

PLAY OF THE HAND

LESSON 6-B

Watching Out For The Opponents: While declarer is attempting to make enough tricks to make his/her contract, the defenders are also striving to make the maximum number of tricks possible so as to defeat the specified contract. Good **Declarer Play**, therefore, necessitates considering what the opponents are likely to do. The topics covered within this lesson deal with the ways in which declarer can lessen the number of tricks scored by the opponents, despite their interference.

1. **Holding Up:** - If declarer is playing in a No Trump contract, the opponents will attempt to set up their long suit by driving out your high cards. Having the advantage of timing because they have had the opening lead, the opponents can then run the remaining winners in their long suit. In a Suit contract declarer can prevent this from happening by the use of trump cards. In No Trump, there is also a method of preventing the opposition from running their long suit. It has to do with **timing**. Look at the following example:

NORTH (DUMMY)		
75		
WEST		EAST
KQJ109		832
SOUTH (DECLARER)		
A64		

Declarer has one sure trick (The Ace) whether it is played on the first, second, or third trick. **When** declarer decides to play the Ace, however, is the key in effecting the number of tricks the defenders can produce. If declarer wins the Ace immediately, no matter which defender gets the lead, the suit can be run. If, however, declarer **holds-up** and refuses to take the Ace until the third trick, East is stripped of any remaining cards in the suit and, if West has no outside entries, or alternatively, if East fails to find the entry that East, indeed, does have outside the suit led, declarer has succeeded in stopping the suit from being run.

In the following examples, assuming your left hand opponent has led the suit shown against your No Trump contract, if you refuse to play the Ace until it finally must be played, how many cards will your right hand opponent have left in the suit led if it divides as you might expect?

EXERCISE 1

DUMMY :	86	743	7642	974	10
DECLARER :	A97	A62	A3	A8	A6
	0 (5-3)	0 (4-3)	1 (4-3)	1 (5-3)	2 (5-4)

Conclusion: - When declarer does not take a trick immediately, because he/she desires to strand the opponents long suit, it is called a **hold-up play**. The timing as to when to take a trick can have a discernible impact by stripping the defenders of their ability to communicate in the suit in question.

2. **How Long To Hold Up:** - One must **not** be tempted to use the hold-up play every time one can just for the sake of doing so. If the overall picture exists such that you have enough winners to make the contract, or to run the rest of the tricks without holding up, or if there is another suit to which the opponents could switch which would be even more injurious, one must be careful not to hold-up. In the following example, West leads the King of Hearts against your 3NT contract. Should you hold up?

NORTH (DUMMY)
 862
 74
 K973
 AQJ5

Consult your plan. You need nine tricks and you have nine tricks. There is no need to put the contract at risk by holding up. If you do not take the trick, the opponents could switch to Spades and your contract would be defeated.

K (Hearts)
 SOUTH (DECLARER)
 Q3
 A65
 AQJ10
 K942

Conclusion: Only use the hold-up play when you must give up the lead later in order to promote the number of tricks needed. Always remember to consult your plan first before playing.

3. **The Dangerous Opponent:** - Since the opponents are always trying to capture your high cards, it is universal that one of your two opponents is always more dangerous than the other in this regard. It is, therefore, critical for declarer to be alert so as to identify which of the opponents is the more perilous. In the following examples, which opponent is the dangerous one?

EXERCISE 2

DUMMY:	K84	-	984
DECLARER:	653		K32
	Left-Handed		Right-Handed

Conclusion: Not only do the opponents interfere with your plans by playing their suit(s) before you can play yours, but they also attempt to defeat you by trapping your high cards. In both instances, one of the opponents is likely to be the more dangerous and declarer's ability to identify the more perilous opponent is most useful and important.

4. **Avoiding the Dangerous Opponent:** - Taking a proposed finesse in the proper direction is one way to avoid letting the suspected dangerous opponent get the lead. In the following examples, if your opponent to your right is the dangerous opponent, how would you play each of the following suit combinations?

EXERCISE 3

DUMMY:	AJ105	10753	J103	A9752	AQJ83
DECLARER:	K983	AQJ8	AK872	KJ3	10764
	A Then J	Finesse 10	Finesse J	Finesse J	Play A