



## Cover an Honour with an Honour

by Paul Bowyer

LET us revisit a theme that I had begun to explore in a previous article (August 2014, pages 24-25, to be precise) on the principle of 'cover-an-honour-with-an-honour'. The idea is to prevent declarer getting away with, well, if not murder then at least petty larceny.



Suppose that the layout of the spade suit were as follows:

Layout 1



You will see many declarers lead the ♠J from hand towards dummy and now it is up to West. If that player sleepily plays low the ♠J will hold the trick, a spade to the ♠Q will follow and the suit is all declarer's for five tricks. If, however, West puts the ♠K on the ♠J then the defenders cannot be denied a trick. Essentially the ♠9 will be promoted to winning rank.

In general, for this section, there are two main rules to follow.

Firstly, you should aim to play high cards on high cards and low cards on low cards. (In the example above I have seen cases where declarer has led the ♠3 towards dummy and West has thrown the ♠K on it with the gratuitous and highly inaccurate comment that "my King is dead anyway". Not so...)

Secondly, you should cover an honour with an honour if (and only if) you can see a prospect of your side promoting a card of lower rank into a winner.

Enough theory. Here are some examples.

Layout 2



South, playing in 3NT, leads the ♠J from hand.

Do you cover with the ♠K? Why (or why not)?

**Answer:** Yes, you must cover. If declarer has the critical ♠10, then the suit is his to run regardless of how many he has or what you do. However, if East has the ♠10 then covering the ♠J with the ♠K will promote partner's holding. Covering here is a no-cost play.

Layout 3



South, playing in 3NT, leads the ♠J from hand. Do you cover with the ♠Q? Why (or why not)?

**Answer:** No, certainly you should not cover. There can be nothing in partner's hand to promote – if East has the ♠K then he will make it anyway if you play low. By covering you just make declarer's task easy if he started with ♠K-J-x.

Layout 4



South, playing in 3NT, leads the ♠J from hand. Do you cover with the ♠K? Why (or why not)?

**Answer:** Yes, you should certainly cover. If partner has ♠10-x-x your side will make a spade trick. If declarer has ♠J-10, then all is lost no matter how you defend.

Layout 5



South, playing in 3NT, leads the ♠J from hand. Do you cover with the ♠K? Why (or why not)?

**Answer:** No, don't cover. What can partner have to

promote? All is lost on this hand (declarer is surely destined to make five Spade tricks) unless that ♠J is a singleton in which case you will make a trick by not covering.

★★★★★

Now, these are relatively simple examples. The way you should be thinking as you defend is: 'Do I have a card that might be promoted if I cover?' If the answer is no, then ask yourself if it is possible that partner can have a promotable (is that a word?) card. If there is nothing to promote, then don't cover.

What you don't want to happen is to be perpetually caught out in this situation:

**Layout 6**

♠ A 6 5 2		
♠ Q 8 4		♠ 7 3
		♠ K J 10 9

Suppose spades are trumps and declarer is fishing for the queen. Many declarers will try their luck by leading the ♠J from hand trying to tempt West into an injudicious (and fatally revealing) cover. What happens in practice is if West plays low nonchalantly on the ♠J, declarer plays dummy's ace and takes the finesse against East, assuming that West would have covered had he held the ♠Q.

Let's look more deeply at this from West's perspective. If spades are trumps you can assume that South has (at least) four. That leaves East with one or two spades. What card(s) could he have that would be promoted if you were to cover the ♠J? The ♠K? Well, that's going to make anyway if you don't cover. Note that covering would be more than a little embarrassing should the layout prove to be:

**Layout 7**

♠ A 6 5 2		
♠ Q 8 4		♠ K
		♠ J 10 9 7 3

Quite humiliating to make no tricks at all in this position . . . Going back to Layout 6. If you play low smoothly on declarer's lead of the ♠J and South does get it wrong (by playing the ♠A and taking the finesse against East), you might just see him eye you with a greater respect. □

## ELIZABETH PHILLIPS

I WAS extremely saddened to hear of the death of Liz Phillips on Tuesday 17th March from bronchopneumonia at age 92.



She had been a friend for many years, and I had enjoyed playing with her as a partner and team-member in numerous events. She was a strong and formidable bridge player, an aggressive but sound bidder, and an excellent card player with very good powers of concentration. She retained an extremely sharp mind with no loss of ability in her later years.

We won the Lady Rose Cup (main Surrey teams of four event) four years running between 2008 and 2011 (Liz playing with Bob McRobert), on one occasion coming back from a huge early deficit against a team including three internationals. Together we won the Surrey Mixed Pairs three years running about that time. Even last year, we came second.

Liz had a number of successes at national level, and represented the English ladies on various occasions. Her successes included three wins in the National Women's Pairs, a win in the National Women's Teams, a win in the National Inter-Club Knockout, and a win in the Garden Cities Trophy. The last two wins were representing the Mayfield Club, currently in Tadworth. She had uncountable successes at the Mayfield, far too many to list.

Liz also, in 1987, received the Dimmie Fleming award for services to bridge.

We shared a common interest in sport, and I discovered that she had played golf at women's county level, and been an excellent tennis player and cricketer. Her sporting prowess was perhaps no accident, as her father had opened the batting for Hampshire with the legendary C.B. Fry just before World War I.

I will miss her.

*(Peter Lee)*