

Hold Up & Avoidance Plays

Definitions

- ♦ **Hold up play:** Not winning a trick (that you can win) for strategic reasons
- ♦ **Avoidance play:** Keeping your dangerous opponent off lead
- ♦ **Dangerous opponent/hand:** One who can hurt you by, for example:
 - ▶ Running a long suit
 - ▶ Leading through an unprotected K
 - ▶ Leading a card that his/her partner can ruff
- ♦ **Safe opponent/hand:** One who can't hurt you

Note: Lecture just covers offense. It is also useful on defense – a lecture for another time.

Why Do It?

- ◆ Drain one opponent of a danger suit (cut communications)
- ◆ Keep dangerous opponent off lead (avoidance play)
- ◆ Save a convenient entry to ruff in short hand (suit contract only)
- ◆ Encourage opponent to make a lead that gives up a trick (Bath Coup)
- ◆ Rectify the count for a squeeze (not covered in this lesson)

When NOT To Do It

♦ **When it's futile**

- ▶ When you have enough tricks off the top (& it risks contract or offers no gain)
- ▶ When you have no choice but to finesse into the danger hand
- ▶ When they have so many cards in suit led that hold-up is pointless
- ▶ When you are SURE the suit splits 4-4

♦ **When it's dangerous**

- ▶ When you can lose your only stopper
- ▶ When it can cost you your 2nd stopper
- ▶ When they can switch to a more dangerous suit
- ▶ When you risk a ruff (trump contract)

Basic Hold-Up (drain opponent of danger suit)

With the Ace

Contract: 3N: ♥5 led, East plays ♥Q

♠ Axx	
♥ xx	
♦ AQJ10x	
♣ xxx	
♠ Jxx	♠ 10xxx
♥ KJx5x	♥ Qxx
♦ xx	♦ Kxx
♣ Qxx	♣ Jxx
♠ KQx	
♥ Axx	
♦ xxx	
♣ AKxx	

- **Winners off top:** 7 (5 black cards, 2 red aces); **Only source for 2 more tricks:** Diamond finesse
- **Danger:** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦K
- **Solution:** Hold up till 3rd round. If lead was from length, either East is out of hearts or they were 4-4. In either case, your contract is cold regardless of location of ♦K.

Basic Hold-Up Continued

With the KQx – it depends on who can get on lead

Contract: 3N: ♥5 led, East plays ♥J :

Case 1 (finesse is into East)

♠ Axxx
♥ xxx
♦ Axxx
♣ KQ

♠ Jx
♥ A10x5x
♦ xx
♣ xxx

♠ Qxxx
♥ Jx
♦ Kxx
♣ Jxxx

♠ Kxx
♥ KQx
♦ QJ109
♣ Axx

Case 2 (finesse is into West):

♠ Axxx
♥ xxx
♦ QJ109
♣ KQ

♠ Jx
♥ A10x5x
♦ Kx
♣ xxx

♠ Qxxx
♥ Jx
♦ xxx
♣ Jxxx

♠ Kxx
♥ KQx
♦ Axxx
♣ Axx

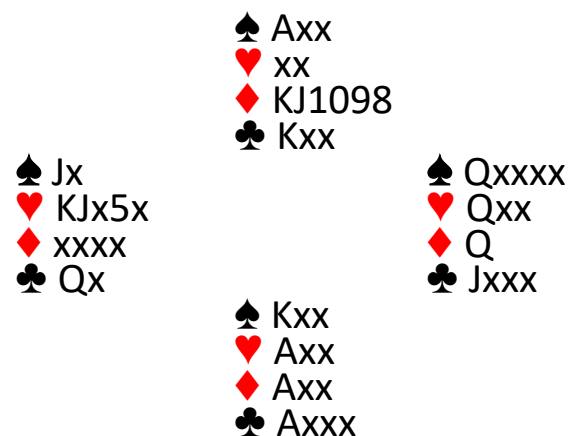
- **Winners off top:** 7 (5 black cards, ♦A, ♥K); **Only source for 2 more tricks:** Diamond finesse
- **Danger :** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦K
- **Case 1 solution:** Hold up on 1st round. If lead was from length, either East is out of hearts after continuing at trick 2 or they were 4-3. In either case, your contract is cold regardless of location of ♦K.
 - If you win 1st round, a heart will come through your ♥Kx when you lose the diamond finesse
- **Case 2 solution:** No point in holding up since you will finesse into West who cannot hurt you in hearts
- **Note:** This also applies with AJX when K/Q played by East & KJx when Q is played by E

Hold-Up & Avoidance (keep danger hand off lead)

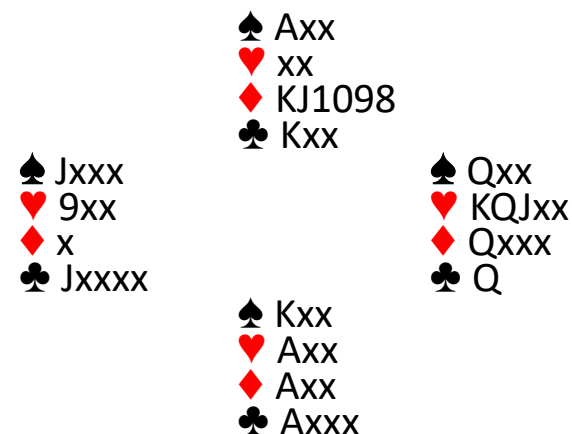
With 2-way finesse, depends on which hand you think is long

Contract: 3N

Case 1 (♥5 led, East plays ♥Q – West likely long)



Case 2 (♥9 led, East plays ♥J – East likely long):



- **Winners off top:** 7 (4 black cards, ♦AK, ♥A); **Only source for 2 more tricks:** Diamond finesse
- **Danger:** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦Q
- **Both Cases:** Hold up till 3rd round. Either short hand is out of hearts or they were 4-4.
- **Case 1 solution:** Finesse into East (A then low to J)
- **Case 2 solution:** Go to dummy with ♠A or ♣K then finesse into West (lead J)
 - Don't play ♦K first (nor enter dummy with ♦K) – need to protect against ♦Qxxx in East

Hold-Up & Avoidance (Continued)

Make safe play even if against the odds

Contract: 3N: ♥5 led, East plays ♥Q

♠ Axx	
♥ xx	
♦ KJ1098	
♣ Kxx	
♠ Jx	♠ Qxxxx
♥ KJx5x	♥ Qxx
♦ Qxx	♦ x
♣ Qx	♣ Jxxx
♠ Kxx	
♥ Axx	
♦ Axxx	
♣ Axx	

- **Winners off top:** 7 (4 black cards, ♦AK, ♥A); **Only source for 2 more tricks:** Diamond suit
- **Danger:** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦Q
- **Solution:** Hold up till 3rd round then finesse into East (♦A then low to ♦J)
 - DO NOT PLAY FOR DROP – You cannot let West in

Hold-Up & Avoidance (Continued)

Make only play that can work

Contract 3N: ♥5 led , East plays ♥Q

♠ Jx	♠ Axx	♠ xxxxx
♥ KJx5xx	♥ xx	♥ Qx
♦ Qxx	♦ xxxx	♦ Axx
♣ xx	♣ KJ10x	♣ Jxx
	♠ KQx	
	♥ Axx	
	♦ KJx	
	♣ AQxx	

- **Winners off top:** 8 (7 black cards, ♥A); **Only source for 1 more trick:** Diamond suit
- **Danger:** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦A
- **Solution:** Hold up till 3rd round (East shows out on 3rd round) then lead to dummy and play ♦x to ♦K)
 - It's not a guess – You cannot let West in so must play East for ♦A
 - If West has ♦A, you have no hope

Hold-Up & Avoidance – Suit Contract

Keep danger hand off lead

Contract 4♥: ♠3 led, East plays ♠J

	♠ xx	
	♥ Q10xx	
	♦ Kxx	
	♣ AJ9x	
♠ Kxx3		♠ QJxx
♥ x		♥ xxx
♦ Jxxx		♦ AQ10x
♣ xxxx		♣ Kx
	♠ Axx	
	♥ AKJxx	
	♦ xx	
	♣ Q10x	

- **Sure losers:** 3 (1♠, ♦A, ♣K if offside)
- **Danger:** Diamond led through K – you cannot afford a 2nd diamond loser
- **Solution:** Hold up ♠A on 1st trick. There will now be no way for West to get in to lead a diamond
 - Note that the club finesse is into the safe hand
 - If you win the first trick & lose club finesse (♣K in East), a spade to West's king will allow a potentially fatal diamond switch

Preserve Convenient Entry for Ruff

Preserve entry for ruff

Contract 4♥: ♠K led

♠ Axx
♥ 10xxxx
♦ xx
♣ xxx

♠ KQxxx
♥ Ax
♦ xxxx
♣ xx

♠ 10xx
♥ 9xx
♦ KQx
♣ J1098

♠ Jx
♥ KQJ
♦ AJxx
♣ AKQx

- **Sure losers:** 3 (1♠, ♥A, ♦K/Q)
- **Problem:** Need to ruff a spade in short trump hand to avoid 2nd spade loser (unless clubs are 3-3)
- **Solution:** Hold up ♠A on 1st trick. There is now no problem using ♠A as entry to ruff 3rd spade
 - If you win the first trick & you must then lose a spade to set up the ruff – and you have no sure way of getting back to dummy to take that ruff

Hold-Up in Hope of Continuation (Bath Coup)

Definition:

A hold up when defender leads a K and either:

- Declarer has Jxx in hand and Axx in dummy and no 10 in either hand or
- Declarer has AJx in hand and no 10 in either hand
- (Any of those example holdings can be longer than 3 cards)

Purpose:

Induce leader to continue suit so you can get 2 tricks when only 1 is truly available

Note:

Good defensive signaling often makes this futile, but sometimes a clear signal isn't possible and leader is on a guess about whether to continue or not. Declarer should false card appropriately to try to confuse leader.

Bath Coup

Contract: 3N: ♥K led

Case 1

♠ Axx
♥ xxx
♦ Kxxx
♣ KQx

♠ Jxx
♥ KQ10x
♦ xx
♣ xxxx

♠ Qxxx
♥ xx
♦ QJ10x
♣ Jxx

♠ Kxx
♥ AJxx
♦ Axx
♣ Axx

Case 2

♠ Axx
♥ Jxx
♦ Kxxx
♣ KQx

♠ Jxx
♥ KQ10x
♦ xx
♣ xxxx

♠ Q10xx
♥ xx
♦ QJ10x
♣ Jxx

♠ Kxx
♥ Axxx
♦ Axx
♣ Axx

- **Winners off top:** 8 (7 black cards, ♥A); **Only sources for 1 more trick:** ♥J or 4th diamond
- **Case 1 solution:** Hold up on 1st trick. If hearts are continued, you have your 9th trick.
- **Case 2 solution:** DO NOT HOLD UP – this is not a Bath Coup situation.
 - Win your ♥A & lead low towards the ♥J for your 9th trick.
 - If you hold up, the suit is not continued & East gets in and leads another heart, you have just morphed 2 heart tricks into 1 heart trick.

When Not to Hold Up

You have enough tricks and there is a danger in holding up

Contract 3N: ♥K led

♠ Kxx
♥ xxx
♦ KQxxx
♣ KQ

♠ QJx
♥ KQ10x
♦ xx
♣ xxxx

♠ A10xx
♥ xx
♦ xxx
♣ Jxxx

♠ xxx
♥ AJxx
♦ AJx
♣ Axx

- **Winners off top:** 9 (♥A, 5♦s, 3♣s)
- **Danger:** Spade switch at trick 2
- **Solution:** DO NOT HOLD UP.
 - This is a Bath Coup situation - you will get an overtrick if hearts are continued
 - But you will go down if West switches to a spade at trick 2 (& East has ♠A)

When Not to Hold Up (Continued)

Only choice is to finesse into danger hand

Contract 3N: ♥5 led, East plays ♥Q

♠ xxx	♠ xxxx	
♥ KJx5x	♥ Axx	
♦ xx	♦ 9x	
♣ Qxx	♣ AKxx	
		♠ QJx
		♥ Qxx
		♦ Kxx
		♣ J109x
	♠ AKx	
	♥ xx	
	♦ AQJ10xx	
	♣ xx	

- **Winners off top:** 6 (4 black cards, ♥A, ♦A); **Only source for 3 more tricks:** diamond finesse
- **Danger:** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦K
- **Solution:** DO NOT HOLD UP.
 - Your only chance to make this contract if hearts aren't 4-4, is the diamond finesse
 - You have to take the diamond finesse into the danger hand so there is no point in holding up

When Not to Hold Up (Continued)

They have so many cards that hold up is futile

Contract 3N: ♥5 led, East plays ♥Q

♠ Kxxx
♥ x
♦ Q10x
♣ AQxxx

♠ Ax
♥ J10xx5xx
♦ xx
♣ xx

♠ xxxx
♥ KQx
♦ Kxxx
♣ xx

♠ QJx
♥ Ax
♦ AJxx
♣ KJxx

- **Winners off top:** 7 (♥A, ♦A, 5♣s); **Only source for 2 more tricks:** diamond finesse
- **Danger:** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦K
- **Solution:** DO NOT HOLD UP.
 - Your only chance to make this contract is the diamond finesse
 - If it wins, you make; if it doesn't, you wish you had found a club contract

When Not to Hold Up (Continued)

You can lose your only stopper

Contract 3N: ♥5 led, East plays ♥Q

♠ Axx		
♥ xx		
♦ AQJ10x		
♣ xxx		
♠ Jxx		♠ 10xxx
♥ KJx5x		♥ Qxx
♦ xx		♦ Kxx
♣ Qxx		♣ Jxx
	♠ KQx	
	♥ Kxx	
	♦ xxx	
	♣ AKxx	

- **Winners off top:** 6 (5 black cards, ♦A); **Only source for 3 more tricks:** diamond finesse
- **Danger:** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦K
- **Solution:** DO NOT HOLD UP.
 - If you hold up, a heart will come back through your K and they will run hearts
 - If the diamond finesse wins, you make the contract...if it doesn't, you don't – but it's your only chance
 - Note that this is identical to the very first hand we discussed except you hold ♥K instead of ♥A

When Not to Hold Up (Continued)

You have a 2nd stopper only if you DON'T hold up

Contract 3N: ♥5 led

♠ xxx
♥ Ax
♦ QJ109x
♣ Kxx

♠ xxx
♥ KJx5x
♦ Ax
♣ xxx

♠ QJxx
♥ Qx
♦ xxx
♣ Jxxx

♠ AKx
♥ 109xx
♦ Kxx
♣ AQx

- **Winners off top:** 6 (5 black cards, ♥A); **Only source for 3 more tricks:** diamonds
- **Danger:** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦A
- **Solution:** DO NOT HOLD UP.
 - Protect against 5-2 split (4-3 poses no problem to you)
 - East MUST have a heart honor (West didn't underlead KQJ) so assume East has Kx, Qx or Jx
 - If you duck, East will win and force out ♥A. Now if West has ♦A you're down
 - If you play ♥A, you always have 2 stoppers (either your 10 will eventually win or the suit blocks)

When Not to Hold Up (Continued)

There is a more dangerous shift available

Contract 3N: ♥5 led, East plays ♥Q

♠ AJx	♠ xx	♠ K10xxx
♥ K10x5x	♥ Jx	♥ Qxx
♦ Kxx	♦ AQxx	♦ xxx
♣ xx	♣ KJxxx	♣ xx
	♠ Qxx	
	♥ Axx	
	♦ J10x	
	♣ AQxx	

- **Winners off top:** 7 (♥A, ♦A, 5♣s); **Only source for 2 more tricks:** diamonds
- **Danger:** Losing 4+ hearts and ♦K...but also losing oodles of spades
- **Solution:** DO NOT HOLD UP.
 - It looks like you might want to hold up since diamond finesse is into safe hand BUT...If you hold up, there is a good chance that they'll find the spade switch
 - You need to hope that the ♦K on-side. If it is, you make – if not, you don't.

When Not to Hold Up (Continued)

You risk a ruff if you hold up:

Contract 2♠: ♥K led

♠ KQxx
♥ xxx
♦ Ax
♣ Kxxx

♠ xxx
♥ KQxx
♦ KJxx
♣ xx

♠ Ax
♥ xxx
♦ Qxxxx
♣ Axx

♠ J10xx
♥ AJx
♦ xx
♣ QJ10x

- **Sure losers:** 5 (1♠, 2♥s, 1♦, 1♣); **Eventual winners:** 8 (3♠s, 1♥, 1♦, 3♣s)
- **Solution:** DO NOT HOLD UP.
 - This is a Bath Coup situation: If West continues a heart, you'll make an overtrick
 - But if West switches to a club at trick 2 you may lose a club ruff when the defense wins the ♠A...and go down in a cold contract