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Chapter 1

CAMOUFLAGE

It was Machiavelli who said: “People judge on the basis of appearance... Everyone can watch, but few can see.” The word *camouflage* is of French origin; it means to mask, to cover, in order to hide the true nature of something.

The principle of camouflage is likely to be one of the most important elements of 21st century declarer play. Until now it has been largely neglected by the majority of players, and quite unwisely so.

Defenders’ observations concerning declarer’s hand are often superficial and susceptible to suggestion and deception from declarer. Sometimes camouflage is accidental or subconscious. But some techniques must simply be learned and used in a disciplined way. Lacking important pieces of information or misperceiving them, defenders will go wrong more often. It is therefore vital for declarer to master the art of concealing his intentions. He should talk defenders into believing that he is implementing some other plan. He should also try to confront them with false, nonexistent dangers.

The fact that camouflage will sometimes be de-camouflaged, i.e. deciphered, should not deter us from trying the same thing in future.

FALSE TRACK

The hunter follows his prey and the prey tries hard to cover up its tracks. Sometimes it can even lead the hunter astray by leaving false traces.

Presenting defenders with false picture of our hand, instilling in their minds fear of dangers that are not real, pretending to proceed in a direction incompatible with our true intentions – these techniques indicate a high level of declarer play. The time has come to look at a few concrete examples. Test yourself on the next two problems.

CAMOUFLAGE IN THE RED SUITS

W	N	E	S
1NT	pass...		
♠ Q 5 3			♠ J 9 8
♥ A J 3			♥ Q 10 9
♦ 9 8 5			♦ Q J 10 7 3
♣ A K Q 9			♣ J 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

North leads the ♥5 against your contract of 1NT. What can be done about that, you may ask. Quite a lot, as we'll find out shortly.

PLAYING THE RIGHT CARDS

W	N	E	S
1♠	pass	3♣*	pass
4♠	pass...		

* – 7-9 HCP, 4+♠

♠ A 10 6 5 3	N	♠ Q 9 8 7
♥ K J	W E	♥ Q 10
♦ Q J 10 8	S	♦ K 8 7 3
♣ A K		♣ 7 5 2

North leads the ♦4 (second or fourth best). How will you tackle the contract?

CAMOUFLAGE IN THE RED SUITS

W N E S
 INT pass...

♠ A 10 2			
♥ K 8 7 5 2			
♦ A			
♣ 10 8 7 4			
♠ Q 5 3	N	♠ J 9 8	
♥ A J 3	W E	♥ Q 10 9	
♦ 9 8 5	S	♦ Q J 10 7 3	
♣ A K Q 9		♣ J 2	
		♠ K 7 6 4	
		♥ 6 5	
		♦ K 6 4 2	
		♣ 6 5 3	

Our first task is to conceal the layout of the heart suit. To this end, we call for dummy's queen, dropping the jack from hand. There are three possibilities:

- a) In a position like this, the defenders use reverse attitude signals. South will play a discouraging six, but this will not reveal the distribution of the suit. Upon regaining the lead with the ace of diamonds, North will be unable to tell whether the six was from ♥65 or ♥653. If we played the jack smoothly at Trick 1, North may swallow the bait and continue hearts.
- b) Defenders play reverse (low-high=even) count signals in such position. South will signal with the five. Fair enough? Well, not necessarily. Some players signal unclearly, i.e. with the five from 653, unaware of the ambiguity of such information (the five may show 653 or 65).
- c) Our opponents are an expert partnership who signal their length intelligibly (the highest from three spots). In this case the five will inescapably indicate an even number of hearts and we must attempt to deceive defenders in the other red suit – diamonds.

After getting in with the diamond honor, North will know enough to refrain from a heart continuation. He will still have to guess which black suit to play, in order to reach his partner's hand. South will try to give a suit preference signal in diamonds – the six – to show values in spades. We should counter this by playing the queen and following with the five of diamonds from hand.

Since the position of the two highest diamond spots is still unknown, South's six can be interpreted, for all North knows, as low from ♦K986 or, equally well, high from ♦K642.

All of these deceptions are aimed at making life difficult for the defenders. If you use them on permanent basis, from time to time defenders will make a mistake. This is what practical, winning declarer play is all about.

PLAYING THE RIGHT CARDS

W	N	E	S
1♠	pass	3♣*	pass
4♠	pass...		

* – 7–9 HCP, 4+♠

♦4 led (second or fourth best)

	♠ 4 2										
	♥ A 8 7 5 2										
	♦ 4										
	♣ 9 8 6 4 3										
♠ A 10 6 5 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 9 8 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K J		♥ Q 10									
♦ Q J 10 8		♦ K 7 6 3									
♣ A K		♣ 7 5 2									
	♠ K J										
	♥ 9 6 5										
	♦ A 9 5 2										
	♣ Q J 10										

Under South's ace we drop the jack – the only card that can mislead the opponent. Why? Let us go through possible combinations.

- 1) If we follow with the ♦8. Leading the four from ♦QJ104 makes no sense, while underleading ♦Q104 is possible.
- 2) If we follow with the ♦10, the alternative to ♦4 being a singleton is ♦QJ84 (where a good player would lead the queen against a suit contract).
- 3) If we follow with the ♦Q, the alternative is ♦J1084.
- 4) If, finally, we follow with the ♦J, the alternative is ♦Q1084. This is the plausible alternative. In addition, from South's point of view the club switch looks very attractive.

FALSE ALTERNATIVE

W	N	E	S		
1♠	2♥	4♠	pass...		
♠ K Q J 10 9 ♥ 10 9 7 3 ♦ Q 4 ♣ K Q	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A 8 3 2 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ A J 3 ♣ J 5 2
N					
W E					
S					

North leads the ♥A and South follows with the ♥6. Opponents use natural count signals. How will you play the contract?

HIDING THE TWO

W	N	E	S		
2♣*	pass	2♦	pass		
2NT	pass	3NT	pass		
4NT	pass	6NT	pass...		
* – game forcing.					
♠ Q 2 ♥ A K Q J 10 ♦ A K Q ♣ A K 4	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K J 10 9 ♥ 9 8 5 ♦ J 10 3 ♣ 9 5 2
N					
W E					
S					

♥6 led. Opponents use natural count signals.

FALSE ALTERNATIVE

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♥	4♠	pass...

North leads the ♥A and South follows with the ♥6. Opponents use natural (low-high=odd) count signals.

	♠ 7				
	♥ A K J 9 2				
	♦ K 10 9				
	♣ A 9 8 3				
♠ K Q J 10 9 ♥ 10 9 7 3 ♦ Q 4 ♣ K Q	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A 8 3 2 ♥ Q 5 4 ♦ A J 3 ♣ J 5 2
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 6 5 4				
	♥ 6				
	♦ 8 7 6 5 2				
	♣ 10 7 6 4				

This time we drop the ♥3. We want to create the illusion of South holding three hearts (♥1096, ♥1076 or ♥976). If this was the case, it might have been necessary for North to switch to diamonds.

HIDING THE TWO

W	N	E	S
2♣*	pass	2♦	pass
2NT	pass	3NT	pass
4NT	pass	6NT	pass...

* – game forcing.

♥6 led. Opponents use natural count signals.

		♠ 8 7 3	
		♥ 6 4	
		♦ 9 7 5 4	
		♣ Q 10 8 3	
♠ Q 2	N		♠ K J 10 9
♥ A K Q J 10	W	E	♥ 9 8 5
♦ A K Q	S		♦ J 10 3
♣ A K 4			♣ 9 5 2
		♠ A 6 5 4	
		♥ 7 3 2	
		♦ 8 6 2	
		♣ J 7 6	

At Trick 2 we play the queen of spades, overtake it with the king and return the spade jack. South will face an unpleasant dilemma: was partner's ♠3 on the previous trick low from ♠873 or high from ♠32?

DE-CAMOUFLAGE

W	N	E	S
1♠	pass	2♠	pass
2NT	pass	3NT	pass
4♠	pass...		

♠ A Q J 10 8	N	♠ K 9 3
♥ 7 2	W E	♥ K Q 10 6
♦ A K	S	♦ Q 10 3
♣ Q 8 6 4		♣ 9 5 2

♠7 led. Opponents use natural count signals.

MASKING THE QUEEN

W	N	E	S
1♠	pass	2♣	pass
2♠	pass	3♠	pass
3NT	pass	4♣	pass
4♦	pass	4♥	pass
4NT	pass	5♥	pass
6♠	pass....		

♠ A 10 8 7 5 2	N	♠ K 9 3
♥ 7 2	W E	♥ A K 5
♦ A 5	S	♦ 10 8 3
♣ A Q 8		♣ K J 10 5

♦Q led. Having won the ace, we draw trumps. On the second round North discards ♦7.

DE-CAMOUFLAGE

W	N	E	S
1♠	pass	2♠	pass
2NT	pass	3NT	pass
4♠	pass...		

♠7 led. Opponents use natural count signals.

	♠ 7 6 2	
	♥ J 9 4	
	♦ J 7 5 4	
	♣ A 10 3	
♠ A Q J 10 8	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; padding: 2px;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; padding: 2px;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; padding: 2px;"> S </div>	♠ K 9 3
♥ 7 2		♥ K Q 10 6
♦ A K		♦ Q 10 3
♣ Q 8 6 4		♣ 9 5 2
	♠ 5 4	
	♥ A 8 5 3	
	♦ 9 8 6 2	
	♣ K J 7	

We win the trump lead in hand and immediately play the two of hearts. Why the two rather than the seven? North will play the four, signaling an odd number of hearts. This information may persuade South to hold up the ace. We will, of course, take advantage by discarding the other heart from hand on the queen of diamonds.

Playing the heart seven, instead, will make North's four ambiguous (♥J94 or ♥J942). South will then probably take the ace – exactly what we do not want.