

## BRIDGE SLOGANS ( and when not to use them)

Reg Busch



### ***Third hand plays high.***

Here we are talking about the situation where partner has led (often the opening lead) and you are to play after dummy. First let's be clear what this slogan does **not** mean. As a defender, you play the lowest of equal cards in any situation. 'Equal' cards are such as QJ, KQJ, J109, 9876, AKQ etc. Depending on what you see in dummy, there may be other similar holdings. Thus, if partner leads a diamond, dummy has the AJ92, and you have KQ108, all your cards are 'equals' in sitting over dummy. If dummy plays the ♦2, then you play the ♦8, which is enough to win. You do not play the ♦K because 'third hand plays high!'

You **must always** play the lowest of equals. The only exception is perhaps later in the play where it is essential to deceive declarer and deceiving partner can't matter.

Supposing I lead a diamond through dummy's AJ103, dummy plays the ♦J, and you play the ♦K, I know that you don't have the ♦Q (if you did, you would have played it), and that there is no joy in diamonds for us. But if you play the ♦Q and it holds, I know that you have the ♦K (unless declarer is mad), so will lead them again when next on lead.

This 'lowest of equals' is an essential understanding in defence. So often one sees it ignored (perhaps to trick declarer). But it also tricks partner, and damages partnership trust.

A more general philosophy of defence is this one: *your high cards are meant to capture declarer's high cards, not his 2s and 3s.* Thus: if declarer leads ♣2 up to the ♣K43 on the table, rising with your Ace is bad defence.

K43
A972
Q842

Your Ace has captured declarer's 2 and 3, and set up 2 tricks for him.. Better to wait and play low– next time it may capture declarer's Q. This is the rationale for '*second hand plays low*'.

Some examples where third hand should not play 'high'.

<b>Hand # 1</b>	♥Q92
♥5	♥A103

The bidding has gone 1NT - 3NT. Partner leads the ♥5. Dummy has ♥Q92 and plays the ♥2. You hold ♥A103. Which card do you play?

You remember the slogan 'Third hand plays high' so you play the Ace. But you would be wrong. The correct card is the 10.

<b>Hand #1</b>	♦86 ♥Q92 ♦KQ76 ♣K65
	♦Q754                      ♦A103
	♥KJ654                      ♥A103
	♦5                              ♦9832
	♦QJ9                              ♦872
	♦AK92 ♥87 ♦AJ104 ♣A1043

Here is the full hand:

Note that, if you play ♥A then another you have established dummy's ♥Q for declarer's ninth trick. If you play the ♥10, then ♥A and another you win the first five tricks.

How do we know that partner has the ♥J? We don't. But, if declarer can beat the ♥10, then he always has one stopper in the suit, no matter what partner's holding is. Playing the 10 can't cost. So, one exception to the slogan 'third hand plays high', is: ***When you hold an honour sitting over dummy's honour and dummy's honour is not played, keep that honour sitting over dummy's honour, provided you have a card at least as high as the nine that you can play.***

<b>Hand #2</b>	♦83 ♥A43 ♦AJ1065 ♣1074
	♦Q10943                      ♦AJ6
	♥Q65                              ♥J982
	♦87                              ♦K93
	♣Q83                              ♦J95
	♦K75 ♥K107 ♦Q42 ♣AK62

After 1NT – 3NT auction, South is in 3NT. You are East, and partner leads the ♦4. In the standard play, you win the Ace, then play the Jack and six, declarer holding up until trick 3. Now he loses the diamond finesse to you, but you have no useful return, and declarer winds up with his nine tricks.

Here is another exception. Analyse the hand. Partner can't have many HCPs. And it seems unlikely that he has an entry to cash his now established spades. It looks likely that declarer will need to finesse in diamonds to establish his nine tricks. What if you play the ♦J at trick 1? Declarer can't afford to hold off – he doesn't know that you have the Ace. If he holds off he may never make a spade trick. So he'll take his trick, hope the diamond finesse works, and will go off. This is a special case, where you are deceiving both partner and declarer, because you can judge that it is likely to work well.