

CAPTURE AN HONOR WITH AN HONOR

by Maritha Pottenger

“Aces are supposed to kill Kings and Queens.” The idea of capturing an honor with an honor is to promote lower-ranking cards to winning rank. If Aces capture only small cards, they do not help to promote anything for the defenders. So, it is often correct to capture an honor with an honor. There are, however, exceptions. It is important to note that in most of these exception, you must DUCK SMOOTHLY when you refuse to capture the honor. If you stop and think about it, you are giving away the situation, and Declarer will know what is going on. (The exception is holding up an Ace to kill a long suit. Declarer knows someone has the Ace and you can—and should—stop and think about it to make sure you get the correct count. In other situations, however, you must duck with your Aces and Kings in tempo as if you could not have those cards in your hand.)

GIVE DECLARER A GUESS

Not capturing an honor with an honor (right away) will sometimes give Declarer a guess. It is important to give Declarer a chance to go wrong in these situations. The classic holding is when you hold Ace third or Ace doubleton behind KQ10(x) in dummy. When Declarer plays a low card to the King (or Queen), if you take the first round of the suit immediately with your Ace, Declarer has no choice but to finesse the Jack on the next round of the suit. If, however, you DUCK the first round of the suit (SMOOTHLY!), Declarer will think your partner has the Ace and will play low to the remaining half of the royal marriage. You take that round, promoting your partner's jack.

MAKE DECLARER WASTE AN ENTRY

When Declarer has few entries in dummy, he may have to choose among finesses to take. If he takes a losing finesse, it is vital to DUCK SMOOTHLY the first time. Declarer is likely to use up another precious dummy entry to repeat the losing finesse (which you then win) and may not have enough entries to take a winning finesse in a different suit.

NOT CAPTURING KILLS AN ENTRY TO DUMMY

When dummy has a sure entry (such as a KQ), it is often right to NOT capture the first round in order to kill a dummy entry early. Particularly when dummy has a long suit that is a threat, if you can force Declarer to use that outside entry early—before the long suit is developed—you may be able to kill dummy completely so that Declarer cannot get back to it. If you duck the first round and take the second round when KQ is in dummy, you have ensured that the entry in that suit was used up right away.

NOT CAPTURING AVOIDS BEING END PLAYED

Sometimes Declarer can pull trumps and eliminate a couple side suits and then play the 4th suit. It may be correct for you to DUCK the first honor in that side suit in order to avoid an end play. A classic example is when you have AJ(xx) and Declarer has KQ10. If you take the King on the first round, you will be forced to give Declarer a ruff-and-sluff or to finesse yourself by playing into Declarer's remaining Queen-Ten combination. If you DUCK the first round, you will get two tricks in the suit.

CUTTING COMMUNICATION

The most classic times when you will NOT capture an honor with an honor (right away) is when you

are holding up an Ace in order to cut communication between Declarer and Dummy. When Dummy has a long suit and no outside entries, you want to take your Ace on the round in which Declarer plays his/her LAST card in that suit. (Your partner will be giving you COUNT in that suit so that you know how many cards Declarer has in the suit.)