

LEAD LOW TOWARD HIGH CARDS—NORMAL FINESSING—OR NOT?

By Maritha

Most of the time, you do well at the bridge table by using the positional advantage of clockwise play. You play low TOWARD honors—particularly “broken honor sequences” such as KJxx or AQxx or KQxx, etc. It is to your advantage if you can avoid having the opponents kill your honors with their honors. You are very happy to see Aces and Kings fall on “air,” without beating your lower honors. So, leading toward strength is one of the maxims of bridge. There are, of course, exceptions to these guidelines. Sometimes you need to lead AWAY from honors rather than toward them.

LEADING AWAY FROM HONOR COMBINATIONS MAY BE YOUR ONLY CHANCE

Certain combinations need to be played “backwards” from our normal thinking in terms of finessing. If you hold AQxx opposite Jx and MUST GET three tricks from that combination, play low toward the AQxx or playing the Jack toward the AQxx is doomed to fail. All you will do is promote the 9 or 10 in the opponents' hands. If, however you play a card AWAY FROM the Aqxx combination, you will win whenever second hand has the Kx or Kxx.

LEADING AWAY FROM HIGH CARDS IN DUMMY MAY CONVINCING A DEFENDER TO RISE WITH AN HONOR.

When you have AQxx opposite xxxx and need THREE tricks from the combination, taking an immediate finesse to the queen is not advisable. Much better is to try a LOW card AWAY from the AQxx combination. If the defender who is second hand has the Kx, s/he will find it almost impossible to duck. Or, you might get luck and your spot card third-hand forces out the King. If nothing interesting happens, you can finesse on the SECOND round of the suit having given yourself extra chances.

SOME SAFETY PLAYS INCLUDE LEADING AWAY FROM HONORS

When you are guarding against bad breaks, it is fine to lead away from honors in case there is a singleton Ace or King lurking. That way, the singleton Ace or King falls “on air” and you avoid losing too many tricks.