

Stamford Bridge Club

Ducking & the Danger Hand Recap

Wednesday, 11th March 2015

Ducking – a definition

“Deliberately losing an early trick in a suit”

In other words we can win that trick but choose not to

Several reasons for ducking

Reason 1

To sever the defensive communication so that we restrict the defence’s ability to take tricks.

Reason 2

To protect a vulnerable suit holding from attack.

We distinguish between:

Safe hand – we’re happy for this defender to be on lead

Danger hand – we’re unhappy for this defender to be on lead

Technique

We try to duck a trick into the safe hand (often by way of taking a finesse into that hand)

Such play are known as

Avoidance plays – plays where we keep a particular defender off lead

So, in such cases:

Identify the vulnerable suit holding

Plan and organise the play to protect that holding from attack

... A third reason for ducking (*Reason 3*)

To keep communication between the two hands fluid

Witness the following hand (complex!):
(*see separate attachment*)

South opens 2♠ (weak) [*hand incorrectly has North as dealer*], West doubles for takeout and North makes an aggressive raise to game (4♠).

West leads a “safe” ♥K. After West’s takeout double it’s likely that West holds ♣A. That makes playing a club towards the ace futile. Were declarer to do that he would be at the

mercy of the spade position (needing six spades to go with the four winners in the red suits).

We know the club holding is vulnerable so we want to duck any tricks into the *safe West hand*.

So we duck the opening lead (good for fluid communication) and win the diamond switch. We cash the second diamond winner and ruff a diamond to hand (this is known as eliminating a side suit, taking away West’s ability to exit *safely* in this suit). We now take the marked finesse of ♥J and cash ♥A.

Now the *coup de grâce* – we cash dummy’s top trump and finesse South’s ♠J. This is a win-win obligatory finesse. We don’t mind if it loses, as here, to a doubleton queen of spades. West is said to be endplayed – he can cash ♣A (which promotes the king of clubs) or he can give us a ruff and discard. Whichever poison West chooses we have ten tricks and we have made use of West’s *safe hand* status.

So, in summary, this hand demonstrates:

- **Identifying the safe hand**
- **Ducking for communication**
- **Eliminating a side suit**
- ***Refusing* a finesse (of ♣K)**
- **Ducking into the safe hand by taking an *obligatory finesse***
- **Endplaying an opponent**