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# Third-hand play revisited

IN this article I continue looking at the theme of whether third hand should play high. In the first deal West leads the nine of hearts against 4♠. How should you defend in the East seat?

**Love All. Dealer South.**

♠	Q J 8 2
♥	10 6 5
♦	K J 9
♣	A K J

♠	7 6
♥	A 8 4 2
♦	8 7 6 3
♣	8 6 4

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

West has clearly led from a doubleton. You must withhold your ace of hearts, encouraging with the eight, and hope your partner quickly regains the lead with the ace or king of trumps. Now he can lead his second heart for you to take the ace of hearts and give him a ruff.

A similar type of play can occur in the trump suit. Imagine declarer is playing in a 5-3 spade fit. The success of his contract depends on him being able to ruff a heart in dummy but he will first have to concede a heart trick to your partner. Maybe your partner has found an inspired lead from a small doubleton trump. Your trump holding is ♠A-3-2 but you have no outside entry. If you grab your ace on the first round you will never regain the lead to play your last

trump. However, if you withhold your ace, partner can lead a second spade and you can draw two rounds of trumps.

In the next deal West leads the three of spades. Should East contribute the queen?

**E/W Game. Dealer South.**

♠	J 10 9
♥	Q 6
♦	A K 5 4 3
♣	J 6 3

♠	Q 4 2
♥	A 9
♦	J 10 8 7
♣	K 10 5 4

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Are you trying to work out what declarer has? There is nothing to think about. You don't know what declarer has but it can never be right to play your queen. You know that declarer has no trump losers; however, your queen may have nuisance value as long as you don't waste it. Suppose declarer has: ♠A K 8 7 6 ♥K 8 3 ♦9 2 ♣A 7 2. He has nine obvious tricks: five spades, a heart, two diamonds and the ace of clubs. If you play the queen of spades at trick one he can fulfil his contract in two entirely different ways: firstly, he can concede a heart and ruff a heart in dummy. Secondly he can plan to ruff dummy's fifth diamond good, using dummy's spades as entries.

If you keep your queen of spades you foil both of these successful methods: if he tries to ruff a heart in dummy, you can overruff with the queen; alternatively he does not have winning trumps as entries to dummy's diamonds.

If you ask yourself what possible gain there can be from playing your queen of

spades, you cannot get this wrong.

In the last deal partner leads the two of spades against declarer's 3NT, clearly a fourth-highest lead. Declarer plays the seven from dummy. Which spade should you play?

**N/S Game. Dealer South.**

♠	Q 7
♥	K 5 4
♦	A 8 7 5
♣	K J 3 2

♠	K 10 9 4 3
♥	J 6 2
♦	9 6 3
♣	8 4

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	3NT		

With the ♠K-10-9 surrounding dummy's queen, it might seem natural to play the nine. However, all is not what it seems here. Declarer has only two spades.

If his spades are both small, it won't matter what you do.

If his spades are doubleton ace, then you must play the nine.

If his spades are doubleton jack, then you must play the king.

So, do you have to guess? There are two good reasons for getting it right. The first is certainly not conclusive: A lead from a four-card spade suit headed by the ace would be more attractive than leading from a four-card spade suit headed by the jack. The second is conclusive. Suppose declarer held a doubleton ace of spades. Which spade would he have played from dummy at trick one? Surely he would have tried dummy's queen in the hope that West held the king. You must play your king at trick one to prevent declarer taking an easy trick with ♠J-5 doubleton. Declarer's hand is:

♠J 5 ♥A 8 7 ♦K Q 4 2 ♣A 7 6 5. □