

Tidbit 10

Don't let the Danger Hand in

Interpretation: This relates usually to NT contracts where the danger hand is the one the defenders' hold with the long suit for which you no longer have a stopper.

Example:

BD: 27	♠ Q74 ♥ K83 ♦ QJ9 ♣ AJ63	Dir: S Vul: Nil
♠ JT982 ♥ J64 ♦ K762 ♣ 5	♠ A ♥ A972 ♦ A54 ♣ Q9742	♠ K653 ♥ QT5 ♦ T83 ♣ KT8

Bidding: You are sitting North.

South	West	North	East
1C	Pass	3NT	Pass

East leads the 3S. Unfortunately, you must win with in the dummy with the singleton AS. The defenders had 9 x spades between them so if East has the KS and West wins a trick in another suit and leads a spade through your QS you are probably going to go down. You have a second spade stopper if East is on lead so West is the danger hand.

You should take the club finesse into the East hand. If it loses and East leads another spade you will have your nine tricks. If East leads a diamond you must forgo the finesse because if East has the KD no problems but if West has it you have let the danger hand in to lead a spade through your QS. When you run your club suit off the defenders will have troubles keeping the spades they need to defeat the contract as well as one of them guarding hearts and nine tricks will eventuate even though West has the KD. (Think about what could be a danger hand in a trump contract).

Exercise:

Dir: West
 Vul: None

♠76
 ♥6
 ♦A83
 ♣AJ98654

	North	
West	8	East
South		

♠842
 ♥109
 ♦J106
 ♣KQ732

♠QJ1053
 ♥K8742
 ♦Q75
 ♣--

♠AK9
 ♥AQJ53
 ♦K942
 ♣10

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	4	4	2	1	3
S	4	4	2	1	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

	9	
8	6	
	17	

*You are South in 3NT. West leads the QS from her sequence. In this case, West is the danger hand and you have a combined five card holding with 2 stoppers in the danger suit and the opportunity to duck once. In this situation and where you may have to let the defence in twice to make your contract, the guideline **is to let the danger hand in first** and then when the non-danger hand gets in second she has no more spades to lead to her partner, provided you ducked along the way. Let's say you duck the QS and win the JS continuation. Double dummy, seeing how badly the clubs are positioned what suit do you attack first and how? (This is counter-intuitive and not easy).*

Answer to Tidbit 9 exercise:

Think of exceptions where it would not make sense to play for the drop when holding nine cards in a suit between the two hands including the AKJ.

Here are three possible exceptions. You may have thought up others.

This tidbit is one example where you may choose to finesse through the danger hand to ensure it cannot gain the lead just in case it has Qxx in the suit.

Occasionally, it is obvious that all of the high card points are in one of the defender's hands and it makes more sense to finesse her for the Q.

If there has been very competitive bidding to a high level, nevertheless resulting in you winning the contract, it is quite possible that one of the defenders will have a singleton or void in your suit making a finesse a possible approach.