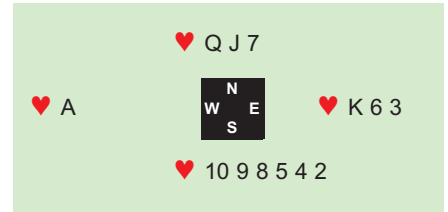


# Covering Touching Honours



might be safe to cover, so long as West has 10-8-x or 10-9-x, since in this case declarer cannot take a finesse against partner's ten. If, as here, West has the ten but neither the eight nor nine, then covering is fatal. You need to duck the queen and wait to cover the jack.



This layout illustrates another of the dangers of covering the first of touching honours. Your high card might crash with one of partner's. You do better to let West deal with the queen and save your king for later.



This layout gives another reason for ducking. If you win with the king, a subsequent lead by South will set up the jack. Yes, if declarer attacked this suit from hand, leading twice towards the queen-jack, one of dummy's honours will score, but perhaps there were insufficient entries for doing that.

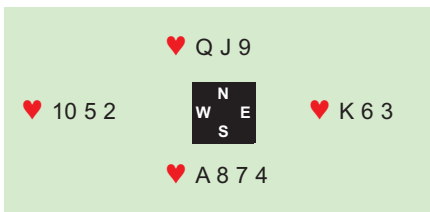


Talking about a lack of entries, can you see why it would not be a good idea to cover the queen with the king if this is the position? Declarer captures the king with the ace and returns a low heart to dummy. When West shows out, there is marked finesse against your nine and the lead is in dummy for taking the finesse. Note the difference if you duck the first round and only cover on the second round. To pick up your nine now, declarer will need a side entry to dummy.

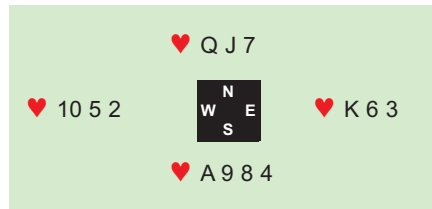
Continued on page 26 ►

In the last issue of BRIDGE we discussed covering honours. You may recall that we mentioned the subject of touching honours: if it turned out that the card led was part of a sequence, then it was not such a good idea to cover. This time we will examine the topic in more detail.

To start with, we will consider all the positions from East's viewpoint, so that you can see the holding from which a card is led.



Dummy leads the queen, and let us suppose first that you decide to cover. Declarer wins with the ace and finesses the ten on the way back. That was no good, was it? Now try ducking the queen and let us say that the jack comes next. This time you need to cover to promote partner's ten.



I have made dummy's holding slightly weaker and again you need to decide whether to cover the queen. This time it

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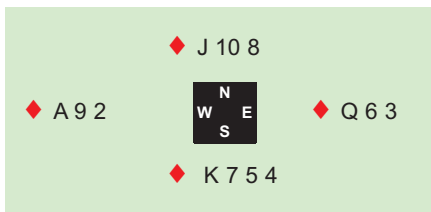
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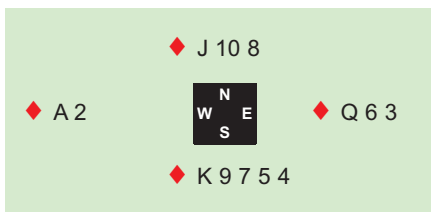
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## POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 25

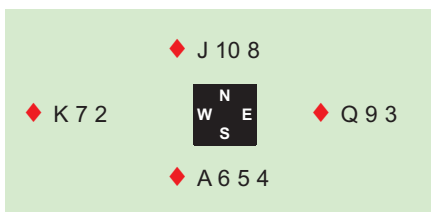
If we weaken dummy's holding to J-10-x and give you the queen, you will find that the winning tactics are similar:



If the first round of the suit goes jack, queen, king, ace, dummy will be left with a tenace of ten-eight over partner's nine. The ace will be the only trick your side scores in the suit. Observe the difference if you duck the first round. Whether partner ducks and the ten comes next, or the ten comes later, you should cover it. Now it is partner's nine that wins the third round of the suit.



This time, with the nine on your left, your side can only make one trick whatever you do. All the same, it is usually right to let the jack ride. If partner takes the ace then declarer will need to use (and to have) an entry to dummy to repeat the finesse. If, instead, you covered, declarer could safely make subsequent leads in the suit from hand.



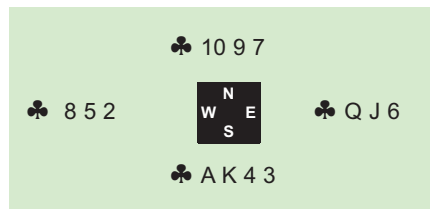
I have moved the nine again, this time to your hand. On this occasion, it would not cost to cover the jack on the first round if partner had the ace. On the actual layout, however, covering will probably cost you a trick. Declarer captures your queen with the ace and returns a low card. If West goes in with the king, dummy's ten will definitely become a winner. Equally, if partner plays low but thinks before doing

so, it will be clear who has the king and the ten will score. Even if partner ducks smoothly, declarer may well do the right thing, putting up the ten.

So far, one rule for dealing with touching honours has applied: *cover not the first of these touching honours but the second*. Indeed, if you follow this rule when you have only the one honour yourself, you will not go far wrong.

*You have two honours higher than the card led*

The position changes significantly if you have two honours that could beat the card led:

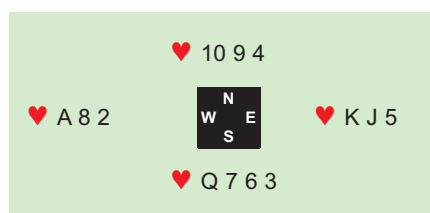


Clearly, here you want to cover both the ten and the nine. By covering twice, you promote partner's eight into a winner on the third round.

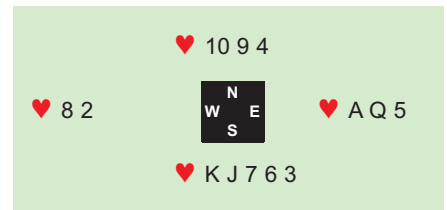


The winning tactic is the same if, as here, partner has the ace. If you were to duck the ten, partner would either have to win the ten with the ace, in which case the king scores later, or allow the ten to win. You do better to cover. Declarer might eventually set up a long card, but your side scores three tricks along the way.

The position becomes more complex when your honours are not touching. In this case, it is usually right to cover with your higher card:



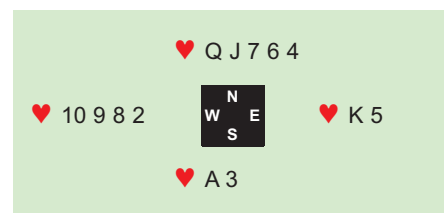
Clearly, it would not work to allow the ten to run. After partner uses the ace to capture the ten, declarer's queen, sitting over your king, is normally going to score. Nor does it work to cover the ten with the jack. After the queen and ace cover your jack, declarer later runs the seven for a finesse against partner's eight. The solution is to capture the ten with the king. Then, if necessary, you can cover the nine with the jack to set up partner's eight on the third round.



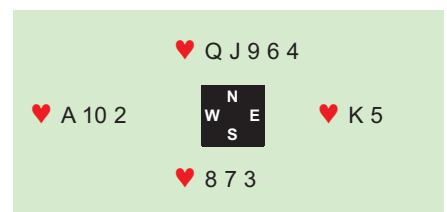
This time, when the ten is led you probably cannot score more than one trick. Even so, you usually do best to cover with the ace. This will force declarer to find a way back to dummy to take a further finesse against your queen. If you ducked or covered with the queen, declarer would not need to do that.

*Exceptions to the rules*

This has all been quite straightforward. Now we need to start considering some exceptions. It may help if you bear in mind the *raison d'être* for covering. Can you remember what is? You normally cover to promote lower honours or intermediate cards in your hand or partner's.



If you allow the queen to win, your king will fall lamely under the ace on the next round. If you cover, you make partner's holding potentially worth two tricks.

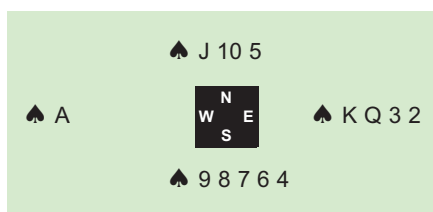


*Continued on page 27 ►*

## POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 26

If declarer holds the ace, it will usually be right to duck. You would hope partner has 10-x-x and declarer takes a losing view on the next round, leading the jack. (This would be the winning play if you actually held K-x-x and partner 10-x). Now suppose you have worked out that, as shown, partner has the ace. Maybe you cannot defeat the contract otherwise or maybe declarer would be out of range for a limit bid with the ace. In this case, it could be a good idea to take the king, especially if declarer is short of entries to hand. If you ducked, declarer could set up the suit by leading low from dummy on the next round. This option will not be available if you win with the king.

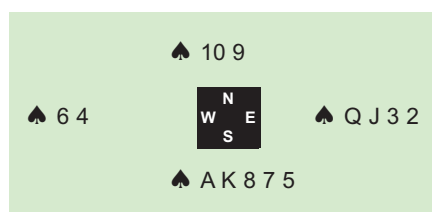
We now return to the situation in which you hold two honours yourself:



On this layout, where you can see J-10-x in dummy and K-Q-x-x in your hand, it might be right to cover if you think partner has 9-x-x. Of course, 9-x will not be good enough, because you have no intermediate cards and partner's nine would drop helplessly on the second round. If you can tell from the bidding that partner is short in the suit (not difficult if, for example, this is the trump suit) then covering will not be so bright. You might crash partner's singleton ace.



If it is possible that West has 8-x-x (or you are desperate to stop declarer from making more than two tricks in the suit) then you need to cover with both the queen and the jack. If, in fact, you know West is short, you do better to duck. For one thing, West could hold a singleton king as shown.



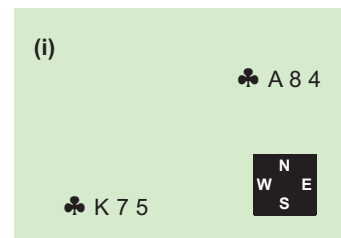
On this variation, again it would be a mistake to cover twice, although it is all right to cover once. Again, the key is the poor intermediates and length in your hand, making it clear (if you suspect that partner is short) that covering cannot promote anything.

*The lead comes from declarer's hand*

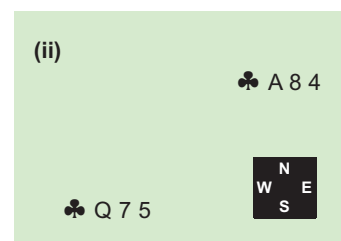
So far, life has been relatively simple because you have seen the lead come from dummy and so have been certain whether or not the card led is part of a

sequence. The time has come to move across to the West seat. For a change, I am just going to show you your hand and dummy. You tell me whether you think the card led is a touching honour.

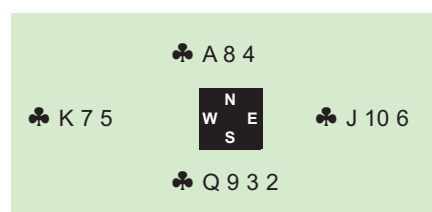
South leads the queen and this is what you see:



South leads the jack and this is what you see:



In both cases you should form the view that declarer has led from touching honours.



If this were the full picture in (i), why would declarer start by leading the queen? It would be far better technique to start by crossing to the ace and then leading back to the queen.



The danger of covering is that the real layout is this. As you may remember from our very first example, parting with the king allows declarer to finesse against the ten on the second round.

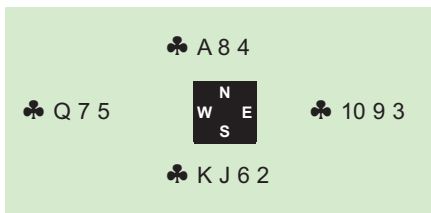
*Continued on page 28 ►*

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You do not think this is the full picture of (ii), do you? Declarer's correct play on this layout is to cash the ace and then finesse the jack.



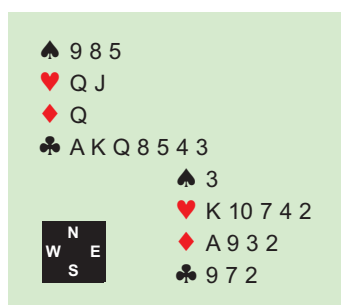
Surely, this is a more plausible layout. Declarer probably intends to play the ace and finesse the ten on the way back. This makes it essential to duck, and to do so smoothly.



This is another realistic layout for when South leads the jack. Again, you need to save your queen for later.

Did you spot the similarity between (i) and (ii)? In both cases, there was only one honour in dummy. In other words, *if dummy has one honour, it is reasonable to assume that if declarer leads high it is with a touching honour*. This should help you to decide or, as you become more experienced, know, what to do.

For our final example, please move back to the East seat.



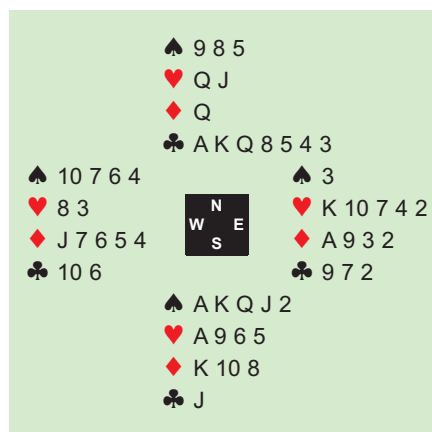
West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♠
End			

Partner leads the five of diamonds and you win with the ace. Clearly, 6♠ is going to fail if partner has a trump trick. So, you can forget about that possibility because then your play will make no difference. Partner is not going to have the ace of hearts unless your opponents have had a mix up, so prospects appear bleak. You can count declarer for, it would seem, more than enough winners to take the rest: five trumps, seven clubs, one heart (even without taking the finesse) and very likely a diamond (the king). You need to shut out dummy's clubs and accordingly decide to switch to a club. Declarer plays the jack from hand, overtakes in dummy and leads the queen of hearts.

Do you cover or not?

## Did you work it out?

Since you have the ten of hearts yourself, you know that declarer has two heart tricks whether you cover the first round or the second. So, since your play makes no difference on how many heart tricks each side takes, you should consider the impact of covering on the entry situation. Do you agree that you do not want to leave dummy with a winning heart as an entry for getting back to the clubs after trumps are drawn? This tells you what to do: duck.



This turns out to be the winning move when the full deal is as above. ■

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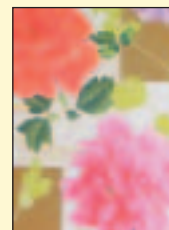
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