



Cover an Honour with an Honour Part I

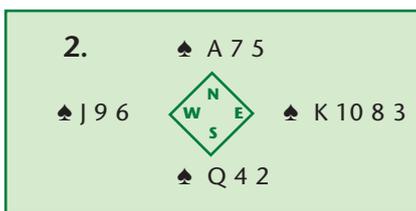
YOU often hear bridge players quote adages and phrases such as 'Second player plays low, third player plays high' and 'Always cover an honour with an honour'. It is the latter I want to examine (especially the use of that pernicious word 'always').

Let's start at the very beginning (a very good place to start . . . cue for a song?) When I discussed the finesse I made allusion to this layout of cards:



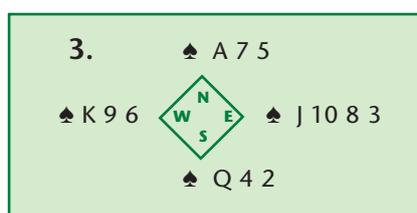
If the ♠A-Q were in the same hand then that would be a classic 'tenace' holding. When the honours are divided between the two hands we refer to the position as being a 'split tenace'.

Anyway, what is the best way to play this combination if North-South require two tricks in the suit? The answer is to lead a low card from the North hand towards the queen of spades, hoping that the king of spades is with East and the layout is something like this:

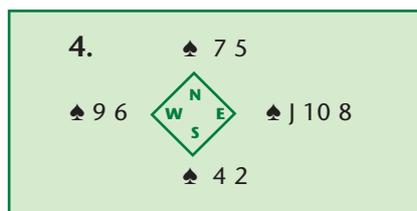


If East plays his spade king 'on thin air' then the spade queen is established as a second trick to go with the ace of spades. If East plays low, then the queen of spades scores a trick immediately. There is nothing East-West can do if the cards do lie in this way; North-South can always make two tricks in the suit. Many inexperienced players,

though, will lead the queen of spades from the South hand hoping that West has the spade king and will play low. They think that they are taking a finesse. If the layout is like this, however:



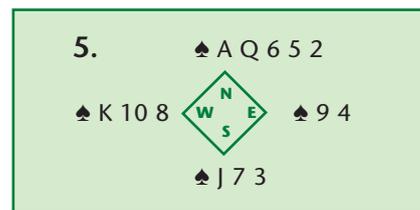
then West has a defence to this play. On the lead of the spade queen from South West should put his king of spades on it 'covering an honour with an honour'. Although the king is crushed by the ace of spades, the upshot is that two of the North-South spade honours are played for one of East-West's. Now the position is:



and East-West have all the boss spades. If the cards do lie as in Example 3 then North-South can only ever make one trick if they lead the suit. Note (in passing) that if West leads the suit, then North can play small and the lead will run to the queen of spades; here North-South will, in fact, make two tricks.

Now, the 'two-for-one' principle is very important at bridge and it says that it is often useful to play your honour cards on the opponents' honour cards if it takes out two honours for one. 'Often' is not the same as 'always', however, and there are many examples where this is the wrong play. Be warned! This area of the game can be a minefield.

Have a look at the following (very common) suit distribution:



How many tricks can South make in the suit, given best defence by East-West?

First of all, let's look at some basic but all too common errors.

Sometimes declarer leads a low card towards the ♠A-Q on the table and West throws his king of spades on it with the gratuitous comment 'Oh well, my king is dead anyway, so it doesn't matter what I do'. That is terrible play on West's part. It is rarely right to play your high cards on the opponents' small cards. If West does sacrifice his king in this fashion, South will make all of his spades (in other words, five tricks in total).

At the other end of the scale some Souths choose to lead the jack of spades. West, mesmerised by the sight of the ♠A-Q on his left wrongly follows with the eight of spades so the spade jack is allowed to win the trick. A further spade lead is made to the queen and declarer makes all five spades.

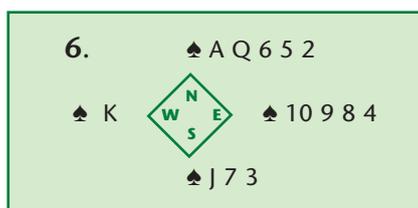
What should West do? The answer, pleasingly enough, is to play low cards on low cards, and honours on honours. If he does that, then East-West are assured of a trick in the suit at some stage. This is such an important card combination that it is worth playing it through to check the accuracy of that statement.

Note also that this card combination is another split tenace. If West were to lead this suit, then South could run the lead to the jack of spades and then lead a spade to the queen, picking up all five tricks. This is an important point. There are very many

card combinations in bridge where best play is to wait for the opponents to lead the suit.

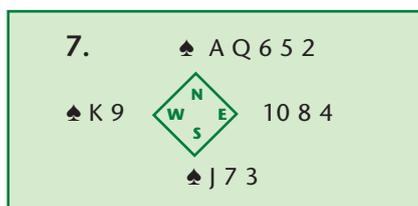
Let's return to the card combination of Example 5. Is there any way South can make five tricks? Not on the actual distribution that has been given, but is there a layout of the East-West cards where five tricks can be made?

Did someone say: 'What if East or West has the singleton king of spades?'. No, that won't work. Try it out:



South can cash the ace of spades (dropping the king), then the jack and then the queen but the ten would still be the boss spade. Try again.

The answer is that West must hold precisely *two* spades including the king. Not likely but possible. You have to hope for this layout:



South can lead a low card to the queen of spades, cash the ace (dropping the king), come back to the jack and (assuming that he can get to dummy) has the two boss spades in the North hand.

All of the above examples are by way of an introduction to the highly complicated topic of suit combinations, which is an area of card-play that needs concentration and attention, and will be treated in future issues of this magazine. □

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11 – 14 August 2014



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'Really Easy' events are an ideal way for bridge students and less experienced players to sample the atmosphere of the Brighton Summer Meeting.

'First Step' sessions are suitable for beginners playing a basic Acol system and run from Monday to Wednesday. 'Next Step' sessions are held from Tuesday to Thursday and are for players who have been playing in a local club and want to try out an EBU congress event.

FIRST STEP

Monday	2.00pm 7.30pm	Lesson (topic to be arranged) Bridge session 1
Tuesday	10.00am 2.30pm 7.30pm	Lesson (topic to be arranged) Bridge session 2 Free evening or Informal play
Wednesday	10.30am	Bridge session 3 – Swiss Pairs

NEXT STEP

Tuesday	2.30pm 7.30pm	Bridge session 1 Bridge session 2
Wednesday	10.30am 7.30pm	Bridge session 3 – Swiss Pairs Bridge session 4
Thursday	10.00am 1.00pm	Lesson (topic to be arranged) Bridge session 5

Entry fee for either event: £46 which includes the bridge sessions and the lessons. First Step players wishing to stay on for Thursday can do so for an additional £8.

Blue points will be awarded to the top 1/4 of the field in all events.

There is still time to enter!



Entries / Enquiries:
Peter ☎ 01296 317203 or
Dawn ☎ 01296 317219
or email comps@ebu.co.uk

HUBERT PHILLIPS FINALS

THE 2013-14 Hubert Phillips Bowl has been won by the team of Sally Brock, Gunnar Hallberg, Barry Myers and Rob Sheehan.

The event is a mixed pivot teams, using aggregate scoring, and the Brock team won by 180 points after sixty boards – a very narrow margin after such a long match. In fact the final was close throughout, with the opponents, the team of Tom Gisborne, Sandy Davies, Mike Pomfrey and Dave Robinson, leading by 10 points with ten boards to play.

The Hubert Phillips Plate was won by the team of Sarah Dunn, Nick Boss, David Ewart, Richard Johnson, Ewa Kater and Tom Townsend.