

Learning Points – Duck your King

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Defense LEVEL: Basic

North Deals
EW Vul
MPs

♠ KQ9
♥ K84
♦ A1053
♣ A103

Steve

♠ J72
♥ QJ762
♦ J6
♣ 954

N
W 25 E
S

♠ 1086
♥ 103
♦ K87
♣ KQ876

Mike

♠ A543
♥ A95
♦ Q942
♣ J2

NS: 5♦
S: 4♠, 4N
N: 5♠, 5N

Tuesday Evening September 22, 2009 International Fund Open Pairs,
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Certain suit combinations present declarer with a pure guess. When you defend, you might succeed if you help declarer to make the wrong guess!

The Bidding

North South contract the notrump game after a Stayman auction. South's 2♦ response squelches South's hopes to find a ♠ fit. With a maximum of 26-28 HCP between the 2 hands, 3N seems best.

North	East	South	West
1N	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3N	All Pass
East Leads ♥10			

The Play

East has a nice ♣ suit. 4th from longest and strongest is often right but that lead doesn't seem best here. Missing the ♣AJ109 we risk giving up an additional ♣ trick declarer couldn't otherwise get.

Since North has denied interest in the majors, partner rates to have at least 4♥ and maybe 5. East leads the ♥10, waiting to take club ♣s later. North can count 8 tricks with a high likelihood of developing the 9th in ♦.

How should declarer play the ♦suit? Some suggest running the ♦Q and if it loses, finessing West for the ♦J next. This split honors approach seems reasonable, and caters to a singleton ♦J in East. Others suggest playing low to the ♦A10 and finessing the ♦10. This particular suit combination is symmetrical and affords many reasonable approaches. Declarer has a pure guess, absent information from the bidding (none here!).

At our table declarer played low to the ♦A then low from the table. This approach caters to a singleton honor in either defender's hand. East now has an opportunity. Many players cannot resist jumping up with an established high honor. Dummy holds the ♦Q94 – so declarer could still take the finesse for the ♦J! East ducked reasoning that if declarer held that card, we'd still score the ♦K. If partner held it, then it might crash under the ♦K. Sure enough Declarer couldn't resist the temptation that West, not East, held the ♦K and finessed the ♦9. West won the ♦J and continued a 2nd ♥. East eventually took one ♦ and ♣. While the West's ♥s were developed, West held no side entry and East no 3rd ♥.

North South 3N making 4 for -630 was worth 6.5 of 7 Match Points for EW!

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
MPs	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	6.5	2.5	6.5
Score	460	460	460	460	460	430	460	430

Post Mortem

There are many finessing combinations where opponents are missing 2 honors. Sometimes these combinations are not easy to see – you have to anticipate the possibility. Playing low often succeeds while holding the higher of 2 non-touching honors. Declarer might credit partner with the higher card, and finesse you wrongly for the lower card. Thrust and parry – that's what makes this game exciting!... And maddening!!

What does suit combination analysis say about declarer's likelihood of success in the ♦ suit? You can take a look at:

http://www.bridgehands.com/S/Suit_Combinations.htm

where we find the following:

Case	Declarer's # of Cards	Partnership Holding	# Tricks Needed	% Success	Remarks
77	4-4	A 10 x x Q 9 x x	3	69	Play A then 10

For software capable of analyzing any position go to Jeroen Warmerdan's website:

<http://www.suitplay.com>

Learning Points

1. When presented with an opportunity to jump up with an established honor, consider ducking. The results might surprise you.
2. Play honors with a purpose. When opponents are finessing cover the 2nd honor with an honor to stop them from a (successful) intra-finesse in the way back. Alternatively, covering immediately from honor doubleton might protect partner's honor 4th (if this is a possibility).
3. Consider leading a short major against 3N when declarer has no 4 card major. You might help develop tricks for partner.
4. Use your web resources to learn more about this game!

Key Words: Leading short major, duck to help declarer take the wrong finesse, suit combinations