

Danger Hand High

By Eric Rodwell

Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth, otherwise known as Meckwell, are generally considered to be the best pair in the world at the moment. This is partly because of their bidding system, which is awesome in its complexity. This partnership has won the triple crown: the Bermuda Bowl (in 1981 and 1995), World Pairs (1986) and World Teams Olympiad (1988).

Born in 1957, Eric is the younger half of the partnership (but not by much) and is also the chief theoretician. He is also an extremely accomplished pianist and can often be persuaded to entertain the guests at post-final-banquet celebrations. When he is not travelling the international bridge circuit, he lives in Indiana with his wife, Donna.

The adage 'second hand low' is good general advice, but, as we all know, there are many exceptions. Some of the better known include:

- taking the setting trick
- splitting honors to promote a trick for self or partner
- winning a trick to return partner's lead
- unblocking to avoid being endplayed

Playing second hand high can also destroy declarer's communications – if declarer ducks your honor he surrenders an extra trick; if he wins he loses a crucial entry. If dummy has only small cards in declarer's suit, it is often right to play high from holdings like J-x or even K-x-x ...

Board 21
North Deals
N-S Vul

<p>♠ 9 8 2 ♥ K Q 7 6 ♦ A Q 4 3 ♣ A 3</p>	<p>♠ A K Q 10 ♥ 5 3 ♦ 8 6 5 ♣ K J 10 4</p>	<p>♠ 7 6 3 ♥ J 2 ♦ J 10 7 ♣ Q 9 8 5 2</p>	
	<p>♠ J 5 4 ♥ A 10 9 8 4 ♦ K 9 2 ♣ 7 6</p>		
<p>West</p>	<p>North</p>	<p>East</p>	<p>South</p>
	<p>1 ♣</p>	<p>Pass</p>	<p>1 ♥</p>
	<p>Pass</p>	<p>Pass</p>	<p>1 NT</p>
	<p>All pass</p>		

West leads a passive nine of spades against South's 1NT. Declarer wins the ace in dummy and leads a heart. If East plays 'second hand low', as most would, declarer plays the ten and West has to win. The spade continuation will be won by the king and declarer clears the heart suit. Declarer wins the third spade with the jack, runs hearts and leads a club to the king to make his contract (the king is the right play since declarer wants to keep East off lead and only one minor-suit trick is needed).

If East plays the jack of hearts at trick one, declarer must win the ace. Declarer's natural options include either continuing hearts (hoping the king of diamonds is a re-entry), or finessing clubs, both of which fail. In this deal, East was the 'danger hand', able to lead through the king of diamonds, so he was especially eager to put up his unsupported jack of hearts.