



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(130) Defensive Details - Dummy Has Qxx+

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Level: 2

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General

When partner leads an Ace (from AK) and the Qxx or longer hits in the dummy, we need to know what to do and we need to have good agreements about what our signals mean as 3rd hand.

Note: This may seem like a very specific situation to focus on, but it is one that comes up commonly and it is important to get this situation right.

Suit Contracts

Note: We will assume standard carding for this discussion.

When partner leads the Ace and Qxx+ hits in dummy, we generally signal attitude as the 3rd hand. That attitude is not for an honor (as we assume partner can see the A, K, and Q), so in this situation we give attitude about whether we can ruff the third round of the suit. We play high (encouraging) for a doubleton (we want the defense to continue Ace, King, and a ruff) and we play low (discouraging) from three or more cards (we cannot get a ruff). It is important to know that this is an attitude position and not a count position – we would only play high from a doubleton, not from 4-cards.

Notrump Contracts

Against a notrump contract, if partner leads the Ace from AK (usually in a 4+card suit) and dummy hits with Qjxx, we need to have a different approach to our carding. In this situation our attitude is known (we have no honors or future in this suit), and count is irrelevant, so in this situation we switch to suit preference signals.

In this case we as 3rd hand will not have a lot of cards to choose from - often only two. Since there are three other suits to choose from, the question is: how do we make a suit preference signal? We (both partners) need to eliminate one of the suits (using information from both the auction and examining the dummy). Then there are only two suits left to possibly shift to and we play low to signal for the lower reasonable suit and high for the higher reasonable suit.

Conclusion

Since Ace from AK is a common opening lead and one of our favorites, then knowing what to do when dummy hits with such an unfortunate holding as Qxx+ is very important. Using this set of agreements, we are able to make good decisions and help partner make good decisions about what to do (continue or shift suits) at trick 2.