

# TO CAPTURE KINGS

by DAVID J. WEISS

*We're all taught what aces are for. But sometimes they must be used more subtly. The common theme in these problems is that a defender is lucky enough to have an ace, and must figure out how to use it effectively. All of the deals occurred in IMP settings, and vulnerability is irrelevant to the problems.*

**1**

♠ Q854			
♥ AK			
♦ 10832			
♣ J96			

  

	N	♠ AJ9
W	E	♥ 8543
S		♦ K94
		♣ 8752

  

South	West	North	East
1NT(i)	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3NT	All Pass

(i) 15-17

LEAD: ♥9 (0 Or 2 higher honours)

Declarer wins the heart ace and calls for a low spade. How should you defend?

**2**

♠ Q64			
♥ 9852			
♦ J5			
♣ AKJ7			

  

♠ A10932			
♥ 73			
♦ 863			
♣ Q103			

  

	N	
W	E	
S		

  

South	West	North	East
—	—	—	1♦
1♥	1♠	2♦(i)	Dble
2♥	3♦	3♥	All Pass

(i) A sound raise to 2♥, up to a bad 11

LEAD: ♦3

Partner wins the diamond nine, declarer playing the seven, and shifts to the spade seven. Declarer follows with the eight. How do you defend?

**3**

♠ KJ4			
♥ 75			
♦ K653			
♣ A742			

  

	N	♠ 105
W	E	♥ A63
S		♦ Q842
		♣ J1053

South	West	North	East
1NT(i)	Pass	3NT	All Pass

(i) 15-17

LEAD: ♠3

Partner leads the spade three, and declarer captures your ten with the ace. The six of clubs is led, and partner's nine is allowed to hold. Now West returns the spade queen. Declarer comes off dummy with a heart. Plan the defence.

**4**

♠ KQJ			
♥ KQ			
♦ AQ972			
♣ 965			

  

	N	♠ 9732
W	E	♥ 73
S		♦ 543
		♣ AQ73

  

South	West	North	East
—	1♦	1NT	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

LEAD: ♣4

When you win the club ace, declarer contributes the eight. Now what?

**5**

♠ 964			
♥ A10			
♦ A83			
♣ KQ652			

  

	N	♠ 7
W	E	♥ QJ972
S		♦ J1097
		♣ A98

South	West	North	East
1NT(i)	Pass	3NT	All Pass

(i) 15-17

LEAD: ♠K

Partner leads the spade king, and declarer plays the five. Partner continues with the spade ten. Plan the defence.

# SOLUTIONS

# 3

# 1

♠ Q854  
♥ AK  
♦ 10832  
♣ J96

♠ 763  
♥ Q10932  
♦ QJ  
♣ 1043

♠ AJ9  
♥ 854  
♦ K94  
♣ 8752

♠ K102  
♥ J76  
♦ A765  
♣ AKQ

N  
W E  
S

To be attacking spades, declarer should have K-10-x. You can see that his plan will succeed. Divert him by inserting the spade jack. Look at what will happen. South will win the spade king and return the ten to your ace. You will clear hearts, and then declarer will return to his hand to finesse the spade eight. A similar result would probably ensue if you had grabbed the spade ace at Trick 2; declarer would unblock the ten, and you would drop the jack when he cashed the king on the second round. The jack play is slightly better, though, because it is conceivable that declarer lacks the spade ten and is hoping for an error. The clearly wrong Trick 2 card is the spade nine.

# 2

♠ Q64  
♥ 9852  
♦ J5  
♣ AKJ7

♠ A10932  
♥ 73  
♦ 863  
♣ Q103

♠ 75  
♥ AJ  
♦ AKQ1094  
♣ 962

♠ KJ8  
♥ KQ1064  
♦ 72  
♣ 854

N  
W E  
S

You must duck the spade, encouraging with the ten. How do you know partner doesn't have a singleton spade? Because he won the diamond nine. If he wanted a ruff, he would have won the diamond ace at Trick 1.

♠ KJ4  
♥ 75  
♦ K653  
♣ A742

♠ Q9862  
♥ Q107  
♦ Q108  
♣ Q9

♠ 105  
♥ A63  
♦ Q842  
♣ J1053

N  
W E  
S

♠ A73  
♥ KJ942  
♦ A10  
♣ K86

The reflex play of ducking the heart smoothly is correct, but be ready. Partner wins the heart nine with the ten and plays another spade. On this one, you must dump the heart ace. Even if declarer had played the jack to partner's queen, you should give full credit to the spade queen and find the unblock. If you don't get rid of your ace, declarer will make the hand; he doesn't really have a guess, since if West has the heart ace the hand is doomed.

Certainly declarer's line was less than optimal, but there is no automatic penalty for that. You must find the winning play to earn a plus score.

# 4

♠ KQJ  
♥ KQ  
♦ AQ972  
♣ 965

♠ A1086  
♥ A5  
♦ KJ1086  
♣ 42

♠ 9732  
♥ 73  
♦ 543  
♣ AQ73

N  
W E  
S

♠ 54  
♥ J1098642  
♦ —  
♣ KJ108

Too late! Sure, partner's lead looked like three or four headed by the king, but what if he has led from a short suit? In that case, West's high cards will include both major suit aces and the diamond king. The play which preserves your options is the club queen at Trick 1. If it holds, you can return a low one; but if it loses, you will be glad you played it. Even if partner has led from the jack, a club is unlikely to go away. The club ace is necessary only if partner has led a singleton, and singletons are much less likely than doubletons. The only worry

is that partner will not know you have the club ace when your queen loses, but a partner who was tough enough to find the only killing lead will appreciate that the only possible tricks for the defence must come from the club suit.

# 5

♠ 964  
♥ A10  
♦ A83  
♣ KQ652

♠ KQJ1032  
♥ 84  
♦ 54  
♣ J107

♠ 7  
♥ QJ972  
♦ J1097  
♣ A98

N  
W E  
S

♠ A85  
♥ K653  
♦ KQ62  
♣ 43

This one is tough. Obviously declarer has the missing red kings and the spade ace, along with the diamond queen. With all that, the key card is the club jack. If declarer has that card, he will be able to set up the suit and make the hand.

Even if partner has the key card, though, declarer's likely plan to establish the club suit while keeping partner out seems destined to succeed. What can be done about it? Is it time to ditch the club ace? True, everyone will snicker when declarer wins five club tricks; but we can endure abuse if we've made the right play. However, when does it gain? For the defence to triumph, partner must have an entry. In order to have a sure entry, he must own the jack, ten and seven of clubs. You must get out of his way, and at the same time alert him to his responsibilities, by pitching the club nine.

Notice that if you pitch a heart instead, declarer will win the spade, lead a low club and duck partner's seven (or cover the ten and repeat the process). Having a third high club in your hand is fatal to the defence. The flashy club ace discard will work too; but why sacrifice an extra undertrick? Incidentally, you should make partner's life easy by returning the club eight as soon as you win the ace. That will prevent him from carelessly playing low if declarer leads the second club from hand.