

Bridge Theory for the Practitioners

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10. No Cover Charge

This week I will go over another set of very common defensive problems, namely when to cover an honor with an honor. The general rules are the following (from *Goren on Play and Defense*):

- 1) When declarer leads an honor from his own hand, cover when there are two honors in dummy but do not when there is only one.
- 2) Cover an unsupported honor led from dummy, but wait until the last card is led from a sequence of honors.

Let's see if these rules make sense and if there are any exceptions to the rules.

I. Declarer Leads the Q and you have the King

When declarer is leading the Q, he will more often than not have the J with it. At least that's what we will assume here. Sometimes, declarers do try to pull a fast one by taking a so-called *Chinese finesse* (or more appropriately *Redneck finesse*, a term I learnt from Eric Bell).

Dummy holds:	A x x x
Your holding (second hand)	K x x
Declarer leads to you	Q (from say QJ9)

In this situation if you cover the Q immediately, dummy's A will win and declarer will be able to finesse out your partner's T if he has it. So this situation is *in agreement* with Rule # 1.

II. Declarer Leads the J and you have the Queen

Again, we will assume that declarer has the T along with the J if we don't see it in the dummy.

Dummy holds:	A x x x
Your holding (second hand)	Q x x
Declarer leads to you	J

If you cover, dummy's A will win and now the declarer will play a small card from dummy toward the close hand. Even if partner has the K 9 x, he will win only one trick. But if you don't cover, partner's K wins and later when declarer leads the T, you will cover to try to establish partner's 9 if he has it. This situation is also consistent with Rule # 1.

Dummy holds:	A T x
Your holding (second hand)	Q x x
Declarer leads to you	J

If you fail to cover, declarer will duck and your partner's K will win but in the next time declarer will be able to finesse you out of your queen. If you cover, dummy's A will win but partner will be sitting happily over dummy holding K 9. **Of course you have to train dear partner to show up with K 9 every time you need it.** At any event, note that the correct card play does follow Rule # 1.

III. Honor led from Dummy

Dummy holds:	Q J x	
Your holding (second hand)		K x x
Card played from <i>dummy</i>	Q	

You will duck when the Q is led but cover the J in agreement with Rule #2.

Here is an exception to the Rule # 2.

Dummy holds:	Q J x	
Your holding (second hand)		K x
Card played from <i>dummy</i>	Q	

In this case you must cover to protect partner's T 8 x. He will be happy to know that you don't follow rules blindly.

This last case opens up another interesting issue. I will go over that in my next column.

References:

1. Charles Goren, *Goren on Play and Defense*.
2. Louis Watson, *Play of the Hand at Bridge*.