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Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ QT8	
	♥ JT964	
	♦ 96	
	♣ 864	
West		East
♠ J4		♠ A73
♥ AK2		♥ Q753
♦ AJT87		♦ Q3
♣ T32		♣ KQJ7
	South	
	♠ K9652	
	♥ 8	
	♦ K542	
	♣ A95	

This second series of six deals and its earlier partner, also of six deals, are all about covering honours with honours.

There is an old adage at bridge that tells you to "cover an honour with an honour". Like all such maxims it contains a modicum of sense but should not be followed blindly as it sometimes does more harm than good.

It often makes sense when, by covering, you take two of the opponents' honours for one of your own and thereby promote a lower card in your own hand or your partner's.

Sometimes you know for certain you are promoting a card, sometimes you don't know but covering will be a no-cost play.

*The essence, though is **trick promotion**. If there is no prospect of promoting a trick in either your partner's hand or in your hand you should not be covering.*

So be warned. In many of these hands successful defence is found by covering an honour with an honour. But that is not always the case. Sometimes it is wrong to do so.

You can probably guess this hand will involve you having to decide whether to cover an honour with an honour.

West	North	East	South
-	P	1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

Lead: ♠ 5

As South you lead the fourth highest of your longest suit (actually the ♠5) against a swiftly bid 3NT by East.

Declarer holds up for two rounds then wins with the ♠A before leading the ♦Q. Decisions, decisions...! Do you cover with the ♦K or not?

The answer here is a firm **No**. There is no point in covering as there is nothing to **promote** – your Diamond pips (the ♦5 4 2) are pathetic and partner can have two Diamonds at most (think of the *bidding*).

The one chance you have is that your ♦K cannot be caught because declarer has only two Diamonds. If that were the case then East cannot take the Diamond finesse three times.

So, you play low. Declarer plays another Diamond to dummy's ♦10 and then plays the ♦A, hoping for a 3-3 split. This leaves you with the ♦K as a master. Next comes dummy's ♣10 which, to declarer's chagrin, you win with the ♣A. Had North held the ♣A the contract would have been safe. It just isn't East's day...

You already have three tricks and now you cash the ♠K 9 and then the ♦K to defeat the contract by two tricks.

If you had covered the ♦Q with the ♦K declarer would have taken it in dummy with the ♦A and proceeded to cash four more Diamonds and three Hearts to add to the ♠A, thereby making his contract.


You will need to work out whether following the old adage helps the defence or helps declarer.



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Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 2 ACOL	Contract: 2H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ QJT9	
	♥ Q97	
	♦ JT9	
	♣ J62	
West		East
♠ 874		♠ K53
♥ AJ8532		♥ T4
♦ 74		♦ KQ62
♣ K7		♣ AQ54
	South	
	♠ A62	
	♥ K6	
	♦ A853	
	♣ T983	

Here you are defending a miserable part-score.

That doesn't mean that you should relax, though. Every trick is vital.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	P
2♥	P	P	P

Lead: ♠ Q

You are defending a miserable contract of 2♥ here and North leads the ♠Q from his sequence. The early play departs a little from the routine – for some reason declarer decides to play the ♠K from dummy on the second round (maybe he thinks North is capable of leading the ♠Q from ♠A Q J 10 against a suit contract) and you take the first three tricks ending in your partner's hand.

Next comes the ♦J to the ♦Q and your ♦A and you exit with a Diamond to dummy's ♦K. Declarer now needs to pull trumps so leads the ♥10 from the table – do you cover?

Players don't always regard the Ten as an honour-card but it certainly is – and covering it here with the ♥K is essential.

If you **don't** cover, the ♥10 is run to partner's ♥Q and that player has no card to lead back that causes any problem. A Diamond (say) would be ruffed – West would cross to a Club on table and a further Heart lead would expose your ♥K. At this point West could claim the rest.


What a difference a cover makes! When you cover the ♥10 with the ♥K it forces the ♥A and now partner's ♥Q 9 are both winners, sitting over declarer's ♥J. True, you don't know the position as South but there is no layout of Hearts where putting the ♥K on the ♥10 can damage your side. It is a **no-cost play**.



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Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ KJ8	
	♥ QJT95	
	♦ T42	
	♣ 84	
West		East
♠ Q763		♠ T52
♥ K82		♥ A73
♦ A87		♦ QJ96
♣ KJ9		♣ AQ5
	South	
	♠ A94	
	♥ 64	
	♦ K53	
	♣ T7632	

Declarer tests your mettle early in the deal, before you have had time to work out who has what.

Can you come up with the right play?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	P
1NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Lead: ♥ Q

West and East bid rapidly to 3NT and North leads the ♥Q. Declarer wins that on table with the ♥A and immediately advances the ♦Q. Should you cover that with the ♦K?

Well, the answer is no – and this simple piece of defence gives declarer no chance of making the hand. Look at it from West's perspective. With only three Club tricks and two Heart tricks his only chance is to pick up four Diamond tricks. That can only be done if you (as South) have ♦K ×. Now the ♦Q is run, the ♦K falls under the ♦A and the ♦9 is finessed on the third round.

You can allow declarer to make the same four Diamond tricks if you make the error of covering the ♦Q. Declarer bumps that off with the ♦A and now runs the ♦8, finessing partner's ♦10. Two finesses in the same suit – neat!

However, by refusing to cover (*in general do not cover touching honours*) you make West's task impossible. If he were next to lead the ♦J you'd cover that (and promote North's ♦10). As it is, West plays you for the doubleton ♦K and cashes the ♦A next. No luck today – your side has a Diamond trick and East-West have only eight tricks they can ever come to.



Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

West	North	East	South
1NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Lead: ♥ Q

West and East bid rapidly to 3NT and North leads the ♥Q. You peer at dummy suspiciously. Isn't this Hand 3 all over again?


Anyway, declarer wins trick one on table with the ♥A and immediately advances the ♦Q. Should you cover that with the ♦K?

Well, the answer last time was no – but this time it's different. *In general do not cover touching honours* but this is not an absolute rule. Here you have to cover because it's the last chance you will get to take out two Diamond honours (the ♦Q and the ♦A) for one of yours (the ♦K). If you pass up the opportunity you may find yourself putting the ♦K on dummy's ♦4 on the next round of the suit – and that you cannot afford.

From West's perspective he has to score four Diamond tricks to make his contract. On this layout of the cards it can't be done but there are ways you can arrange the North-South Diamonds so it can (you might amuse yourself by trying out various layouts).

On this actual layout if you were to refrain from covering the ♦Q with your ♦K West could succeed in making four Diamonds by playing a low card from dummy at the next trick. By covering you promote North's original holding of ♦10 8 5 into a sure trick.

Once North-South have a Diamond trick West has nowhere to go for nine tricks.

	North	
	♠ KJ8	
	♥ QJT95	
	♦ T85	
	♣ 84	
West		East
♠ Q76		♠ T52
♥ K82		♥ A73
♦ A962		♦ QJ74
♣ KJ9		♣ AQ5
	South	
	♠ A943	
	♥ 64	
	♦ K3	
	♣ T7632	

A deal eerily similar to the last one (we are like that here at VuBridge).

Same deal, same play, same defence...


Maybe.



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Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 2 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ Q962	
	♥ 5	
	♦ 654	
	♣ AJT92	
West		East
♠ A54		♠ JT3
♥ A62		♥ QJT98
♦ J32		♦ AKQ
♣ KQ73		♣ 65
	South	
	♠ K87	
	♥ K743	
	♦ T987	
	♣ 84	

Sometimes covering an honour with an honour promotes a trick in your hand or in your partner's.

Sometimes it throws away a trick that would have gone your way if you had the patience to wait for it.

Which of those occasions is this? Or, more accurately, are these?

West	North	East	South
-	P	1♥	P
2♣	P	2♥	P
4♥	P	P	P

Lead: ♦ T

You lead the ♦10 against 4♥ by East; declarer wins trick one with the ♦Q then leads the ♥Q. Should you cover that honour with the ♥K?

The answer is a firm **No**. You do not cover because you have more Hearts than dummy and if you play low on each round of trumps your ♥K cannot be caught. Anyway, there is nothing to *promote* (partner can't have anything in Hearts).

Declarer continues with the ♥J then, noting the 4-1 trump break, switches to a Club playing the ♣Q from dummy. Your partner (North) wins with the ♣A and plays back the ♣J, putting declarer back on table with the ♣K.

Declarer comes to hand with a Diamond and tries his luck with the ♠J. This is test number two. Do you cover that honour with your honour?

The answer again is **No**. Although you cannot see what is in declarer's hand you can be sure that East has either the ♠Q J or the ♠J 10 and in neither case would it be right to cover *touching honours*.

The ♠J runs to the ♠Q and North plays another Club, ruffed and overruffed by your ♥K. You exit with yet another Diamond. Declarer can now draw the last trump and lead the ♠10. Do you cover that?

This time the answer is a resounding **Yes**. If you don't cover then you can see that the ♠10 will be run and declarer will have the rest. So it is no-cost to cover with the ♠K. As the cards lie this promotes partner's ♠9 as the setting trick.


Phew! It's easy to go wrong on this testing deal.



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Practice on when (and when not) to cover an honour with an honour.

VB#11 Y2 Covering honours 2 ACOL	Contract: 2S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ 7542	
	♥ QJT	
	♦ QJ8	
	♣ A64	
West		East
♠ AKJ63		♠ T8
♥ 652		♥ K73
♦ T		♦ K76543
♣ KQ93		♣ JT
	South	
	♠ Q9	
	♥ A984	
	♦ A92	
	♣ 8752	

Sometimes you have to cover an honor with an honor to gain maximum advantage.

Is this one of those times?

Just because the contract is a miserable part-score does not mean that you can relax and put your feet up.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	P
1♠	P	1NT	P
2♣	P	2♣	P
P	P		

Lead: ♥ Q

East-West end up in their best spot (maybe their least bad spot) after the reasonable bidding 1♠ – 1NT – 2♣ – 2♠.

Partner (North) leads the ♥Q against this contract, which neatly traps dummy's ♥K. Three rounds of the suit put you on lead and, with little else to do, you exit with a Club. North wins the ♣A and tries the ♦Q. You take the ♦A over the King and play another Diamond. Declarer ruffs and crosses to the ♣J. Now comes the critical point of the deal – declarer calls for dummy's ♠10. Is it right to cover with the ♠Q or not?

Remember that the ♠10 is certainly an honour and therefore you should cover it with your ♠Q. You can have no idea of the full Spade layout but it cannot cost to cover and it may promote something in partner's hand. As it happens, partner's lowly ♠7 becomes a somewhat unexpected trick.

After the ♠10 is covered with the ♠Q declarer wins with the ♠K and takes two more rounds of trumps before playing his winning Clubs. North ruffs one of those with his master trump and the contract is one down.

Had you not covered the ♠10 Declarer would have finessed and made his eight tricks (three Clubs and five Spades).