by a 2nd truncation in 10 spades with a subsequent charge to two trumps can be ruled out in this suit. If it were to happen anyway, the defeat would be unavoidable.



Historical invitation cards to a "scat evening", all signed with W.S. (?)

**Example TM 6: Two color game with headwind****forehand (single player)****Middle hand (opponent 1)****Hindquarters (Opponent 2)****In Skat: 10 of hearts, queen of spades**

Middle hand wanted to play a Null Ouvert. With 10 of hearts and queen of spades in the Skat, she would have won for sure. But she didn't make her move, because forehand held 46. Backhand did not intervene in the bidding any more. Forehand, of course, played the cross hand and opened with the old one:

1. Jack of clubs, 10 of clubs, 9 of clubs

The lesson to be learned from this trick is that if Middlehand really did bid Null Ouvert, she can hardly have any other cards of clubs. It also does not have the Jack of Hearts, otherwise it would have shown it in the first trick. So the remaining trumps are in the backhand of opponent 2. There could also be trumps in the Skat, but the Soloist does not want to rely on that. Therefore, the tempo play is now interrupted in order to build up the diamonds as standing cards (replacement trump). To do this, of course, the ace of diamonds must be displaced. Because of the one-sided distribution of trumps, the game is as good as hopeless if the diamonds are also on a hand, so the bet is on diamonds 2:1. It makes no sense to start the diamond clarification with the king, because the 10 would have to be offered later as a replacement trump anyway. After about 2nd king of diamonds, 7 of diamonds, queen of diamonds... and 3rd 9 of diamonds, ace of spades, ace of diamonds... the opposing party would already have 22 eyes and could later cut off the 10 of diamonds with a charge. Then the game would hardly be winnable for the Soloist, because the opposing party would make another trick with the Jack of Hearts with already 53 or 54 eyes. So the 10 is bid immediately:

2. 10 of diamonds (!), 7 of diamonds, ace of diamonds = - 21

It doesn't matter what suit comes next except diamonds, the solo player trumps everything:

3. 9 of hearts, queen of clubs, 7 of hearts
4. King of Diamonds, 7 of Spades, Queen of Diamonds
5. 9 of diamonds, 8 of hearts, 9 of spades
6. 8 of Diamonds, 8 of Spades, King of Hearts
7. 7 of clubs, ace of spades, ace of clubs = - 22 (- 43)

8. King of spades, 8 of clubs, 10 of spades
9. Jack of spades, Queen of hearts, King of clubs

and 10. jack of diamonds, ace of hearts, jack of hearts = - 15 (- 58)

The Soloist has won and would even have scored 2 more eyes if he had played 7th Jack of Spades (the game is already safe, and at least there is a theoretical Schneider chance if there are 2 trumps in the Skat). However, opponent 2 could have played stronger. If he suspects that the solo player is leading the 10 of diamonds in four in addition to his 6 trumps, then he must run the 10 in the second trick:

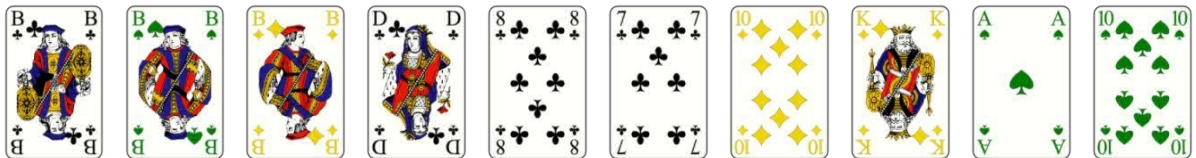
2. 10 of diamonds (!), 7 of diamonds, queen of diamonds (!!)

The solo player will not, of course, rely thereafter on the fact that ace of diamonds might be in the skat:

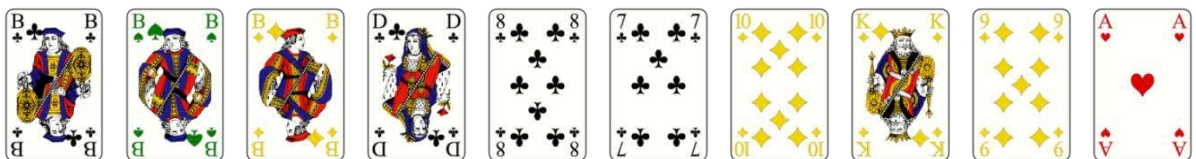
3. 8 of diamonds, ace of spades, ace of diamonds = - 22

And later follows about: King of Diamonds, 10 of Spades, Ace of Clubs = - 25 (- 47) and 9 of Diamonds, Ace of Hearts, Jack of Hearts = - 13 (- 60). What is certain is that opponent 2 makes two tricks with ace of trumps and jack of hearts, capturing the king of diamonds of the solo player, which with the charge of ace of hearts and spades-10 is enough to win = 60:60.

Now the question arises whether and how Hinterhand could have recognized the actual distribution with the 4 diamonds on Vorhand. After all, this forehand sheet would also be possible, for example:



or this:



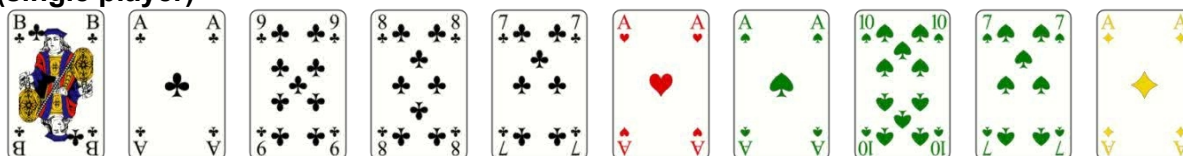
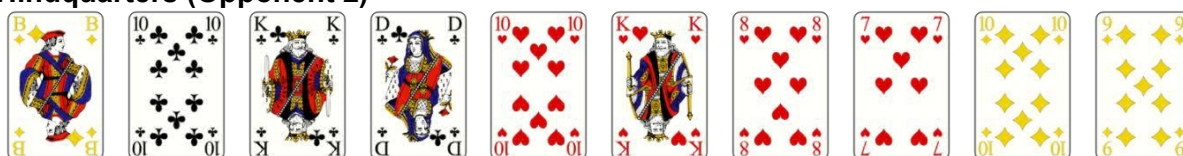
But would the game even be winnable for the other party then? According to

2. 10 of diamonds, 7 of diamonds, ace of diamonds = - 21

the other party would only make the two trumps with ace and jack (13) and would have to get 26 additional eyes. But this is not possible, because backhand leads all suits twice and therefore can't take any or not enough eyes of the solo player. The cards of opponent 1 alone are not enough.

So if opponent 2 concentrates only on distributions that will allow him to win, he will soon consider the variant "4 diamonds" and not give a thought to the fact that there might be two fulls in the Skat. You don't have to recognize this, but you can. And when it is recognized, the 10 of diamonds should be denied.



**Example TM 7: A critical forehand endgame****(single player)****Middle hand (opponent 1)****Hindquarters (Opponent 2)****Pressed: King of Diamonds, Queen of Spades**

Middlehand and backhand had passed without bidding, which was of course a confirmation for Forehand to "absolutely" play a grand with her hand and not to try a cheap cross play. She had pressed 7 eyes and started with the old man:

1. Jack of clubs, Jack of hearts, Jack of diamonds = 6 (13)
2. Ace of spades, 8 of spades, 7 of hearts = 11 (24)

The first surprise is perfect. Opponent 1 has all spades against and probably also the last jack. The solo player naturally switches to his second long suit to keep strength in spades:

3. Ace of clubs, Jack of spades, 10 of clubs = - 23

The second surprise. Opponent 1 has of course registered the discard of the 7 of hearts in the second trick and thus knows that he cannot break anything in hearts. If his partner had an acutely endangered heart card, he would hardly have discarded the 7 of hearts.

4. 9 of hearts, king of hearts, ace of hearts = 15 (39)

The solo player still has 10 of spades and ace of diamonds. However, there is a danger that he will only get lucas on them and then lose his game 60:60. He could now play his ace of diamonds on the off chance and hope that perhaps the queen of diamonds is blank. But this probability is much too small for him. Instead, he tries an insertion, only to catch a picture or build up a cross trick. He knows for sure that the remaining spade cards are on the left and the club cards on the right, and can trust that sooner or later he will be played diamonds:

5. 9 of clubs, queen of hearts, king of clubs = - 7 (- 30)
6. 10 of hearts, 7 of spades, king of spades = - 14 (- 44)



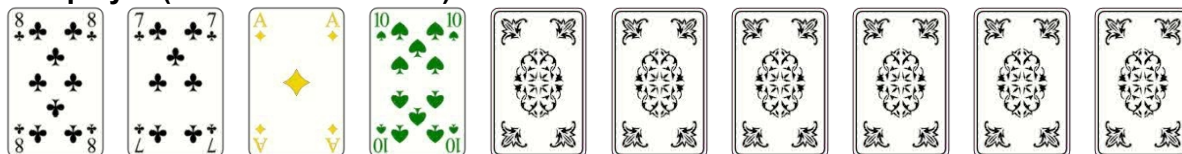
It is quite natural that opponent 2 has played his strong 10 of hearts, after all it is not endangered because all the jacks are out of the game. But now he should pause before drawing his other two strong cards (queen of clubs, 8 of hearts). Less experienced players would play through their standing cards here, which also seems obvious, only to realize disappointedly at the end that "unfortunately" it was not enough to win.

The decisive endgame position:

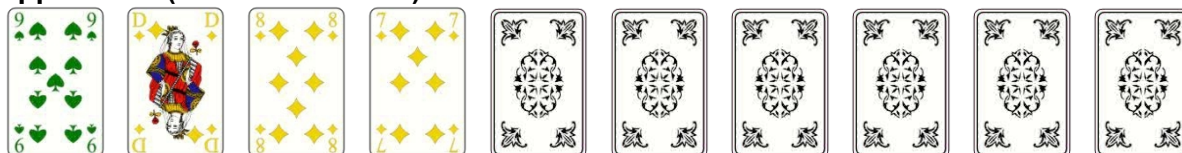
#### Opponent 2 (now in forehand)



#### Solo player (now in middle hand)



#### Opponent 1 (now in backhand)



If opponent 2 was paying attention, he knows that partner can't have the 10 of spades, otherwise he would have ruffed it in the 6th trick instead of the king of spades. So partner either has no full left or he leads the ace of diamonds. But the latter is hardly likely, because otherwise he would have played it already in the 4th trick (incidentally, the soloist's grand would then have been extremely daring). But if partner has no more full, then his own 10 of diamonds must make a trick. So it should be played free now, even with the risk that the solo player leads the ace and king of diamonds as well as a ruff of clubs in addition to the 10 of spades (then the 10 of diamonds and thus the game will be lost anyway).

Disastrous for the other party would be the token move (which sometimes comes reflexively to casual players in order to "secure the trick"):

7. 8 of hearts (?), 8 of clubs, queen of

diamonds = - 3 (- 47) Now the solo player

captures the 10 of diamonds:

8. 9 of diamonds, ace of diamonds, 7 of diamonds

9. Spades-10... Now opponent 2 must sacrifice his 10 of diamonds if he wants to make any trick at all with the queen of clubs.

Even 8. Queen of clubs... does not change anything, because the solo player makes the last two tricks and thereby cashes the 10 of diamonds.

However, the other party wins if opponent 2 evaluates all the information correctly after the 6th trick and plays the 9 of diamonds.

In order to win, he simply has to rely on the fact (presumption of distribution) that the solo player must lay the ace of diamonds, because how else could the 10 of diamonds be saved?

7. 9 of diamonds, ace of diamonds, 7 of diamonds = 11 (50)

The solo player has no more chance. He only gets spades 10 with 2 louses and loses. 60:60!

The solo player's rescue attempt after the 4th trick (he was at 39 at that point) could also have been via a spade insertion....

5. Spades-10, Spades-9, Hearts-8 = 10 (49)

6. Spades-7, Spades-K, Diamonds-10 = - 14 (- 37)

...to sit in hindquarters afterwards. But then he would have his pants down in 3 colors and could no longer control anything in diamonds:

7. Heart-9, Heart-10...

The solo player only gets the last trick with ace of diamonds and two luses = 60:60.

What seems essential to me here is the good rescue attempt of the solo player: he knows or suspects that his game will end on 60 when he draws his last two fulls. But he does not lose his game, but gives the opponent the opportunity to make a mistake or even several mistakes. If opponent 2 is not very attentive, the single player's plan will work.

### Example TM 8: A blocked insertion forehand

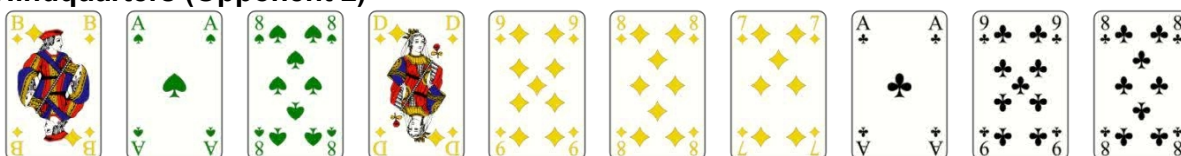
#### (opponent 1)



#### Middle Hand (Solo Player)



#### Hindquarters (Opponent 2)



### In Skat: 10 of Clubs, King of Diamonds

Forehand had held 18 and passed at 20. Backhand had a 5-trump with 2 aces, but did not take advantage of it, but passed after bidding 23.

She had recognized her hand as a "Blender" - especially because of the double counter bidding - and wanted to keep a zero option open in any case. Now middlehand plays grand after she has pushed 10 of clubs and king of diamonds.

1. 10 of hearts, ace of hearts, jack of diamonds = - 23

A standard opening. Forehand could have started with diamonds, but she hopes for a heart discard by her partner. Opponent 2 now plays an ace and chooses the shorter of two suits:

2. Ace of spades, ace of diamonds, 9 of spades (!) = - 22 (- 45)

The addition of the 9 is well considered. The only danger for the solo player is that he must give up the 7 of hearts to the king of hearts and opponent 2 can load the last remaining ace. Opponent 2, of course, recognizes the spades of the Soloist and knows that he can only have one "lazy" card besides spades and the Jacks. In the winning sense, this should be a louse in clubs or hearts or the blank king of diamonds (not very likely).

Now, opponent 2 could play ace of clubs on the off chance to get the necessary 15 eyes. But if the ace were poked, the game could no longer be beaten. It would be better if the Soloist had to play his own last suspected weakness and had no opportunity for a discard. So Opponent 2 wants to push the Soloist into spades now and wait for the last trick, for which the Ace of Clubs is to be reserved. But the Soloist has foreseen this tactic and with the far-sighted addition of the 9 of spades in the second trick has constructed an insertion brake.

3. 8 of spades, 8 of hearts (?), 7 of spades

Opposite player 1 recognized the insertion attempt, but carelessly did not think about the seat of the 7 of spades. He should have noticed that the Soloist had conceded the 9 of spades, and that Opponent 2 had not played "any spade check", but the 8 of spades. Why didn't he play the 7? This would have made the insertion situation crystal clear.

4. Queen of diamonds, 10 of diamonds, 7 of hearts = - 13 (- 58). The rest goes to the solo player.

If opponent 1 had been attentive, he would have reinforced 3. spades-8... with at least one picture to make the refusal of the spade trick "expensive" for the solo player:

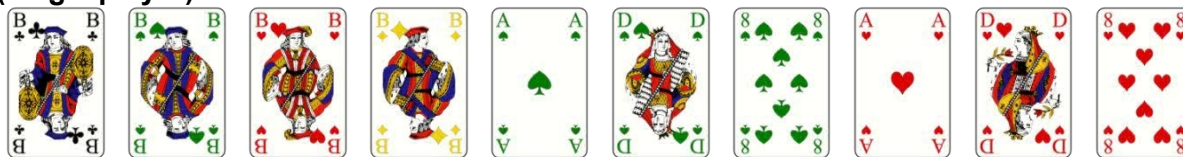
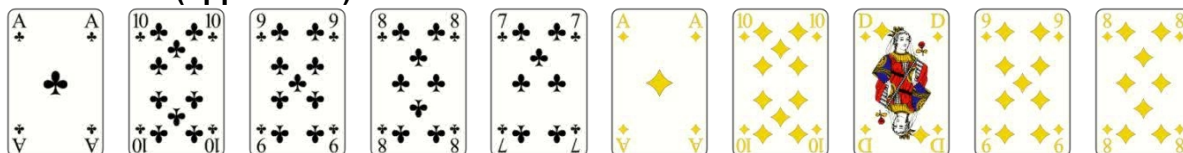
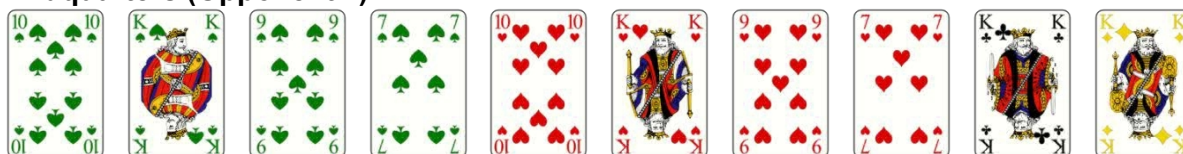
3. 8 of spades, queen of hearts (!), 7 of spades = - 3 (- 48)
4. Queen of diamonds (!), 10 of diamonds, Jack of spades (the discard is forced)

...and later follows: 7 of hearts, ace of clubs, king of hearts = - 15 (-

63) More direct is the irresistible sacrifice:

3. spades-8, diamonds-10 (!), spades-10 with the same final trick:

....Heart-7, Ace of Clubs, King of Hearts = - 15 (- 60).

**Example TM 9: Grand with forked forehand****(single player)****Middle hand (opponent 1)****Hindquarters (Opponent 2)****Pressed:** Queen of clubs, 7 of diamonds

Middlehand had bid only to 18, and backhand had no higher bid either. Forehand had found good, pushed queen of clubs and 7 of diamonds and is now playing grand. Even beginners know that the jack bluff with 1st jack of diamonds... is nonsense and only very rarely leads to middlehand whining a full. So forehand starts with a suit:

1. 8 of spades, ace of clubs, 10 of spades = - 21

Opponent 2 consequently continues with the won color:

2. King of clubs, Jack of diamonds, 7 of clubs

The solo player does not want to discard anything, but wants to clear the second suit as early as possible:

3. 8 of hearts, ace of diamonds, 10 of hearts = - 21 (- 42)

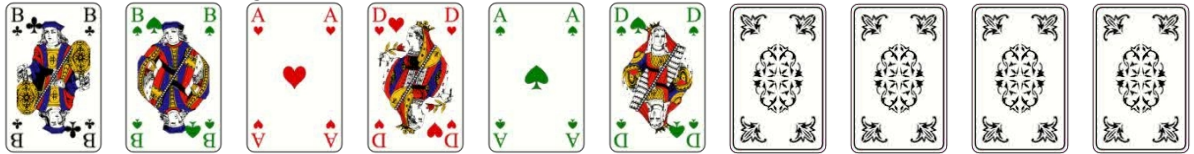
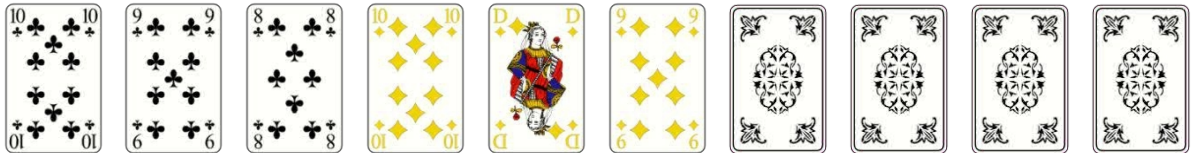
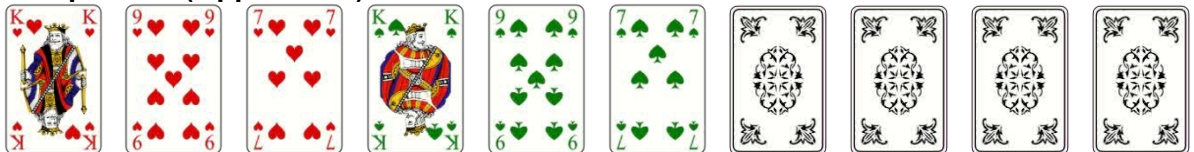
This clears up almost the entire distribution for the solo player. Opponent 1 has 5 clubs and 5 diamonds. The only thing that is unclear is where the 10 of diamonds sits.

4. King of Diamonds....

Now the solo player knows where the 10 of diamonds is, namely with opponent 1.

4. king of diamonds, jack of hearts, 8 of diamonds

The other party is already at 42 eyes and the remaining distribution is as follows:

**Forehand (solo player)****Middle hand (opponent 1)****Hindquarters (Opponent 2)**

At first glance, this doesn't look good at all for the solo player. He is still giving away two queens and the other party still has a lot of material to swarm. But the attentive single player knows this distribution exactly, because he knows what he has pressed and he has followed the course of the game. He can therefore afford a precise tactical maneuver by which he far-sightedly forces a fork and thus allows the other party only one trick instead of two:

5. Jack of clubs...
6. Jack of spades (!)...

The solo player has apparently played his last trumps senselessly. But there is a good plan behind it: Opponent 2, in order to preserve a chance of winning, must discard a louse of hearts and a louse of spades, so that he then still has the two kings that were simply ordered.

The Soloist now plays any Ace and the corresponding Queen immediately after:

7. Ace of spades...
8. Queen of spades, 10 of diamonds, king of spades = - 17 (- 59)

Regardless of which card opponent 2 now plays, the solo player takes the last two tricks. On 9. 9 of hearts... the Soloist places the Queen of hearts, and on 9. King of hearts... he naturally takes over with the Ace of hearts.

You have realized that the solo player could also draw the ace of spades (ace of hearts) first and then the two jacks in the 5th trick, the result would remain the same: he plays the queen of spades... (queen of hearts) in the 8th trick. The jack moves are indispensable, however, because they force the opponent 2 to reduce his hand. After about

5. Ace of spades, ..., 7 of spades
6. Queen of spades (?), 10 of diamonds, king of

spades = - 17 (- 59) could opponent 2 with the

last louse of spades

7. Spades-9... force the win for the other party.



Now, one could come to the conclusion that the grand is captive in this distribution. But it is not. The other party has a way to beat the game:

1. 8 of spades, ace of clubs, 9 of spades (!) = - 11

The cut with the 9 seems unusual, but it has decisive consequences:

2. King of spades...

What does the solo player want to do with the king?

2. King of spades, queen of spades, ace of diamonds = - 18 (- 29)
3. 7 of spades, ace of spades...

and it's the solo player's turn again. He has to compete with hearts, jack moves are of no use here:

4. Heart-8, Cross-10, Heart-10 = - 20 (- 49)
5. Spades-10 (!)... and the solo player is finished.

Or:

2. king of spades, ace of spades, 7 of clubs

The solo player can continue as he likes, he can neither prevent the fat spade trick of the other party nor build up a fork in hearts. If, for example, he plays down all the jacks, opponent 2 naturally holds the king of clubs along with the king of hearts 10 and spades 10, and the solo player has no chance.

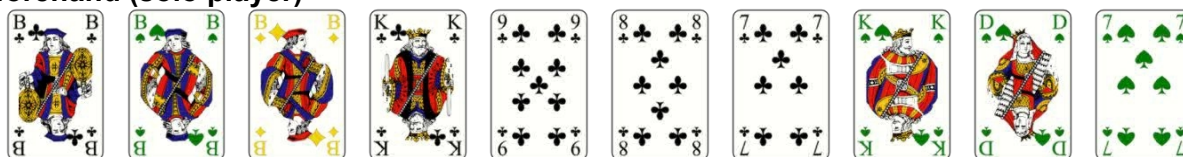
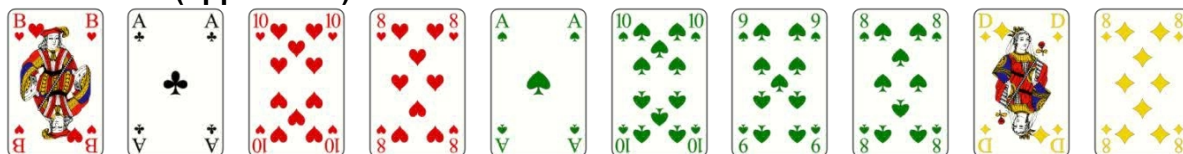
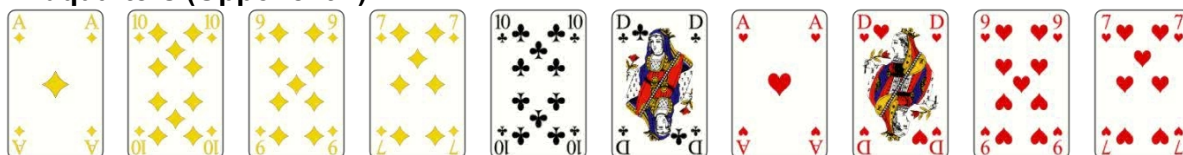
At first glance, one might think that opponent 2 must have a courageous and almost visionary foresight to recognize or anticipate the later threatening fork setup and to prevent it already in the first trick (by cutting with the 9).

Now imagine that the 7 of diamonds and the 8 of diamonds were reversed in our example. Then the 8 of diamonds would be in the Skat, and middle hand would have a safe Null Ouvert hand, which it would of course have bid. Would backhand (opponent 2), in view of his own hand (two longer suits, each with the 7 and the 9) and with the opener

1. 8 of spades, ace of clubs...

not be allowed to suspect that partner could, indeed should, have a two-suited hand in clubs and diamonds with the ruffed 59? Shouldn't opponent 2 then be able to figure out on his own that the grand player might only have spades and hearts in addition to his jacks? In this case, wouldn't one expect a strong player to develop a winning plan that would

1. 8 of spades, ace of clubs, 9 of spades (!) included?

**Example TM 10: An early recognized seven-trump****forehand (solo player)****Middle hand (opponent 1)****Hindquarters (Opponent 2)**

**Pressed:** King of Hearts, King of Diamonds

Middle hand had only bid to 18 and then passed. Backhand had no bid at all. Forehand could do nothing with the two kings from the Skat. She pushed them again and played clubs:

1. Jack of spades, Ace of clubs, Queen of clubs  
Here, of course, opponent 1 does not show his Jack of Hearts, because after all there is a chance that backhand leads the Jack of Clubs.
2. Jack of clubs, Jack of hearts, 10 of clubs
3. 7 of spades (!)...

Why does the solo player play the 7 of spades here and not the queen? Answer: He knows that he will win for sure if the spades are not 4:0. Then he can play the louse just as well as the queen or the king. But if they are 4:0 and the spade free opponent has 32 eyes to load, the game could easily be lost 60:60 with these 3 spade tricks to give away. For this "worst case" the spade check is a promising bluff: Won't the spade leading opponent ask himself whether a player who has king-queen check wouldn't rather draw the queen now? Wouldn't he have to assume, looking at the 7 of spades, that the solo player might have pushed the spade patterns or might have had the spade cue blank anyway?

Now all spades are actually on the opponent's 1. The opponent knows after the first two tricks that the solo player is playing a 7-trump. The two trumps are clear in this respect. He does not know what the Soloist has pressed, but he can check the chances of winning for different pressings. After all, it is certain that the Soloist must have 3 suit cards: If it is the 3 spades, the cutting with the 9 now wins, followed by 4th ace of spades... 5th 10 of spades..., provided that opponent 2 leads the 10 of diamonds in addition to the ace of diamonds and the ace of hearts (he must have them then!), i.e. the solo player must not have pressed the 10.

But if the Soloist has pressed Spades and/or there is a Spade card on Opponent 2, is the game winnable at all? In hearts a fat 21-eye trick would be possible, but not in diamonds. So the game cannot be beaten if the Soloist now has two red luses (hearts and/or diamonds) in his hand. If the Soloist had pushed the King of Spades and Queen of Spades with a Queen of Hearts in his hand, the takeover would win 3. 7 of Spades, Ace of Spades, Ace of Diamonds = 22 followed by 4. 10 of Spades, 10 of Diamonds (or King of Diamonds), Queen of Spades and 5. 10 of Hearts (!), Ace of Hearts, Queen of Hearts. However, if the Soloist had a Queen of Diamonds in addition to the Queen of Spades, nothing could be done, because a fat trick of Diamonds is ruled out.

Now it is in the nature of the game of skat that you have to choose a path without knowing for sure if it is the right one:

If the other player 1 decides to lay the ace here - i.e. not to cut - then he is betting on the card status "Queen of spades and Queen of hearts with the solo player". If he lays the 9, he is counting on the fact that the Soloist now still leads the King of Spades and the Queen of Spades.

Both variants are playable because they have a concrete and, above all, plausible plan.

Let's return to the questionable continuation 3. spades-7...

What if the solo player here were to play 3. Queen of Spades...?

3. Queen of spades, ace of spades, ace of diamonds = - 25

Now opponent 1 should rather assume that the solo player still has two spade cards, because then the offer of the queen makes a recognizable sense. Now - which is a classic technique when playing against the king in threes - a threat is built up to force the solo player to take the trick. With this threat, the player who wants to make the 3 suit tricks usually sacrifices a 10 to prevent a discard:

4. 10 of Hearts, Queen of Hearts (or Queen of Hearts)...

The threat stands! Opposite player 2 may of course not take with the ace if he has recognized the plan. If the solo player discards spades-7, 5 follows spades-10, ace of hearts, king of spades with a win for the opposing party. If the Soloist tricks, there are later the two planned spade tricks and the game ends 60:60 (always assuming the Soloist has not pushed the 10 of diamonds).

You will judge for yourself whether, from the point of view of the solo player, you would prefer the direct 3rd queen of spades... or the risky 3rd 7 of spades..., or even whether you would play 3rd king of spades.... There is no objectively best solution. However, you should take into account that 3. spades-7... would almost be an own goal, if the 4 spade cards were sitting in the opponent's 2 in backhand. It is important to know the chances and risks of the variants. By the way, they are all successful if no opponent is free of spades.

This should also be reason enough for the inexperienced solo player not to try a fun bluff such as 3rd of clubs-7... in this situation. No halfway experienced player will fall for that, because the trump situation is clearly clarified. If there is a blank spade somewhere, it is guaranteed to fly away now, and the bluff will backfire.

I would also make the decision "Queen or Lush" depending on who has bid what and how well I can tactically assess my fellow players.

The attacking techniques against the king in three are, as a rule, also applicable against the 10 in three. After all, it doesn't matter technically whether you want to cut out the combination 10-Queen-8 with ace-king-9-7 or the combination king-Queen-7 with ace-10-9-8: There should always be 3 tricks with 28 eyes, into which the other opponent can swarm the eyes still missing for victory. Often it is necessary to build up a threat after the first trick of the sequence, so that the solo player cannot discard a card of his weak suit.

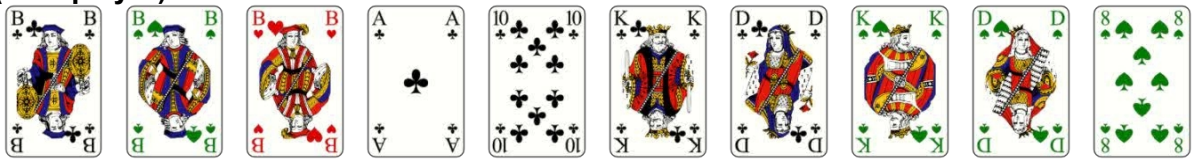
Since the simple attack against the king in three or against the 10 in three is already known to most skat beginners and is also quite easy to lead, experienced players have an aversion to the combinations king-9-8 or 10-dame-7. They do make the hand visually "beautiful!" if you have no other suit weaknesses, but they are not worth much and are easy to read. It is sometimes a good idea to press the highest counting card of the 3-card combo and hold a louse of another suit in the hand instead.

You will also find the king in three in the following two examples, but in other structures and with some surprising twists. I deliberately wanted to show the weakness "king in three" in three different variations, so that it becomes clear that winning plans are not structure-dependent ("against the king in three you always play like this"), but must be borne out by the concrete circumstances of the individual game. Sometimes it's just tiny little things that make the difference and require a different plan.

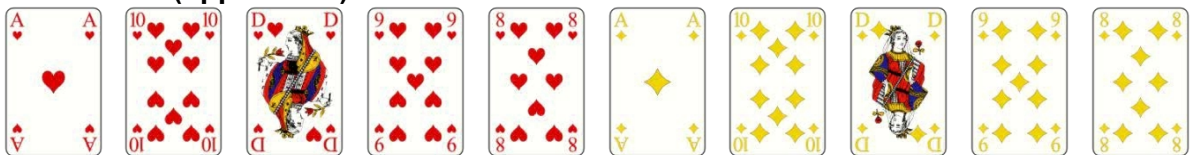
A game with truly extraordinary twists results from the following distribution:

### Example TM 11: A very special grand in forehand forehand

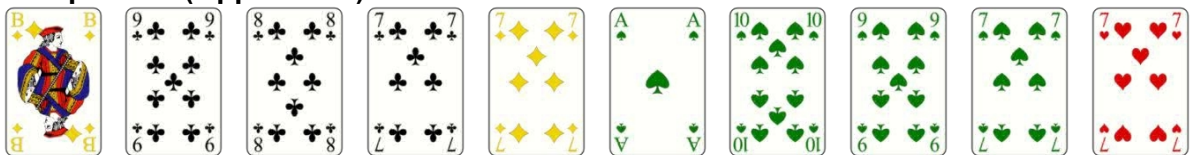
(solo player)



Middle hand (opponent 1)



Hindquarters (Opponent 2)



### In Skat: King of Hearts, King of Diamonds

Midhand had passed after irritated 20. Backhand still went to 46 before folding. Forehand played a grand after pushing the red kings.

One immediately recognizes the "king in three" motif and the threat that opponent 2 will lead all opposite cards of the dangerous suit and opponent 1 will lead two aces and two tens.

So is the solo player in a losing position? He will, of course, take out all the return cards before he starts in spades.

So the first 4 moves are given, because there is really no objectively better presentation here (apart from certain bluffing chances, which should not play a role here):

1. Jack of clubs...
2. Cross ace...
3. Cross-10...
4. Cross King...

Now follows

5. Queen of spades, ace of diamonds, ace of spades = - 25

... and opponent 2 must now play 7 of diamonds or 7 of hearts, because he may not touch spades if he trusts the king to three. If opponent 1 still leads a card of this red suit, the solo player wins by discarding his louse of spades, e.g.

6. 7 of hearts, 8 of spades, ace of hearts = - 11 (- 36).

The opponents would now have to bid two fulls (10 of hearts and 10 of diamonds) to prevent the king of spades from being discarded. But if they could and would do that, the Soloist would take the trick and win, because there would be no more fulls available for the final trick with the 10 of spades and the king of spades.

If the solo player chooses a weaker presentation, such as playing the queen of spades too early, he loses because he can be pushed into clubs immediately after the first spade trick and then has to compete again in spades.

So things are looking good for the solo player, aren't they?

If opponent 1 is so farsighted as to take 4 cards of one suit in the first 4 tricks, thus leaving himself an ace blank, the solo player has a problem:

1. Jack of clubs, 8 of diamonds, Jack of diamonds
2. Ace of clubs, 9 of diamonds, 7 of clubs
3. 10 of clubs, queen of diamonds, 8 of clubs
4. King of clubs, 10 of diamonds (!), 9 of clubs
5. Queen of spades, ace of diamonds (!), ace of spades = - 25
6. Check-7 (!)...

If the solo player now throws away 8 of spades, what happens is...

6. 7 of diamonds, 8 of spades, ace of hearts = - 11 (- 36)
7. 10 of spades, king of spades, 10 of hearts = - 24 (- 60)

If he tricks the 7 of diamonds, he gives up the two spade tricks and also loses 60-60, so the other party wins with all-around best play, right?

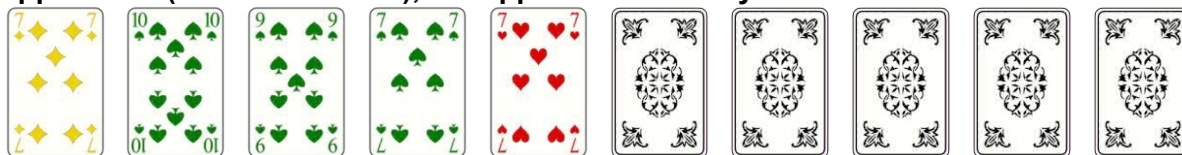
One would have to answer the question in the affirmative if one were to start from the ostensible winning plan, which is: "The solo player gives up a maximum of 3 spade tricks..."



But now we will see how the solo player can save this seemingly hopeless game with an ingenious sacrifice and possibly even give up 4 tricks in this winning variation - but win the game!

The key position:

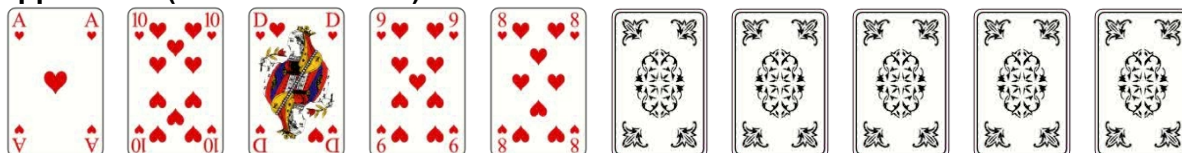
**Opponent 2 (now in forehand), the opponent has 25 eyes so far**



**Solo player (now in middle hand)**



**Opponent 1 (now in backhand)**



6. 7 of diamonds, queen of clubs (!!)...

A seemingly absurd move, because here the Soloist sacrifices a standing card that would always make a trick.

6. 7 of diamonds, queen of clubs, ace of hearts = - 14 (- 39)

Opponent 2, of course, does not play the 10 of spades afterwards, because he could only get the 8 of spades and the 10 of hearts (- 20), which is not enough to win (- 59).

7. 7 of hearts, 8 of spades, 10 of hearts = - 10 (- 49)...

... and the solo player sits in the back, where he can calmly wait for spades-10, which he always captures. Other fulls are no longer in play, e.g.

8. Queen of hearts, 7 of spades, king of spades = - 7 (- 56) ... and the rest goes to the solo player.

So in this game, the Soloist gave away 4 tricks instead of 3, and still (or maybe because of that) won.

Now you may point out to me that the Soloist would have lost, however, if Opponent 2 had the 8 of hearts and Opponent 1 had the 7 of hearts.

This is true, but the Soloist does not deal with this distribution because he cannot win it. He knows when playing the 7 of diamonds for the 6th trick: backhand has already laid or "revealed" 9 cards from her planned zero overt, namely ace of spades-10-9-7, clubs-9-8-7 and jack of diamonds-7. Now one can speculate whether she leads hearts-7 or hearts-8 or hearts-9 to this.

The solo player knows that he can only win if opponent 1 takes the following heart trick. So he plays as if it were a fact.

Conclusion: The solo player has sacrificed a strong queen to protect a weak king. This one eye is decisive! Many Skat players will not even consider such a variant at the table, because it seems absurd (I am not giving away a safe trick). Most of the Skat friends to whom I have described the problem have not been able to solve it immediately even in the analysis with open cards. This is due to the fact that it is not so easy to free oneself from usual playing habits and ingrained procedures. One fixates on the recognized danger and stares at the king in threes like a rabbit at a snake.

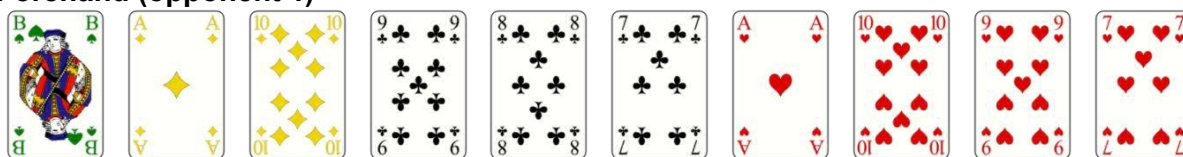
In this game we experienced a trick forfeit (eye sacrifice) in addition to the cutting. The solo player had the good plan to stop all threatening tactical insertions before revealing his spade weakness by first playing the jack and then 3 times clubs from the top. This measure is recommended (not only) when you have the trump dominance and want to build up a discard option. In this case, it was a prerequisite for the trick sacrifice that followed later.

As an aside, it does matter which cards of clubs the Soloist draws in the first tricks. It must necessarily be ace, 10 and king, the queen may not be played! You know why, of course...

### Example TM 12: Grand hand in backhand

This backhand hand is similar to the forehand hand from the last example. In this game, too, there is a king of the solo player in threes. However, the opponent's attack here uses different methods, and it goes in a different direction.

#### Forehand (opponent 1)



#### Middle hand (opponent 2)



#### Backhand (solo player)



### In Skat: Queen of Hearts, 8 of Hearts

Middle hand had passed without bidding. Forehand holds 23 and goes away at 24. She would not have bid more than a single cross anyway. So she passes on her own stimulus value. Backhand feels strong enough to play grand hand with her hand. Forehand opens completely "normally" with....

## 1. Ace of Diamonds, Queen of Diamonds, Jack of Diamonds

One can be divided about whether middle hand had to reinforce the ace with the queen, but it did. It will not hurt the other party.

Hinterhand already sees itself as a sure winner. She still has the endangered king in three, but the ace draw leaves the other party with only 1 ace and 2 tens (31) to ruff, which with the 28 eyes in spades makes only 59. What else is going to happen?

## 2. Jack of clubs, Jack of spades, 7 of diamonds

The jack discard seems logical and compelling. Now you could play the clubs next, but then there might be a spade discard. After all, the solo player does not know the spade distribution. So spades should be clarified immediately, especially since the opposing party cannot win with the 3 spade tricks. Besides, there are still tailoring chances.

## 3. 7 of spades, 10 of diamonds, ace of spades (!! ) = - 21

Opposite player 2 suspects the king of spades to be three, but he has also realized that these 3 spade tricks can only bring 59 eyes, because an ace was already taken in the first trick. So he takes the trick not with the queen, but with the ace. The attack is now not so much on the king in three, but on the last jack! If he succeeds in driving him away, then opponent 2 can save his king of hearts at the end.

## 4. King of Diamonds...

Opponent 2 knows that opponent 1 cannot have any more diamonds and puts the solo player under enormous pressure. At this point, it becomes clear that it was a good idea for opponent 1 to whitewash the blank 10 of diamonds, and not the longer ace of hearts.

## 4. king of diamonds, jack of hearts.... ?

... and the opposing party makes the last two tricks after the solo player has played his flute of clubs. Opposite player 2 naturally discards the queen of spades and holds the king of hearts next to the 10 of spades until the end. Then the Soloist must give up the King of Spades and the 8 of Spades, and the opposing party gets the 10 of Spades, the King of Hearts, and the Ace and 10 of Hearts = - 39 (- 60).

Opponent 2 therefore throws away a strong queen (which would make a trick) to save his king of hearts. This eye is decisive.

What would happen in the event of a drop?

## 4. king of diamonds, 8 of spades, ace of hearts = - 15 (- 36)

## 5. 10 of spades, king of spades, 10 of hearts = - 24 (- 60).

Methodically, it was absolutely correct to draw up the winning plan of the other party, which took concrete shape only during the second trick. Opposite player 2 is not annoyed "Why did my husband start with the ace of diamonds? If he had played the 10, then we could reach 60 eyes with 3 spades, but now, unfortunately, we will only get 59 eyes...", but immediately looks for a winning alternative: "How can we still reach 60 eyes now?"

Although one should always work according to this method, it is not always easy. The time pressure at the game table often does not allow for extensive analyses. And sometimes you think there is no alternative because you have played this or that situation "a hundred times before.

It should be mentioned in passing that the solo player could not have won compulsorily even by discarding in the first trick: After 1. ace of diamonds, diamond-D, spades-8 (?) = - 14 there are several continuations which bring victory to the opposing party.

This game is also tangential to the fundamental question of "Should one risk a hand game without necessity?" There are some cards that make this strong grand safe, and many cards that would make it even stronger. On the other hand, there are not many distributions against which you can lose the grand hand. If the Soloist had picked up Queen of Hearts and 8 of Hearts here, he could have put the Skat back, but he could also have chosen the perfectly reasonable "King of Spades and Queen of Hearts" shove alternative.

*This beer mat from the Saarland bears witness to the "good old days"...*



*There are hardly any skat tournaments with comparable prizes today. 16,200 DM (purchase price of a BMW 320 at that time) was a small fortune in 1976. Nice aspect at the As an aside: The "color television set worth 2,500 DM" was still a absolute luxury item.*



### Displaying the opposite color

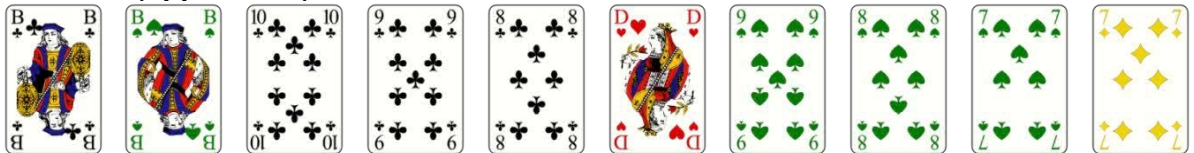
I have separated this topic from the general techniques and tactics because it requires special explanation and critical consideration. This is a tactical device used by advanced skat players to indicate a strong suit (usually a suit in which he leads an ace) to his partner in counterplay in a quite legal way. Especially grand games can be put in danger with this.

The usual pairs of opposing suits are clubs and spades and hearts and diamonds. So by adding a card of clubs you indicate a strong suit of spades, by adding a card of diamonds you signal a strength of hearts, and so on. This assumes, of course, that you have a free choice of suit and do not have to serve trumps or a suit. In this respect, this method is really only important in grand games, and even there only for the jack moves at the beginning of the game (in the endgame, the suits should be clear, and then you don't need to show an opposite suit).

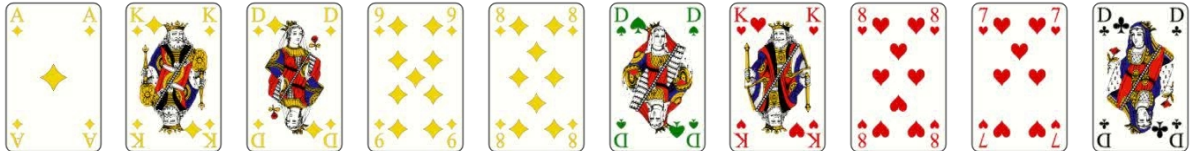
### Here's an example:

Midhand passes without bidding. When backhand bids 18, forehand also passes. Backhand pushes 10 of diamonds and king of clubs and plays grand. What should happen with "passe-passe"?

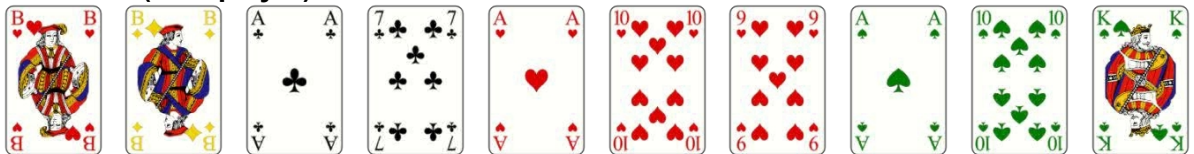
#### Forehand (opponent 1)



#### Middle hand (opponent 2)



#### Backhand (solo player)



The Soloist assumes that this Grand would only be endangered if 2 Jacks with "long" Diamonds were sitting on one hand, but he rules this out because of the missing bidding - rightly, as the card picture shows. The flute of diamonds is not with the jacks. However, it is also clear from the card picture that the opposing party can still make 7 tricks if Forehand draws off the Jacks and then plays his blank diamond lusche.

But how should forehand know which suit to touch after the two jack moves? Well, middle hand could e.g. put the ace of diamonds on the jack of clubs to show their strong suit. Then Forehand would know that she should play 7 of diamonds for the third trick, but the other party would then only make 4 instead of 5 diamonds.



The course of the game:

1. Jack of clubs, Ace of diamonds (?), Jack of diamonds = - 15
  2. Jack of spades, queen of spades (?), jack of hearts = - 7 (- 22)
  3. 7 of diamonds, king of diamonds, 7 of clubs = - 4 (- 26)
  4. Queen of diamonds, 9 of hearts, 10 of clubs = - 13 (- 39)
  5. 9 of diamonds, king of spades, queen of hearts = - 7 (- 46)
  6. 8 of diamonds, 10 of spades, 9 of spades = - 10 (- 56)
- ...and the grand player wins.

So in this sequence, the lubrication of ace of diamonds is a mistake. The second minor mistake happens in the second trick. Middlehand gives a blank queen on the second jack trick, because it does not want to break the king of hearts in three - which could theoretically make a trick. Here, however, it is correct to give the highest counting card (of course, not an ace or diamond) in the second jack trick, because the winning plan via the diamond flute must assume that backhand will subsequently make all the remaining tricks.

But if forehand and middlehand know the tactical means of the opposite suit, middlehand puts the King of Hearts on the Jack of Clubs, indicating already in the first trick that Diamonds is their strong suit. After 2. jack of spades, queen of clubs (or queen of spades), jack of hearts, the opposing party makes 5 instead of 4 diamond tricks with 3. 7... and wins, because backhand has to concede another counting card (here even a full).

You should therefore also think about the squeeze. The grand hand looks strong as a bull after pressing the 10 of diamonds and the king of clubs, but it is no longer flexible because of its many muscles. For this very reason, the solo player could have thought about pushing a second full, such as Ace of Spades or 10 of Spades, in addition to the 10 of Diamonds, and keeping the K of Clubs on top. In this particular case (the grand player makes only 3 tricks) this would not have been enough even with the best counterplay, but against ace of diamonds in four the soloist could successfully defend himself, because he would not have to discard a full. The current pressure (10 of diamonds and king of clubs), on the other hand, would have led to a loss with the same tactics (discarding jacks, opposite suit...) even if middle hand had only 4 instead of 5 diamonds =. 60:60!

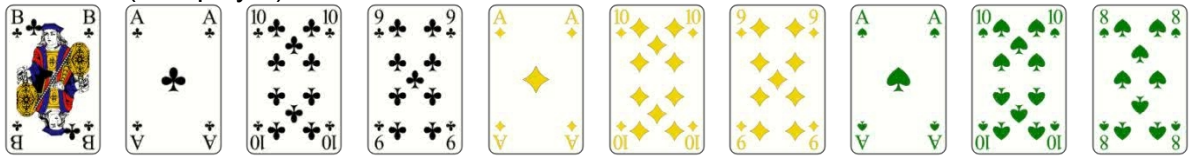
### Another example:

Forehand plays grand after pushing king of hearts and 8 of hearts. Middlehand had previously bid to 23 and then passed, backhand had no bid. This is actually an unsuspicious bidding, indicating normal distribution. The zero bidding is plausible for the grand player (he himself has not a single 7 in the hand), and there are no indications of suit lengths.

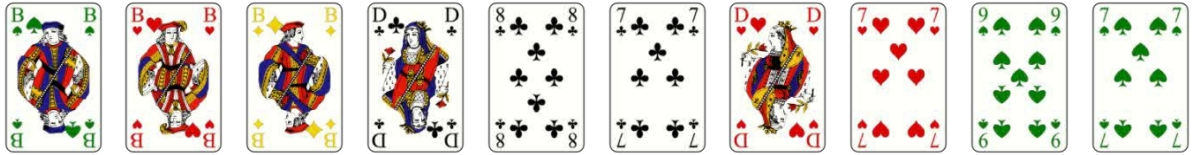
That's why Forehand chooses the standard plan for her push and her talk, which assumes a normal distribution (jacks 2:1, hearts 3:2). Incidentally, it would not be so easy to press one full or two fulls, because Forehand does not know which suit is running double. Also, forehand has to keep the strength in the suits, because it has to plan for the tapping of a full.

The course of the game:

## Forehand (solo player)



## Middle hand (opponent 1)



## Hindquarters (Opponent 2)



The overview suggests that forehand wins quite easily if it plays the jack and then the full in clubs and spades = 61. But it doesn't know that!

1. Jack of clubs, Jack of diamonds, 7 of diamonds (!)

Hindhand, of course, does not show her long suit of diamonds (then she would have had to discard hearts), but her strong suit of hearts.

Forehand now plays an ace and happens to hit the ace of diamonds. Perhaps she plays it because a diamond has just been discarded.

2. Ace of Diamonds, Jack of Hearts, King of Diamonds = - 17

Midhand may now touch neither clubs nor spades, otherwise the grand player wins. She could, however, move Jack of Spades to save a possibly endangered counting card from the backhand before she plays the heart handover. But then she might not be able to stab 10 of diamonds later. It is crucial that the middle hand finds the heart transfer now or after the jack draw:

3. Queen of hearts, ace of hearts, 9 of diamonds = - 14 (- 31)

Midhand plays her higher heart card here, and of course not heart-7, because she doesn't want to come back to the game via hearts (that would be possible if the grand player had pressed heart-10 and king of hearts).

4. 10 of hearts, 8 of spades, 7 of hearts = - 10 (- 41)
5. 9 of hearts, 9 of clubs, queen of clubs (!) = - 3 (- 44)
6. 8 of diamonds, 10 of diamonds, 7 of spades (!)

The discard is necessary, because it is not enough to poke 10 eyes. The jack must fetch 14 eyes.

7. Ace of spades, 9 of spades, queen of spades
8. Ace of clubs, 7 of clubs, king of clubs
9. 10 of spades, jack of spades, king of spades = - 16 (- 60!)

The close result shows that it was right to save the queen of clubs in the 5th trick and not to discard a louse of spades. Otherwise the 3 eyes would have gone to the solo player.

It also works with the boy intermediate train:

3. Jack of spades, king of clubs, 9 of diamonds = - 6 (- 23)
4. Queen of hearts, ace of hearts, 8 of spades = - 14 (- 37)
5. Heart-10, Cross-9, Heart-7 = - 10 (- 47)
6. 9 of hearts, 10 of spades, queen of clubs = - 13 (- 60)

Forehand would have lost even if, after the jack move, she had first drawn the black aces and only then the ace of diamonds. She would not try a double bishop for the time being, but play the aces first, because she wants to get information about the distribution and keep the strength in 3 colors in case of a discard.

The conclusion is that the other party won because the middle hand played hearts after the trick. If they touch clubs or spades, the solo player almost inevitably wins, because he has little choice but to play ace-10 of spades and ace-10 of clubs.

There are countless examples that show that in some constellations the opposite color display is the only reliable way to decide a grand in favor of the other party.

In practice, this "simple counter color display" has proven itself in grand games, and there actually only in the jack moves. There are also Skat friends who swear by using the "opposite color" method for the color tricks in the grand game and even for the color games themselves. But I don't think much of it, because there are too many ifs and buts. Discards often have tactical motives and not only a signal function.

For the sake of completeness, I would like to mention two rare and somewhat complicated techniques with which you can give a color signal - but the question is then whether the sign is also understood. Don't expect too much from it, because the two following methods can lead to misunderstandings, with which the counterplay is possibly "broken signaled".

### **The indirect counter color**

If you don't have a card of the opposite suit, or don't want to lay a card of that suit for some reason (such as a blank 10 that you don't want to sacrifice in the jack trick of the solo player), then you can indicate where your strength is by the delayed addition of another suit. The pairs of the indirect opposite suit are spade diamonds (small black suit - small red suit) and clubs hearts (big black suit - big red suit). So by delaying the addition of a spade card you can indicate ace of diamonds, by delaying the discard of clubs you would indicate ace of hearts, etc. Understanding this signal is difficult, however, because not every hesitation is interpreted as a deliberate "tactical" hesitation.

### The double counter color

There is another substitute method of showing a strong suit if you do not carry a card of the opposite suit. However, it presupposes that two jack moves are played at the beginning of the game. A third (the strong) suit can be indicated by the sequence of two discard suits.

If, for example, first clubs and then spades were discarded, then one could see that the first discard could not have been a "direct" opposite suit, because the signaler would never discard a card of his previously indicated strong suit in the second trick. In this case it is also said that the opposite suit of the first discard was "canceled".

It is recognizable that the colors were dropped from left to right. To do this, imagine the following endless series: Clubs Spades Hearts Diamonds Clubs Spades Hearts... etc. So the next suit in this sequence Clubs Spades... would be Hearts.

By the reverse sequence of spades-cross... (from right to left), diamonds would be indicated. Likewise, one then indicates the strong suit of clubs by hearts-diamonds and the strong suit of spades by diamonds-hearts.

It becomes clear that with this double counter color display, either only the "black" or the "red" pairs are shown. The sequence clubs-heart or diamonds-spades could therefore never be interpreted as a double opposite color, because the first signal is not cancelled. If someone wanted to indicate the suit diamond by the discard sequence "clubs-hearts", for example, he could have done so much more simply by discarding his heart card on the first jack trick, thus indicating the opposite suit directly.

The sequence "Clubs-Hearts" should therefore be correctly understood as indicating the color spades. The caster has indicated the opposite color of spades with clubs and has not cancelled it with the second discard. I emphasize again that the methods "double opposite suit" and "indirect opposite suit" are rarely applicable and difficult to handle. But if you know that your partner in the counterplay understands this technique, then it can be a powerful weapon.

*At Grand da, never play the deuce  
of the weakly represented color: It  
would perhaps thereby  
Give the player a bitch free.*

*But if you had the thau with many,  
you would have to play it forehand,  
because if he didn't have the color,  
Is to be assumed that he stings.*

*(Skat in verse, by Paul Renz, 1888)*