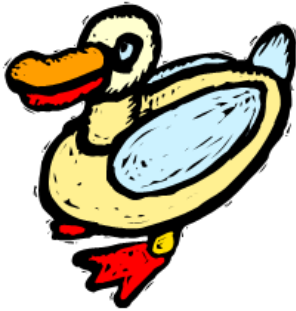


Notrump and the Hold-up Play

(Part II)



Last month we looked at hold-up plays from Declarer's perspective. This month we see how the same play works for defenders.

You are sitting West. Beginning with South, the opponents bid 1♦-1♠-1NT-3NT. Once again, you choose the ♥5 as the opening lead and Dummy comes down.

♠A J 6 3				
♥Q J 4				
♦10 8 6				
♣A Q 5				
♠9 2				
♥K 9 7 5 3				
♦7 5 3				
♣J 5 4				
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While Declarer studies Dummy and makes his plan, you do the same. Dummy has 14 HCPs (High Card Points), Declarer's bidding indicated he has 12-14 HCPs; you have a wallop 4 HCPs. That leaves your partner with 8-10 HCPs. Declarer calls for the ♥4, your wonderful partner plays the ♥A and Declarer plays the ♥6. Partner leads back the ♥8, Declarer plays the ♥10 and you DUCK.

What happens if you take the trick with your ♥K? You will next drive out Dummy's last heart winner, simultaneously eliminating partner's last heart. Your hearts are set up, but the chances of the ♣J being a successful entry to your good hearts are about as great as me winning Dancing with the Stars—zero. You must duck to keep communications open with your partner.

Partner will eventually take a trick and if she has another heart will lead it. You'll capture Dummy's last heart with your ♥K and cash two extra heart tricks, setting the contract. If partner doesn't have a winner, you weren't going to set the contract anyway. If partner doesn't have a third heart, Declarer does and you'll score your ♥K on the thirteenth trick.

♠A J 6 3						
♥Q J 4						
♦10 8 6						
♣A Q 5						
♠9 2		♠Q 10 8 5				
♥K 9 7 5 3		♥A 8 2				
♦7 5 3		♦A 9 2				
♣J 5 4		♣9 6 3				
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S		
N						
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		<table border="1"> <tr><td>♠K 7 4</td></tr> <tr><td>♥10 6</td></tr> <tr><td>♦K Q J 4</td></tr> <tr><td>♣K 10 8 2</td></tr> </table>	♠K 7 4	♥10 6	♦K Q J 4	♣K 10 8 2
♠K 7 4						
♥10 6						
♦K Q J 4						
♣K 10 8 2						

On the next hand you and your partner are silent during the bidding. North opens 1♣, South bids 1NT and North closes the



Jim Jackson

bidding with 3NT. It worked so well the last time, you again try leading your ♥5. Dummy displays his hand and you start thinking.

		♠K 6			
		♥J 4 2			
		♦K J			
		♣A K Q 5 4 3			
♠J 9 2					
♥K 10 9 5 3					
♦A 7 3					
♣J 7					
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	
N					
W E					
S					

Before your analysis is complete, Declarer calls for the ♥2 from Dummy. Partner disappoints with ♥8 and Declarer wins the trick with the ♥Q.

Next, Declarer places the ♦4 on the table. Before you play to this trick you need to finish your analysis. What do you know?

Declarer has the ♥A in hand. If he started with the ♥A-Q doubleton, then you can take the diamond trick, lead a heart and when partner wins a trick, she can lead a heart back to your three good hearts. Your side wins five tricks for

Notrump and the Hold-Up Play (Part II)

down one. Anything wrong with that plan?

Just a little thing called tempo. To make his contract, South needs nine tricks. You know he has two in hearts. Since he bid 1NT he probably has at least two clubs, which means Dummy's clubs will run for six more tricks. If you allow Dummy to score the $\diamond K$, that's the ninth trick! You never get a chance to score five tricks because he's already made his contract.



Okay, back to square one. Dummy has 17 HCPs, Declarer has 6-10 HCPs (and you know six of them are in hearts!); their resources add to 23-27 HCPs. You have 9 HCPs, suggesting your partner has 4-8 HCPs, which could certainly include the $\diamond Q$. Maybe you should duck and put Declarer to a guess.

If your thinking took that line, ask yourself this question: why isn't

Declarer squeezing defenders by running all of those clubs? He needs a diamond trick and he's trying to score it before you get wise.

Yes, I hear you say, but what if he has something like $\diamond 10-x-x$ so even if he lost both of Dummy's diamonds he still sets up a diamond trick? I repeat: why isn't he running all those clubs to force you and your partner to pitch cards and maybe make a mistake?

Look at your hand. You would have to make four pitches if he runs clubs. Can you find four *comfortable* pitches? Nope. He's trying to rob you blind.

Well, what else does he gain with this early lead toward the $\diamond K$? From his perspective, if East wins with the $\diamond A$, Dummy's $\spadesuit K$ is safe from a spade lead—in fact, if East leads a spade, it sets up a spade trick. Who has the $\spadesuit A$? I'm betting big bucks that partner does. If South had 10 HCPs consisting of two aces and a queen, he has ten tricks in the bag and there is no reason to tempt fate by messing around with diamonds.

Place the $\spadesuit A$ in Partner's hand. He has a few more points, so give him either the $\spadesuit Q$ or $\diamond Q$ (maybe both, but that's a tad optimistic).

If partner has the $\diamond Q$ and Declarer the $\spadesuit Q$, then why isn't Declarer leading a spade to guarantee his ninth trick instead of fooling around with diamonds?

You and Dummy have five spades. South didn't bid $1\spadesuit$ when he had the chance, so give him three spades. Partner has five of the little suckers headed by the $\spadesuit A-Q$ and maybe even the $\spadesuit A-Q-10-x-x$. If you knew that were the case, wouldn't you take your $\diamond A$ and lead your $\spadesuit J$ through Dummy? Of course you would, and since that holding is the only thing that will defeat the contract, that is the approach you must take. Dang, it even works. Ain't life grand?

		$\spadesuit K 6$	
		$\heartsuit J 4 2$	
		$\diamond K J$	
		$\clubsuit A K Q 5 4 3$	
$\spadesuit J 9 2$	N		$\spadesuit A Q 10 5 3$
$\heartsuit K 10 9 5 3$	W	E	$\heartsuit 8 6$
$\diamond A 7 3$	S		$\diamond 9 8 6 2$
$\clubsuit J 7$			$\clubsuit 9 6$
		$\spadesuit 8 7 4$	
		$\heartsuit A Q 7$	
		$\diamond Q 10 5 4$	
		$\clubsuit 10 8 2$	

Remember hold-up plays are all about communication for Declarer *and* defenders. When you declare, you want to break communication between the opponents. If you are the loyal opposition, you want to maintain communication with partner and destroy it between Declarer and Dummy.

Sometimes the hold-up play is just the ticket, and sometimes you need to immediately take your trick and finding the killing suit switch.