

### *Safety Plays (3) Preventing an opponent from obtaining the lead.*

This presentation will deal with two distinct situations where declarer may need to prevent one particular opponent from obtaining the lead.

#### 1 Where an opponent has a long suit which he may run against you.

This applies mainly to no trump contracts. When an opponent starts leading a long suit the standard tactic for declarer is to hold up a master card or a combination of honours until the opponent's partner is exhausted of the suit and then try to keep the danger hand off lead. This is a typical position

S K72  
H 63  
D J1084  
C A942

S AQ8  
H A108  
D KQ52  
C K76

You are in 3NT and west leads the five of hearts. If you take your ace immediately you will probably lose four more hearts and the ace of diamonds. You therefore hold up your ace of hearts until the third round. This does not guarantee the contract but it will save the day if west has five hearts and east has the ace of diamonds.

A hold-up should not be automatic and it is necessary to take many factors into account.

- Declarer should consider whether a switch by the opponents to a second suit would be even more harmful. With one or two tricks in the bag from the first suit the opponents might then switch to a second vulnerable suit and establish further tricks there. In this case declarer should refuse to hold up on the initial lead.
- In some cases declarer may conclude that he can cope with the opponents' holding in their long suit and decline to hold up. A fourth-highest lead of a low card may indicate, for example that the suit is splitting harmlessly 4-3 or 4-4.
- Where declarer has a double stop (eg AK) he may still need to hold up if he has to lose the lead twice. Much will depend on which opponent is expected to obtain the lead each time and also whether a damaging switch is likely. In some cases it may be necessary to take the opening lead but to duck the second round of the suit. See questions F and G below.
- If the lead establishes a double stop declarer should normally not hold up. A typical situation would be a lead into a suit where dummy has 10x and declarer has AJx. A hold up would normally cost one trick. The exception would be where declarer expects to lose the lead *twice* to his right hand opponent.

- There are many occasions where declarer has a holding which *may* provide a double stop depending how the play progresses. Typical holdings are AJx or KJxx opposite xx in dummy.

	xx	
K10xxx		Qxx
	AJx	

This is a typical layout where west leads a low card and east plays the queen. Declarer will wonder whether to win or hold up. If west obtains the lead again the jack will provide a second stop. If east obtains the lead the jack will not prevent the run of the suit. The decision whether to hold up should therefore be based on the expectation of which opponent will gain the lead

- Declarer should consider whether the opponents' long suit may be blocked. This occurs especially where the one opponent is expected to have a doubleton honour in the suit. This is a typical layout

	Ax	
KJxxx		Qx
	109xx	

When west leads a low card declarer concludes that he must be missing an honour, having failed to start with the king. He therefore plays the ace. On the second round east will be left on play and unable to continue with spades. Declarer must bear in mind that a smart east may unblock his honour under the ace and must have sufficient cards to cope with this. If east happens to have three spades the suit will break 4-3.

### Examples 1 and 2

S 6 H Jxx D AJ108x C KQxx	S Q9x H 8xx D Kxx C J10xx	S A1087x H Q96 D Kx C 97x	S 6 H AK10 D Q9xxx C KQxx
S A1087x H Q964 D x C 97x	S KJ5x H AK10 D Q9xx C A6	S A1087x H Q96 D Kx C 97x	S Q9x H 8xxx D xx C J10xx

You are in 3NT and west leads the seven of spades. In each case the spade holdings are identical and east plays the queen. Do you hold up? With the first hand you must finesse diamonds into the east hand. If east can lead a spade your jack will be of no use in stopping the run of the suit. You therefore hold up for two rounds assuming that east has three spades. With the second hand you must finesse the diamonds into the west hand. Your jack will provide a second spade stop and you therefore take the king of spades immediately.

### Example 3

	S Jx	
	H Axx	
	D AQJxx	
	C AK7	
S K982		S Q106x
H J10		H KQ98x
D 8xx		D K7
C 108xx		C 9x
	S A7x	
	H 7xx	
	D 109x	
	C QJxx	

You are in 3NT and west leads the two of spades. You try the jack but east covers with the queen. You should refuse to hold up the ace of spades because (1) if this is a fourth-highest lead the spades will split 4-4 and (2) a switch to hearts by the opponents could establish three or more heart tricks for them as well as the initial spade and the king of diamonds.

### Example 4

	S KJx	
	H A10	
	D xxxx	
	C Kxxx	
S 10xx		S Q98xx
H KJ8xx		H Qx
D Qxx		D Jx
C xx		C J10xx
	S Ax	
	H 97xx	
	D AKxx	
	C AQx	

You are in 3NT and west leads a low heart. With KQJ of hearts west would surely have led the king. You therefore assume that east has a doubleton honour. If you duck the opening lead east will win and lead another heart, removing your ace. West will later gain the lead with the queen of diamonds and cash three spades. If you take the ace of spades immediately east's queen will block the suit when west gains the lead. If east unblocks the queen of spades under the ace your 109 will still stop the run of the suit when west gets in. If east has three spades the suit will split harmlessly 3-4.

## 2 Where an opponent may make a damaging lead through a weak suit.

This situation typically occurs where declarer has a vulnerable holding, usually involving an unsupported king such as Kxx opposite xxx in dummy. If east is on lead declarer can easily lose multiple tricks if the cards are placed badly. If west is on lead, however, a lead of this suit presents no immediate danger. The objective is therefore to recognise the problem and keep the danger hand off lead. There are three principal methods of achieving this.

- Leave an opponent on lead even when you could win the trick
- Play a loser on loser to help the run of a long suit.
- Take finesses towards the hand that does not represent a danger.

### Example 5

S AKQ	
H 52	
D AQ8654	
C 106	
S J963	S 54
H AQ86	H J1093
D 10	D J732
C Q432	C K98
S 10872	
H K74	
D K9	
C AJ75	

You are in 3NT and west leads a low spade. You need to establish the diamonds but if east has four diamonds he will win the fourth round and could quickly establish four or more heart tricks. The solution is to finesse the nine of diamonds. This loses to west's singleton 10 but west can do no harm. You then succeed with five diamond tricks, three spade tricks and a club trick.

### Example 6

S K75	
H K1098	
D AQ105	
C 76	
S Q10xx	S AJxx
H 653	H 4
D 82	D K763
C Q942	C KJ85
S 94	
H AQJ72	
D J94	
C A103	

You are in 4 Hearts. West leads the two of clubs and east plays the king. You are at risk of losing a club, two spades and the king of diamonds. After you win the first trick west will eventually win the king of diamonds, lead a club to west's queen and west will then lead spades. You can avoid this simply by letting the king of clubs hold. West can then never obtain the lead. You will eventually score five hearts, three diamonds, the ace of clubs and a club ruff.

Example 7

	S 643	
	H AJ8	
	D A6	
	C K6732	
S AQ8		S J1095
H 76		H 53
D KQJ982		D 10753
C J4		C Q109
	S K72	
	H KQ10942	
	D 4	
	C A85	

You are in 4 hearts after west opened 1 diamond. West leads the king of diamonds. You assume west has the ace of spades and you therefore need at least three clubs for your contract but east may win the third round of clubs and attack spades before you can cash a third club. The solution is to let the king of diamonds hold. You subsequently draw trumps, discard a club on the ace of diamonds and ruff the third round of clubs without letting west gain the lead. You then make six hearts, four clubs and the ace of diamonds.

Question A

	S A74	
	H AJ5	
	D 82	
	C K9763	
S J96		S 10832
H 10743		H K9
D Q10754		D K63
C 5		C J1084
	S KQ5	
	H Q862	
	D AJ9	
	C AQ2	

You are in 3NT. West leads the five of diamonds and east plays the king. Do you hold up the ace? **Answer.** If the clubs don't split 3-2 you will need to take the heart finesse for your contract and if east wins he will lead diamond through your J9. You should therefore hold up the ace of diamonds for two rounds. If west has 5 or 6 diamonds east will not have one to lead when he wins the king of hearts. If west has four diamonds the suit will split harmlessly 4-4.

Question B

S K53	
H 742	
D AJ	
C KJ1053	
S Q98	S 10764
H A10863	H Q9
D Q97	D 108652
C A9	C 64
S AJ2	
H KJ5	
D K43	
C Q872	

You are in 3NT after west opened 1 Heart. West leads a low heart and east plays the queen. Do you hold up the king? **Answer.** You will need to lose the ace of clubs and on the bidding that will be held by west. You therefore take the king of hearts immediately as your jack will provide a second stop in the suit.

Question C

S xx	
H Ax	
D Q98	
C AJ9xxx	
SAJx	S Q10xx
H KQJxx	H 10xxxx
D xxx	Dx
C Qx	C K10x
S Kxxx	
H x	
D AKJ10xx	
C xx	

You are in 5D after west opened 1 heart and east supported hearts. West leads the king of hearts. How do you play to make your contract? **Answer.** You need to avoid a spade lead by east as west probably has the ace, but east may well get the lead with the second round of clubs. You therefore duck the opening lead. You later discard a club on the ace of diamonds and ruff out the clubs without letting east get the lead.

### Question D

	S AKxx	
	H xxx	
	D KJxx	
	C Kx	
S J1098		S x
H AQ8x		H J109
D xx		D Q9xxx
C J10x		C 98xx
	S Qxxx	
	H Kxx	
	D A10	
	C AQxx	

You are in 3NT and west leads the jack of spades. How do you guarantee your contract?  
**Answer.** You need to avoid a heart lead from east as you will probably lose three or four heart tricks if west has the ace. You therefore win the opening lead in dummy and finesse the 10 of diamonds. Whether the finesse wins or loses you now have three heart tricks, three spade tricks and three club tricks before east can obtain the lead.

### Question E

	S KQ7	
	H J108	
	D 754	
	C QJ109	
S 984		S J1053
H 32		H 76
D KJ98		D 63
C K872		C A6543
	S A62	
	H AKQ954	
	D AQ102	
	C-----	

You open 2C, partner responds 2NT and you bid 6H. West leads a trump. How do you make your contract assuming the diamonds are placed badly? **Answer.** You can make the contract without relying on diamonds as long as west does not have AK of clubs. (If he did he would surely have led one). Draw trumps ending in dummy and lead the queen of clubs. If east does not cover, discard a diamond. If west wins he can do no harm in diamonds. You can now ruff out east's club honour and you have two winning clubs to take care of your losing diamonds. If east has both club honours you can ruff the first and discard a diamond on the second with a similar result

### Question F

	S K84	
	H K3	
	D A10942	
	C J87	
S J7		S 653
H J974		H AQ62
D 853		D K7
C Q1053		C K643
	S AQ1092	
	H 1085	
	D QJ6	
	C A9	

You are in four spades after east opened a weak no trump. West leads the two of clubs and east plays the king. You are grateful to have escaped a heart lead. How do you now plan to make your contract? **Answer.** If you take the first trick east will eventually take the king of diamonds and lead a club to west's queen. West in turn will lead hearts. You will thus lose a diamond, a club and at least two hearts. You avoid this simply by letting east win the first trick

### Question G

	S 632	
	H AQ8	
	D K97	
	C QJ92	
S Q10975		S J8
H 43		H J9752
D J54		D 10863
C K84		C A3
	S AK4	
	H K106	
	D AQ2	
	C 10765	

You are in 3NT and west leads the seven of spades. With two spade stops should you hold up on the first trick? **Answer.** Yes. West appears to have at least five spades and you need to lose the lead twice in clubs with no control over which opponent wins. Furthermore no switch would threaten you. If west has AK of clubs you will still go down but if east has one of the club honours your hold up will exhaust him of spades by the time he gets the lead. Should east produce a third spade the suit will split harmlessly 4-3.



## Question H

	S AK4	
	H 65	
	D AJ103	
	C QJ96	
S 7532		S QJ109
H J10982		H K73
D 65		D K74
C A4		C 872
	S 86	
	H AQ4	
	D Q982	
	C K1053	

You are in 3NT. West leads the jack of hearts and east plays the king. With two heart stops should you hold up on the first trick? **Answer.** No. If you duck the first trick a smart east will switch to spades and the opponents will continue to attack spades when they gain the lead. The opponents will then win one heart, two spades, the ace of clubs and the king of diamonds. You should therefore win the first trick and lead clubs, the only suit in which west can obtain the lead. If west persists with hearts you duck the second round, win the third round and finesse in diamonds. If hearts are 5-3 east will have no heart left when he wins the king of diamonds. If they are 4-4 your contract is safe.

