

**DEFENCE -**  
**Third Hand and**  
**Second Hand Play**

**Wednesday,**  
**7<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR**  
**TO ALL**

## **DEFENCE – THIRD HAND AND SECOND HAND PLAY**

### *ASSUMPTION IN ALL THAT FOLLOWS*

That we are defending a no trump contract (most points are applicable to suit contracts too).

### *THIRD HAND PLAY*

Old Whist Rule : Third Hand Plays High

### *BASIC POSITION FOR THIS STATEMENT*

♠ 9 8 2  
♠ K 10 4 3                      ♠ Q 7 6  
♠ A J 5

West makes a fourth best lead and East plays ♠Q, the highest card held.

Elementary and done to stop declarer winning a cheap trick with ♠J.

### *BUT WHAT IF DUMMY HAS A CARD THAT COULD BECOME A WINNER*

### *IF THIRD HAND PLAYS HIGH? ... AN EXAMPLE*

♠ Q 7 4  
♠ K 9 6 5                      ♠ A J 3  
♠ 10 8 2

East can see that playing high (♠A) will promote dummy's queen to winning status (after the defence has taken ♠K). It pays to play an intermediate card (here ♠J). Here that holds the trick and the defence can cash four spade winners.

***SOME FURTHER EXAMPLES WHERE DUMMY HAS A HIGH CARD***

♠ K 6 2

♠ J 9 7 3

♠ A 10 5

♠ Q 8 4

West leads ♠3 and East finesses ♠10. This prevents declarer making two spade tricks. If declarer has the knave, rather than the queen of spades, the finesse of ♠10 neither gains nor loses.

♠ A 10 3

♠ Q 9 6 4 2

♠ J 8 5

♠ K 7

If declarer plays low from dummy on the lead of ♠4 East does best to play ♠8. This won't work well if West has lead from ♠KQ without ♠9! A good example of bridge not always providing a sure solution (though the odds on West having ♠9, having led from length, are high).

*(Talk Hand 1)*

***OTHER THIRD HAND PLAYS : PLAY THE LOWER OF TOUCHING HONOURS\****

♠ 10 8 2

♠ K 9 6 3

♠ Q J 5

♠ A 7 4

On the lead of ♠3 East should play ♠J. By playing the lower of touching honours East lets West know that he may hold the touching ♠Q. Conversely if East were to play ♠Q this would deny the knave. **This is a very important technique** and it allows partner to plan the defence better by being able to rule out (and possibly rule in) certain cards in partner's hand.

***OTHER THIRD HAND PLAYS : WHEN THE OPENING LEAD IS AN HONOUR***

♠ 9 7 4

♠ K Q 10 5 3

♠ A 6

♠ J 8 2

West makes the strong lead of ♠K. East should overtake and play back a second spade.

The overtaking play unblocks the suit and allows the defence to take five tricks.

## *SECOND HAND PLAY*

Old Whist Rule : Second Hand Plays Low (makes general sense – why waste A high card when it may not be clear what declarer’s intention in the suit is?).

An example ...

### *PLAYING LOW KEEPS DECLARER GUESSING*

♠ 8 6 5 2

♠ Q 10 9 7

♠ A 4 3

♠ K J

When East plays low, after declarer has called for ♠2 from dummy, South still has to guess which spade honour to play and may get this wrong. In the absence of any further information, it’s a 50:50 guess.

### *SECOND HAND PLAY – “COVER AN HONOUR WITH AN HONOUR”*

Another maxim from whist based on this sort of hand layout ...

### *BASIC POSITION FOR “COVER AN HONOUR WITH AN HONOUR” STATEMENT*

♠ Q 7 4

♠ J 10 8

♠ K 9 6 5

♠ A 3 2

Declarer, playing none too well, leads ♠Q from dummy (he should lead towards the queen, a card he’s hoping to promote). East must cover else declarer makes two spade tricks.

### *A REFINEMENT AND CORRECTION OF THE WHIST STATEMENT*

“**Do not consider covering until the last card of a sequence is led**”. Some examples ...

## **SECOND HAND – TO COVER OR NOT TO COVER**

♠ J 4

♠ 10 7 3

♠ K 5 2

♠ A Q 9 8 6

When declarer leads ♠J from the table East should cover. This promotes ♠10 in partner's hand. Fail to cover and the defence makes no spade trick.

♠ A J 10 9

♠ K 7 4 3

♠ 8 6 5

♠ Q 2

When declarer leads ♠Q from hand West can see that, with the cards in dummy, no card can be promoted for the defence. West shouldn't cover and will hope, as here, that declarer has insufficient spades to pick up his king (only three tricks for declarer).

*(Talk Hand 2)*

## **SUMMARY**

- The rules from whist form a simplified guide and nothing more
- Each defensive position should be looked at in the abstract to determine the correct approach
- A little thinking goes a long way