

## REVISITING COVERING HONORS (especially in their trump suit) by Maritha Pottenger

Many of you have my handout which discusses some of the main combinations of when to cover (and when NOT to cover). [If you don't have it, and want it, email and ask for it.]

There are several main principles to bear in mind:

- (1) **We cover honors IF and ONLY if we have a chance to promote a lower card to winning rank in OUR hand or in our partner's hand.** [The latter is a hope rather than a certainty, of course.]
- (2) **We cover the LAST of touching honors from Dummy—if any.** If there is NO chance for promotion, we DO NOT COVER. Thus, with QJ109 in Dummy and we hold Kxxx, we do NOT cover. [The exception is if the combination becomes a RUFFING FINESSE and Declarer canNOT get back to Dummy, go ahead and cover. E.G., Declarer runs Queen and you duck. Declarer runs Jack and is forced to win Ace which was originally doubleton. Declarer gets to Dummy via an entry in another suit. Declarer now plays 10. Cover if Dummy has no more entries.]
- (3) **We rarely cover in the opponent's trump suit because we (and partner) rarely have enough length to promote anything.** However, even in their trump suit, sometimes covering is correct.

**To know when to cover in their trump suit, you need to know the number of trumps** they have (and thus, how many you and your partner hold). Let's take a basic case of Jx in Dummy in their trump suit and you hold Kxx or Kx. If you KNOW that Declarer has at least 7 trumps (e.g., a preempt), do NOT cover with Kxx. Partner has only ONE card and it might be the singleton Queen or singleton Ace. [Yes, some people preempt with terrible suits.] Similarly, with Kx, you have no reason to cover. If partner has Qx or Ax, s/he will get a trick anyway. If you hold K10x, DO cover (and hope partner does NOT have singleton Queen or Ace). Declarer will have to guess to finesse for your 10 on the second round of the suit. If you hold K109, cover and be thankful that you are now GUARANTEED one trump trick. The principle of “**Cover when you get two of their honors for one of yours**” works even in their trump suit when you own the cards immediately below the card you are covering.

If you KNOW absolutely that Declarer has 6 trumps in hand and Dummy has Jx, go ahead and cover with Kx. **Your partner COULD hold 109x and you will promote that 10 to a third-round winner.** When you hold Kxx, your partner should only have a doubleton, so you should not, on principle cover. Again, it is better to hope that partner has doubleton Queen or Ace. However, if there is **any** chance that Declarer could have only 5 (rather than 6), then covering is advisable. [Remember, the default of rebidding a major after a 2 over 1 by Responder does guarantee 6 in some partnerships, but does NOT in other partnerships. It depends on their agreements.]

**If Declarer is playing a 5-2 fit, and leads the Jack from Dummy, you should definitely cover with Kx because partner has 4 trumps.** If s/he has as little as 10xxx, you will promote a winner by covering. If you have Kxx, go ahead and cover and hope that partner has 10xx. **If you have Kxxx, do NOT cover because Declarer canNOT pick off your King if you refuse to cover.** On a great day, partner will have singleton Queen and your side will get two trump tricks. Of course, **if you hold K109x, you WILL cover because now you could easily score TWO trump tricks.**

**You get the idea. You have to calculate whether the “two for one” DO COVER principle will work in their trump suit based on how many cards you and you partner hold AND whether you can see some intermediates to be promoted (or partner could hold some).**