

MORE JIGGERY-POKERY

As half of a team you really should play by the rules; Partner won't thank you for disruptive and anti-systemic moves which wreck the defence but now and then you can try to fool Declarer without cost.

You hold KJ doubleton; playing the Jack achieves next to nothing so try thinking "outside the box" and play the King. E.g. Dummy on your right has AQ109 of your suit and Declarer leads up to the nine; your go. Winning the Jack enables Declarer to maybe drop your King assuming he/she can count, but winning with the King may induce another finesse, this time of the ten. Bingo! Similar coups can be perpetrated with K10.

What if dummy's on your left with AQ10? Playing the Jack again is no use, but the King will look like it was bare. Declarer now places your Partner with the Jack and may well finesse into your hand.

Now you hold Kx behind AQJ and Declarer plays up to the Queen; with Kxx you would probably duck, hoping Declarer will waste an entry to his/her hand in order to repeat the "winning" finesse. Well, duck it too with just your Kx and chances are the repeat finesse will be taken.

Nines are great deceptive cards; any time you come to some crucial point and you have the nine, play it. Is it a true card or a false one? Declarer will have to guess. This is the whole point of false cards, they force a guess, and guesses can be wrong.

Dummy has AQ and you have xxx. You know the finesse would succeed, but if you signal strongly for this suit Declarer may reject it. It doesn't matter who has the King, you know it's not you.

You hold Kxx or Qxx and the J is led from your right from Jxxx. Do you cover it? You should for if P has the 10 it will become a winner. They used to tell us always to cover an honour with an honour; hmm... insert the word "unsupported" and it's good policy.

You hold K10x of trumps and Declarer ruffs with the Q or J; you can ruff too, but should you? Answer please. Overruffing with the King means you win ONE trump trick; declining to do so wins you TWO.

How do you know whether it's safe to "muck about" and make disruptive or misleading plays? Counting up the hcp round the table will tell you – say they are in 3NT and you hold 12 hcp yourself; that leaves no more than 3 or 4 for Partner so you have to be the trick taker for your side and are entitled to strive for results. This mainly consists of telling Declarer you hold very little and persuading him or her that it would be safe to play into your hand. Reverse the situation so that yours is considerably the weaker hand and you should seek out Partner's source of tricks and play for him/her to succeed. This means neglecting your Kxxx or whatever and unblocking at every opportunity so that P's nines and tens get promoted or become entries. Even your opening lead should reflect the situation; rather than lead your fourth highest look for P's length and lead your shorter major.