

## Always cash an ace against a slam

This chestnut is not always correct.

Certainly, it is not usually recommended against 6NT unless there is some evidence that partner holds the King. .e.g. He may have made a lead-directing double or the auction suggests that this suit is our only hope. Even so, cashing the ace may be the only way which the contract makes.

Cashing an ace may be even more hazardous against as a suit slam. It may get ruffed and now declarer can collect tricks from the King etc. If you have a holding such as AQxx, it does not favour cashing the Ace. Expecting partner to hold the King is asking too much. Certainly, it is NOT recommended to cash an Ace in declarer or dummy's side suit. This will probably set up the suit for declarer. However, if the auction suggests partner might have a singleton...

Similarly, a slow auction via blackwood etc weighs against cashing an ace immediately. Declarer is probably going to be ready for it. Look at the auction. If the opponents have used cue bidding, determine whether a singleton or void has been shown. Try not to give away the fact that you hold the ace!

If it had been a fast auction to the slam, you had better cash the ace or it may be going away. Certainly, if you fail to cash an ace and it causes the contract to be made, partner will not be happy. Paul Marston is quoted as saying that :-

“Failure to lead an ace against a suit slam is a breach of discipline”

However, it is believed that he intended that the comment to be taken when there is no other information.

### As always Ken is perfectly correct!

A brief survey analysing 12 boards from club play showed that leading an Ace against a slam made no difference overall -

Contract	Lead	Outcome	+ / - / =
6H	AD	keeps contract to 12	+
6S	AC	makes no difference	=
6S	AC	makes no difference	=
6D	AH	sets up the king , makes 13	-
6S	AC	makes no difference	=
6H/6D	AC	makes no difference	=
6C	AS	sets up K/Q/J	-
6S	AD	keeps it to 12	+
6S	AH	keeps it to 12	+
6H	AS	sets up K/Q	-
6C/6H	AD	keeps it to 12	+
6S	AC	sets up K/Q	-

When the opponents have bid a slam in a suit, the lead of an unsupported ace may avoid their trick in that suit, or it can set up a trick they would not have had. It appears to be 50/50.

It seems to be best in long weak suits ie A 6 5 4 3, not AQ xx as that will cost if declarer has the King.