

## DON'T BE IN SUCH A HURRY

Try this hand:

<p>♠ K 8 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 6 3 2 ♣ K 10 9 6 4</p>	<p>♠ 5 ♥ 10 8 7 4 ♦ J 10 7 5 4 ♣ 8 5 3</p>	<p>♠ A Q J 9 4 ♥ A K Q ♦ K 9 ♣ A Q 2</p> <p>♠ 10 7 6 ♥ J 9 6 5 3 ♦ A Q 8 ♣ J 7</p>
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<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

You are North, and on lead versus 3NT. You decide to lead a club because, if partner holds the Ace, you may be able to take the first five tricks. For better or worse, you choose to lead the ♣6 (fourth-highest), thinking the 10 and 9 may be important. This runs to partner's Jack and declarer's Queen.

At one table, declarer cashed the ♠A, then led the ♠Q which North won with the King. Now the ♠J brought down South's 10 and declarer had 9 tricks.

At the other table, declarer tried the ♠J at trick 2. Appreciating that the King was their only entry, North ducked. Now declarer cashed the ♠A but then had to 'guess' whether to lead the Queen or a small spade on the next round. When she tried a small spade, South was able to win the 10 and clear the club suit for North.

Not only did North's duck keep the entry intact, but it left declarer with that guess, which could have happened at the first table if North had ducked there too. There is a saying that you should not win a trick unless you know what you plan to do next.

Tim Seres used to say to 'give the opponents enough rope'. Both those rules of thumb came into being on the hand. By ducking, declarer was given the latitude to go wrong. Don't be in such a hurry to win tricks that won't run away.

It's the same scenario as when you see this suit in dummy:

K Q 10 9 3

Declarer leads a small one towards dummy's King. Sitting East you hold the Ace. Should you win it? The answer is usually 'NO'. You would like to leave declarer with a guess regarding what to do the next time he leads the suit. Should he now play the Queen or the 10? Do you have the Ace or the Jack?

In fact, there is an additional reason why you should not win the Ace here and it is to do with making it more difficult for declarer to establish the suit. Imagine the following scenario:

♠ K Q 10 9 3

♥ A 5 4

♦ 5 3

♣ J 8 7

♠ 7 2

♥ K Q 3

♦ K Q 8 7 6

♣ A K 2

Let's say declarer leads the dummy's ♠K and you win the Ace. It is now easy for declarer to establish the suit no matter who holds the ♠J, with the ♥A as the re-entry to dummy. However, if you hold up the Ace and declarer misguesses on the second round, he cannot establish the spade winners because he would need to use his heart entry to create the winners and there is no later entry to those spade winners.

The same situation applies even when dummy lack the 10 (and 9) in the spade suit. You duck the King so that declarer has entry difficulties for establishing his spade suit.

Unless you think that declarer may be stealing a singleton (winner), then you should think about whether to win or duck. Of course, you have to have planned this in advance because stopping to think gives away the position.

The next hand (over the page) comes from the Gold Coast Pairs many years ago.

♠ void	
♥ K Q 9 8 7 5 4	
♦ K 8	
♣ J 10 9 3	
♠ Q 9 8 6 3 2	♠ J 4
♥ J 10	♥ A 6 2
♦ 7 6 2	♦ 10 9 5 3
♣ 8 7	♣ Q 6 4 2
♠ A K 10 7 5	
♥ 3	
♦ A Q J 4	
♣ A K 5	

Many Norths bid to 6♥. If East wins the Ace when a heart is led to North's Queen, then declarer is forced into the winning line of cashing the King, dropping West's ♥J-10 doubleton. On the other hand, if West plays the ♥J – King – and East ducks, declarer is left with a guess and may go down.

At our table, bearing in mind it was Pairs and the extra points count, South bid to 6NT. Once again, picking the heart suit is critical. Declarer led a heart to the 10 – Queen – and partner played low. (If she won, the contract is cold.) Declarer now mispicked the hearts, leading a small heart and hoping I held doubleton ♥A-10. He claimed one off. As we started the next hand, I realised that he was down more than one trick, because he had to use the ♦K entry to establish the hearts and, therefore, had no re-entry to dummy. (We received an arbitrary two down from the Director, though it may have been three down in reality.)

Keep in mind the power of ducking – smoothly! If it can't cost, then ducking is probably the correct action.

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