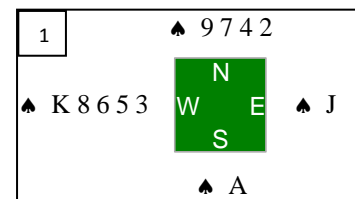


8: Defense - Third Hand High - or not?

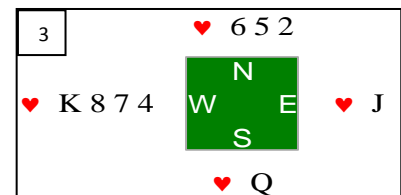
You are defending, and partner has made the opening lead. Dummy comes down. You are third hand, and soon it will be your turn to play. What are you going to play? One old maxim is "Third Hand High" and it is a good one much of the time. But, according to Eddie Kantar, it is right only about half the time! Before playing you should try to figure out partner's holding in the suit led: is it low from an honor, is partner leading the suit that you bid (and if so, did he support you?), is it the top of an honor sequence, etc?

If partner leads low, in an unbid suit, he has presumably led from length and some strength. When dummy has only low cards, it is usually correct for third hand to play high. However, when you have more than one high equal and you are playing high, you should play the lowest of your high equals. For example, from a suit with J1062, play the 10, which is equal to the jack. When you play the 10, partner will often be able to place you with the jack, which might well benefit the defense. But if you play the jack, you are denying the 10. Think hard before you try answering the questions below. Don't fly on autopilot!

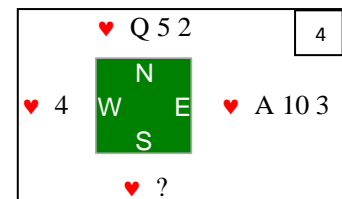
1. West leads the 5 of spades, East plays the jack, South plays the ace. Only two cards are missing. Who has them?



2. You have migrated to the East seat. Partner, West, leads the heart 5. Dummy plays low from the 1042. You hold QJ9 of hearts. What card do you play?



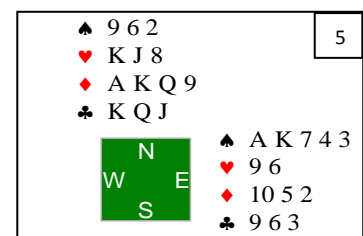
3. Against a notrump contract, you (West) lead the heart 4. Dummy has low cards, partner plays the jack and declarer wins with the queen. Where are the missing honors, and what should you do about them?



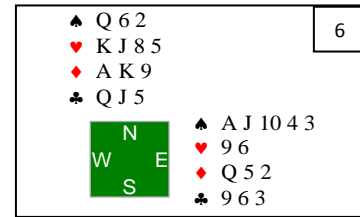
4. You are sitting East again and partner leads her 4th best heart against a notrump contract. Dummy plays low. What do you play?

When partner leads low, dummy has an honor and plays low, and you have a higher honor, insert a nine or higher, if possible, rather than your high honor. In a trump contract, take your Ace or else it might go away!

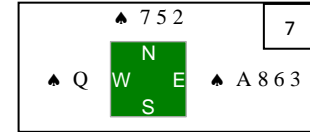
5. You are sitting East. After North opened the bidding with 1 diamond, you overcalled 1 spade, South bid 1NT and North raised to 3NT. Your partner, West, did not support your suit, but dutifully leads the spade 8. Dummy plays the 9. Over to you.



6. Again you are sitting East, and again you overcalled 1 spade. This time the contract is 4H, by South. Partner didn't support your suit, but she leads the 8. How do you think the spades are divided, and how should you play?



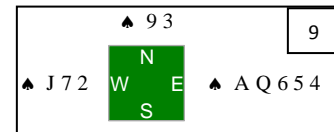
7. Partner opened the bidding with 1 spade, and leads the queen. What do you play?



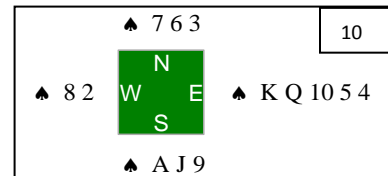
8. Against a suit or notrump contract, partner leads the spade king. What do you play?



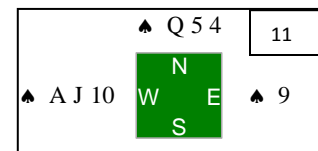
9. You bid spades, partner supported, but South ends up playing the hand at notrump. Partner leads the spade 2. What do you play?



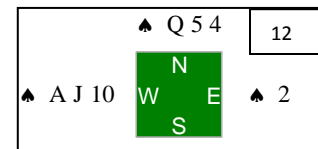
10. Again you bid spades, but this time partner did not support. South declares at 3NT and partner leads the spade 8. From the bidding, partner is marked with 4-5 HCP and you have a likely entry in a side suit. What do you play?



11. So far we have looked at trick one. Let's go to a later trick. You are now West, defending a notrump contract. Partner gets on lead and switches to the spade 9. Again, you are third hand. Who's got what, and what do you play when declarer plays low?



12. This time, when partner gets on lead she switches to the spade 2. What do you play now? Why?



13. You opened the bidding with 1 heart. South bid 1NT and North raised to 3NT. Partner leads the heart Jack. What is your plan?

