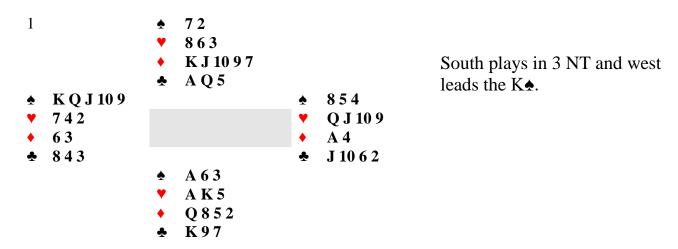**A dangerous opponent** is one who is in a position to inflict damage on declarer. There are two common situations:

1. One who holds a long suit that threatens a no-trump contract
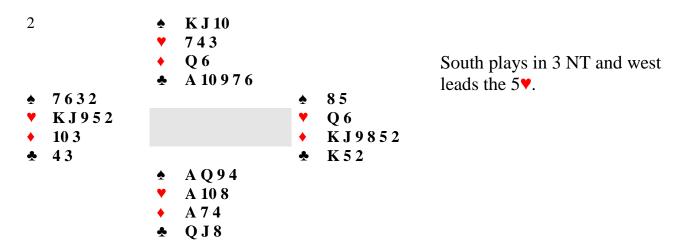2. One who can make a lead that traps a vulnerable honour

## Notes for Week No. 1

**The Hold-up Play**

The term "hold-up" means that declarer refrains from winning a trick even though it is possible to do so.  Examine the following hand.

```
1                ♠  7 2
                 ♥  8 6 3
                 ♦  K J 10 9 7          South plays in 3 NT and west
                 ♣  A Q 5               leads the K♠.
 ♠  K Q J 10 9              ♠  8 5 4
 ♥  7 4 2                   ♥  Q J 10 9
 ♦  6 3                     ♦  A 4
 ♣  8 4 3                   ♣  J 10 6 2
                 ♠  A 6 3
                 ♥  A K 5
                 ♦  Q 8 5 2
                 ♣  K 9 7
```

In hand No. 1, west is the dangerous opponent because he can cash four spade tricks if he gains the lead.  Count your winners.  Here you hax six, one spade, two hearts and three clubs.  Obviously, four more tricks are available in diamonds, but first you must lose a trick to A♦.  When east wins A♦, a spade return will cook your goose. Unless??  Can you see the answer?  If east has no spades left, you are safe.  Hold up twice.  Do not play your A♠ until the third round.

```
2                ♠  K J 10
                 ♥  7 4 3
                 ♦  Q 6
                 ♣  A 10 9 7 6          South plays in 3 NT and west
 ♠  7 6 3 2                ♠  8 5        leads the 5♥.
 ♥  K J 9 5 2              ♥  Q 6
 ♦  10 3                   ♦  K J 9 8 5 2
 ♣  4 3                    ♣  K 5 2
                 ♠  A Q 9 4
                 ♥  A 10 8
                 ♦  A 7 4
                 ♣  Q J 8
```
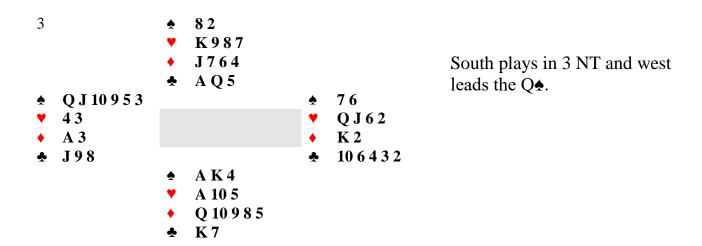
In hand No. 2, west is the dangerous opponent because she can cash four heart tricks. Count your winners. You have eight, four spades, two hearts, one diamond and one club.  Additional club tricks are available in clubs, but first you must try the club finesse.  If it loses, east can return a heart and rain on your picnic.  Of course, the answer lies in a hold-up play.  Seeing all four hands, you know that it is necessary to hold up for one round, but in real life you can't see east's hand.  Suppose that you hold up for two rounds.  West will win J♥ and realize that there is no point in continuing hearts because she has no entry to her hand.  If she leads 10♦, the opponents will establish the diamond suit before you have a chance to try the club finesse. We need a rule that tells us how many rounds to hold up.

**The Rule of Seven** (for hands in which declarer's only stopper is the Ace.)
The rule of seven enables declarer to determine the number of times to hold up her Ace before winning the trick. Here's how it works.  Add the combined number of cards you hold in that suit and subtract from seven.  That is the number of times that you need to hold up.  In hand No. 1,  3+2 =5.   7-5 = 2.  You need to hold up twice. In hand No.2,  3+3 = 6.   7–6 = 1.  You need to hold up only once.  Voila!
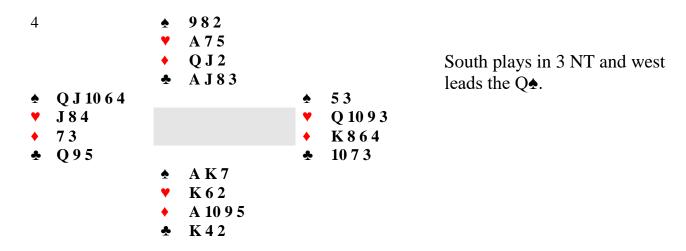
**Notes for Week No. 2**
Is it necessary to hold up if you hold two stoppers in the suit led?  That will depend on the number of times you have to lose the lead in order to establish your suit.

3

|  | ♠ | 8 2 |
|---|---|---|
|  | ♥ | K 9 8 7 |
|  | ♦ | J 7 6 4 |
|  | ♣ | A Q 5 |

South plays in 3 NT and west leads the Q♠.

| ♠ | Q J 10 9 5 3 |  | ♠ | 7 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ♥ | 4 3 |  | ♥ | Q J 6 2 |
| ♦ | A 3 |  | ♦ | K 2 |
| ♣ | J 9 8 |  | ♣ | 10 6 4 3 2 |

|  | ♠ | A K 4 |
|---|---|---|
|  | ♥ | A 10 5 |
|  | ♦ | Q 10 9 8 5 |
|  | ♣ | K 7 |

In this example, declarer has two stoppers but must lose the lead twice in order to establish the diamond suit.  You must hold up once in order to break communications between the defenders.  You will make the contract if east has at least one diamond honour.
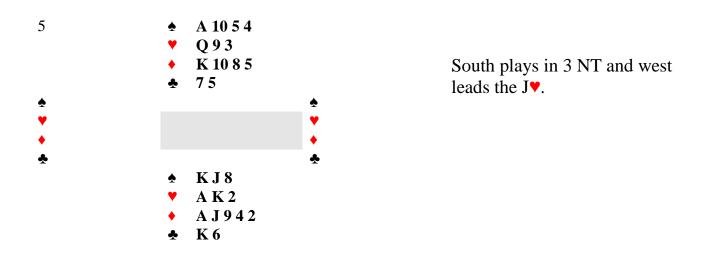
**Notes for Week No. 3**
When declarer holds two stoppers, the hold-up play may not be necessary.  Consider the following example.

4               ♠   9 8 2
                ♥   A 7 5
                ♦   Q J 2             South plays in 3 NT and west
                ♣   A J 8 3         leads the Q♠.

♠   Q J 10 6 4                   ♠   5 3
♥   J 8 4                        ♥   Q 10 9 3
♦   7 3                           ♦   K 8 6 4
♣   Q 9 5                      ♣   10 7 3

              ♠   A K 7
              ♥   K 6 2
              ♦   A 10 9 5
              ♣   K 4 2

In this example, declarer has two stoppers.  There is nothing to be gained by holding up.  Declarer should win A♠, go to dummy and take the diamond finesse.  If it loses, nine tricks are still available.  If it wins he can try the club finesse. Overtricks matter.

**Notes for Week No. 4**
When declarer has a choice of two finesses, she should choose the finesse that avoids the dangerous opponent.

5               ♠   A 10 5 4
                ♥   Q 9 3
                ♦   K 10 8 5        South plays in 3 NT and west
                ♣   7 5               leads the J♥.

♠                                  ♠
♥                                  ♥
♦                                  ♦
♣                                  ♣

              ♠   K J 8
              ♥   A K 2
              ♦   A J 9 4 2
              ♣   K 6

Declarer has seven top tricks, two spades, three hearts and two diamonds.  There is a glaring weakness in the club suit but fortunately the opponents have led a heart.  East is the dangerous opponent.  If east gains the lead, a club switch will likely be fatal for declarer.  The diamond suit can be finessed in either direction.  The contract is guaranteed by playing the K♦ and taking the diamond finesse into the west hand.  Even it it loses, at least ten tricks are available.