

Third-Hand Play

DRC Bridge Lecture for Week 3 (February 13, 2017)

Our chapter for today — ACBL's Diamond Series, 2nd Ed., Ch. 3 — explains how to play 3rd hand high (3hh) when Partner is on lead as 1st hand. All the chapter involves Dummy being 2nd hand. That is, this chapter assumes that you hold the 3rd hand, sitting East. You may download this lesson in one of the two following formats:

- 1.** Paragraph: Bridge Lessons Spr 2017 Week 3 Para.docx
- 2.** Outline: Bridge Lessons Spr 2017 Week 3 Note.docx

Guideline of 3rd Hand High

Where is 3rd Hand? If you are 2nd or 4th hand, then the person in lead was your Opponent. If you are 3rd hand, then the person in lead was your Defending Partner.

When Partner opens a suit (ie, is the first person to lead the suit), you separate your holdings in Partner's suit into 3 categories. Take your lowest card and put it in Category 1: this is your "unblocking" card, the last card you will play from your suit before becoming void. Next look at RHO Dummy's hand, searching for honors. When RHO Dummy holds one or more honors (2 would be rare from a suit opened by your Partner) and you can capture those honors, then your "capture" or "trapping" cards now have a purpose. Put any "capture" card(s) in Category 2. All other cards are in Category 3. Then choose a card to play:

- 3. Category 1 (Unblocking):** Are Categories 2 and 3 empty, but not Category 1? Play your last card.

Example: Partner=KT862, Dummy=74, 3rdHand=Q95. Your 5 goes in Category 1. No cards go in Category 2. The remainder, Q9, go in Category 3. You will play the 5 only after playing the Q9.

- 4. Category 2 (Trapping):** Did RHO Dummy play an honor to overtake the lead? Do you have a "capture" card in Category 2? If so, play your

"capture" card now. For a test on Trapping High Cards, *go to Exercise Three.*

Example: Partner=T862, Dummy=Q74, 3rdHand=K95. Your 5 goes in Category 1. Your K goes in Category 2. The remainder, 9, goes in Category 3. You will not play your K until Dummy plays the Q. You will play the 9 in Category 3 prior to playing the 5 in Category 1. Either the K or the 5 will be your last card.

5. **Category 3 (3hh):** If Category 3 is empty, play the card in Category 1 even if Category 2 still has cards. Whenever you play the card in Category 1 prior to a card in Category 2, you might block your Partner, but your foremost duty remains to capture Dummy's honors. Otherwise, play 3hh.

Example: Partner=T862, Dummy=Q74, 3rdHand=K9. Your 9 goes in Category 1. Your K goes in Category 2. You have nothing left for Category 3. Play your 9, saving your K to capture the Q.

Play of 3hh

Your correct 3hh play could be part of a 2c+ solid sequence consisting of all the combined cards in your hand and RHO Dummy's hand. Do not consider broken sequences or interior sequences, only solid sequences. Your correct 3hh play could also be a standalone card. For a test on Third-Hand High, *go to Exercise One.*

Sequence of High Cards

If you and RHO Dummy have a 2c+ sequence, your 3hh card is the lowest ranking card in your hand from this sequence. That is, from a combined sequence such as QJT98 with some of these in your hand and some in RHO Dummy's hand, your 3hh card is your lowest card in the sequence that is higher than the one Dummy played. This could be as low as the 8 if Dummy played low, or as high as the Q if Dummy played high. Your Partner will guess that you hold all the sequence cards between the one you played and, assuming Declarer in 4th seat wins, the winning card. For a test on Only as High as Necessary, *go to Exercise Two.*

Example 1: Partner=AK762, Dummy=J94, 3rdHand=QT83. You and RHO have an QJT98 sequence. Your 3 is in Category 1. The Q is your capture card in Category 2. The T8 are your available 3hh cards in Category 3.

Example 2: Partner=86, Dummy=Q74, 3rdHand=AJT53. You and RHO have a QJT sequence in Category 3. Your 3 is in Category 1. The A is your capture card in Category 2. The JT5 are your available 3hh cards in Category 3.

Standalone High Card

If your standalone highest card is 2+ spots greater than Partner's card, this is your 3hh card. Otherwise, play low.

Example 1: Partner=KT862, Dummy=74, 3rdHand=Q95. RHO Dummy does not have an honor while you and RHO Dummy don't have a sequence. Your 5 is in Category 1, you have nothing in Category 2, and your Q9 are in Category 3. The Q is your 3hh card from Category 3.

Example 2: Partner=KQJ75, Dummy=942, 3rdHand=A3. RHO Dummy does not have an honor while you and RHO Dummy don't have a sequence. Your 3 is in Category 1, you have nothing in Category 2, and your A is in Category 3. The A is your 3hh card from Category 3. It is *not* 2+ spots greater than Partner's card, but it is your only choice. For more on Unblocking, see the next example.

Example 3: Partner=QJT97, Dummy=643, 3rdHand=AK5. RHO Dummy does not have an honor while you have a sequence. Your 5 is in Category 1, you have nothing in Category 2, and your AK are in Category 3. The K is your 3hh card from Category 3. It is *not* 2+ spots greater than Partner's card, but it is your appropriate choice from 2 equal cards. Win with the K, continue with the A, and finally become void with the 5. For a test on Unblocking, *go to Exercise Five*.

Selection from Category 3

If your card qualifies, then play 3hh. You will either win the trick or unblock Declarer. If you don't have a 3hh card in Category 3, then play low. Partner will understand that you have an issue, such as you cannot help in the suit, you have a "capture" card in Category 2, or you have shortage (doubleton or singleton, now perhaps reduced to a s/v in Category 1). For a test on When Partner Leads a High Card, *go to Exercise Four.*

Summary

Identify the cards in your hand that are in Partner's suit. Put these cards in 3 categories. Use Category 1 as your last card to play, assuming you no longer need Category 2. Use Category 2 for your "capture" cards, and perhaps for your last card if Dummy keeps ducking. Use Category 3 for all plays except your captures and your last card. Always play 3hh if that has a possibility of winning Partner's trick, but only play as high as necessary.

End of Discussion

Class Exercises

Tests of Comprehension

- A. **Ch. 3:** For a test on Ch. 3, *go to Exercise Six.*
- B. **Bidding:** For a test on Review of Responses to 1NT Opening Bids, *go to Exercise Seven.*
- C. **Play:** For a test on Developing Tricks in NT Contracts, *go to Exercise Eight.*

Hands to Play, from Hearts = "ACBL Defense in the 21st Century" (404p)

| Deck | Hands | Declarer | Dealer | Bid | Lead | Hints |
|--------|-------------|----------|--------|-----|------|-------|
| Hearts | P. 126 #3-1 | N | N | 4♠ | 3♦ | A |
| Hearts | P. 128 #3-2 | W | E | 1NT | 6♠ | B |
| Hearts | P. 130 #3-3 | S | S | 3NT | 3♥ | C |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|----------|
| Hearts | P. 132 #3-4 | E | W | 3NT | K♥ | D |
|---------------|--------------------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|----------|

Hints

- **A:** N=14 PVP^[ii]. S=13 PVP. North (N) opens their better minor, 1♣. South (S) correctly soars with four, bidding 1♥. West with a minimum correctly bids their 4cM, 1♠. This is a GF for S, so S correctly jumps to game (a shutout bid). Declarer has 8 QT, needing to develop 2, which is possible by driving out the A♣. However, Defenders lead the unbid suit, taking three ♦ tricks immediately. Down 1.
- **B:** E=14 PVP. W=8 PVP. East (E) opens their longest suit, 1♣. S overcalls to get the correct lead. West (W) with a minimum hand, no major, no support for partner, and one stopper, bids 1NT. W with honors should rebid their strong solid suit, but does not. N makes the correct lead to drive out one stopper, then leads the suit a second time when regaining the lead with the A♣. Down 1.
- **C:** N=11 PVP. S=16 PVP. S opens 1NT. N with 10+ HCP correctly goes to game. W leads their own best suit. E needs to retain their K♥ to trap Dummy's J♥ so plays the T♥. Declarer wins the lead, but Defenders regain the lead in ♠. Down 1.
- **D:** E=25 PVP. W=3 PVP. E opens 3NT to show points and distribution. N with neither Stayman or JT possibilities nor adequate points for a slam, correctly passes. S leads their own 5cM headed by a 3c sequence. N plays high from a doubleton, and returns a low card in the suit to S. Down 1.

Student Notes: (nb: The latest version of DRC@Spr17Week3 may be downloaded at BetterBridge.blog.)

^[ii]PVP = Partnership Valuation Points = the sum of HCP, length points, Dummy points, and any other additions and subtractions.