

BITS OF JIGGERY-POKERY

Although bridge is essentially a partnership game there arise situations where one can make some kind of deceitful play either as Declarer or sometimes as Defender without involving partner.

It's easier as Declarer because there are two people to fool and none to confuse!

You hold AJx and LHO leads the King; take it or duck? If you do win, RHO will eventually gain the lead, play the suit and your Jack will be gobbled up by the Queen. So, you play low and chances are LHO will play the suit again, presenting you with two tricks. This hold-up play is known as the Bath Coup originating in the days of whist. Is there a way to induce a continuation? Yes, just as a defender would, you play high to encourage.

A common related position is Jxx opposite Ax; LHO leads small and RHO plays the King; should you win it? Yes you should because the Queen has to be on your left and the Jack will win you a trick; ducking this allows you no more than one trick in the suit.

You hold AKx and LHO leads this suit and you decide to win it; how? You win with the Ace – this leaves the position of the King unclear to the defenders, whereas should you win with the King they will know you also hold the Ace (because neither of them played it).

You hold QJ10x with Axx in dummy. Which card do you lead for the finesse? It depends... If you need to drive out the King, lead the Queen but if you're merely trying to steal a trick lead the 10 or Jack for these will not make covering attractive to LHO. It is actually very discomfoting to a defender holding the King not to cover the 10 only to see you lead the Queen next.

You hold 109 with AQJx in dummy and since you've been counting you know or at least suspect that the King is offside, taking the finesse will prove futile. Try the 10 to the Ace then leading small!

RHO will be loth to let his/her King get ruffed and you may well score the 9 and on a good day ruff out the King next time!

Against good players (those who signal count especially) you can cross their wires by never playing your lowest card. Say you hold J1042, LHO leads the Ace, RHO will play and you drop the four. As neither defender can see the two, each will assume the other has it.

It goes IC from you, 2H on the left, X from P and you finish up as Declarer; LHO leads AH and you can see 10xxx in the dummy. RHO plays the eight and you hold K2. How can you avoid the ruff? Actually you can't but dropping the King may persuade LHO to switch!

Look at this position: AQ, AQ in the dummy, KJ, KJ on your right and it's your lead with four cards left; how will you take three more tricks? This really happened to me, inflicted by Phil Glanville; he led to one of his Aces and exited with the Queen of the same suit leaving me on lead. Is there a moral here? Don't advertise your Kings in such a situation.