

KRZYSZTOF
MARTENS

GUIDE
DOG

PART I

GARSŲ PASAULIS
Vilnius 2010

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Part 1:

PUTTING ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Putting partner on the right track requires enormous effort. The analysis we routinely undertake must take into account partner's problems, too. This is extremely difficult. We have to double our efforts bearing in mind that clues on which we base our conclusions may not be available from the opposite side of the bridge table. What is obvious to me may not necessarily be self-evident to partner. Any help will be truly appreciated and, no less importantly, will reduce considerably the amount of defensive errors committed by our partnership.

EXAMPLES

I.

The basic skill of a guide dog is showing the way.

You are sitting North.

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♦	4♠	Pass...

Lead: ♥7

	♠ A J										
	♥ 7 6										
	♦ A J 10 9 8 7										
	♣ J 10 3										
♠ K Q 9 6 3	<table style="margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td></td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 8 7 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9 8 4 2		♥ A 5									
♦ K Q 5		♦ 4 3									
♣ K		♣ A Q 7 5									
	♠ 5										
	♥ K Q J 10 3										
	♦ 6 2										
	♣ 9 8 6 4 2										

Partner drops the King under dummy's Ace.

After getting in with the ♠A, we should cash the ♦A and only then play another heart. This way, we deprive partner of the natural but unsuccessful option – of playing a diamond through when in with the Heart Queen.

It leaves him with just one sensible choice: the trump promotion.

Examples

II.

The guide dog makes life easier.

You are sitting South.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

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

Lead: ♥5 (4th best). You inserted the Jack and declarer won his King. He then played the Ace and another club. What do you discard?

The rule of 11 tells you declarer had only one card higher than the ♥5. Make an effort to count to eleven.

Throw the Queen of hearts.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

III.

Another important skill of the guide dog is avoiding obstacles on the way.

Pairs tournament. You are sitting South.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

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

Lead: ♠J. You win dummy's Queen with the King as declarer plays the ♠3.

If you return the ♠2 – the correct card according to your count signaling methods – West will rise with the Ace and take the club finesse. The result: 9 tricks.

The effective continuation at trick two is the ♠7.

This is how you would play from ♠K7x. Declarer, fearing the 5-3 split, will duck again. Now if your partner is wide awake he will realize that his best chance to set the hand will be the heart switch.

Examples

IV.

Another important skill of a guide dog is locating, and safely leading his partner up and down, the stairs.

Pairs tournament. You are sitting North.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

2NT = Extra Values

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

Lead: ♦4.

Partner wins the King and returns the ♦10.

You should play the ♦J. True, following with the ♠6 to partner's Ace at the next trick (the ♠K was led) might suggest the heart switch, but the failure to sacrifice the Jack of diamonds would surely indicate the possession of the Queen.

All we want is one more trick. The key is to show partner the right suit.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

V.

It's in the nature of every working dog, including the guide dog, to protect their master from taking a false step.

Pairs tournament. You are sitting North.

W	N	E	S
3♥	Pass...		

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

Lead: ♣10.

West tried the Jack and South signaled an even number of clubs. When a trump is led from dummy, partner puts up the King and switches to the ♦5, West following with the ♦4.

You win the King and...

The thoughtless diamond continuation will make partner return the suit once again and the spade trick will be gone.

Examples

Cashing the spade Ace, however, may prove disastrous if declarer holds something like:

♠ —
♥ Q J 10 8 7 4 2
♦ 10 4 3
♣ A 5 4

The safe and correct play is to switch passively to clubs (better still, to the ♣Q, to prevent partner from thinking that we are looking for a club ruff).

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

VI.

If two paths are possible, blocking one of them directs partner onto the right one.

You are sitting North.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

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

Lead: ♣5. Dummy's Jack wins the trick as South follows with the ♣9. Declarer finesses in hearts (♥9 from partner). We take the King and... cash the ♣A! Only now do we switch to the ♠9. Since we've made a club return pointless, partner will have no option but to continue spades.

Examples

VII.

It requires some effort to show partner the right way if a sensible alternative exists.

Pairs tournament. You are sitting North.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

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

Lead: ♣5. Dummy's nine holds (South follows with the ♣8) and declarer continues with the ♥10. South should now signal suit preference. By playing the ♥8, he directs his partner's attention to the spade suit

After winning the King we should play carefully play – the eight of spades!!!

Partner will take the Ace and duly return a club through.

If, on the other hand, North desired the spade continuation rather than the club switch – holding ♠KJxx – he would shifted to his smallest spade.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

VIII.

False information can maneuver partner into the desired switch.

Pairs tournament. You are sitting South.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
3NT	Pass...		

	♠ 7 5										
	♥ K 7 6 5 3										
	♦ 10 2										
	♣ 9 7 6 3										
♠ 3 ♥ J 10 ♦ A K Q J 9 8 3 ♣ A Q 2	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K J 10 9 4 2 ♥ Q 9 4 ♦ 7 4 ♣ J 8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A Q 6 2										
	♥ A 8 2										
	♦ 6 5										
	♣ K 10 5 4										

Lead: ♥5. You should take the ace and return the ♥2. According to your agreements, that shows two (or four) hearts. As a result, partner will not hold up the ace. Instead he will win and if you are lucky he will switch to spades. All you need to do now is to cash the two spade tricks and exit with a diamond. The result: one down.

Examples

When would it be necessary (from South's perspective) from North to duck the heart?

If the four hands were:

♠ Q	♠ 7 5	♠ K J 10 9 4 2			
♥ J 10	♥ K 7 6 5 3	♥ Q 9 4			
♦ A K Q J 9 8 3	♦ 10 2	♦ 7 4			
♣ K Q 2	♣ 9 7 6 3	♣ J 8			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 80px; 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	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ A 8 6 3				
	♥ A 8 2				
	♦ 6 5				
	♣ A 10 5 4				

In this case South should return the ♥8, not the ♥2.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

IX.

Even if partner's action looks doubtful to us, we should trust he knows what he is doing.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
4♥	Pass...		

2NT = forcing with support.

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

Lead: ♠2. West took our ♠7 with the Ace, crossed to dummy in clubs (North followed with the ♣2) and led the ♥Q. Partner won the King and switched to the Ace and Queen of diamonds. What should you do?

Examples

a) You overtook with the King ...

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

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

... and everybody looked surprised.

b) You let the Queen win and... partner made an angry face.

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

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

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

In the a) layout your partner missed an expert play. With \spadesuit AQx he should have cashed the Queen first, and only then led the Ace and another diamond.

In b) the fault is all yours. The play of an Ace followed by the Queen suggests the lack of a third diamond. Consequently, you should have overtaken.

Examples

X.

Partner should not make us guess.

W	N	E	S
			1♦
2♣	4♥	5♣	Dbl
Pass...			

♠ J 10 3
 ♥ A J 10 6 5 3 2
 ♦ J 10 2
 ♣ —

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 7 6 5 2
 ♥ 9 8
 ♦ 4
 ♣ 9 6 5 4 3

Lead: ♦J. South won the King and switched to the ♥K.

What should you do?

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

- a) You gave count and were surprised when partner failed to continue the suit.

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

- b) You overtook with the Ace and soon declarer was claiming 11 tricks.

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

Examples

In a) North made the mistake of ducking partner's King.

In b) South was to blame for playing the King, instead of a small heart at Trick 2. It's hard to imagine North switching to another suit after winning the ♥A.

ALARM - CLOCK PLAY 1

Remember: your „table presence” allows you to draw far-reaching conclusions. These inferences may not always be available to your partner, who may have difficulties noticing and understanding some of the opponents’ actions. You have to wake him up, from time to time, with an „alarm- clock” play.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass

1NT = 13–15 HCP

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

♠ Q 10 9 4
 ♥ A J 6 2
 ♦ Q 3
 ♣ 8 7 6

Lead: ♠3. Having considered the matter thoroughly, declarer called for a low card from dummy. You played the Queen, West following resignedly with the ♠8.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Imagine a slightly different layout:

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

The return of the ♠10 may be ducked by partner, even when West covers with the Jack. When the ♠10 is played, a clever declarer will cover with the jack even from ♠J98.

The solution in the first example is the “alarm-clock” play.

Cash the ♥A and switch to the ♠10.

This sequence of plays will dispel partner’s illusions about your alleged diamond stopper and make it much easier for him to win the ♠A in this case.

It is inconceivable that he could switch to another suit after winning the Ace. By playing this way you will unblock the suit and set the contract two tricks.

ALARM - CLOCK PLAY 2

Any unnatural play should prompt partner to a more detailed analysis, by means of which he will discover the reason for your wanting to wake him up.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
4♥	Pass...		

♠ J 9 8 6 5
♥ 6 5 4 2
♦ 7
♣ Q 10 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 10
♥ J
♦ A K J 10 2
♣ J 5 3 2

Lead: ♦7. Declarer took the Ace and South followed with the ♦9, drawing our attention to the spade suit. Next came the heart. Partner rose with the Ace and returned the ♦8; you ruffed West's Queen.

Plan the play.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Here is the full deal:

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

Lead: ♦7. Declarer took the Ace and South followed with the ♦9, drawing our attention to the spade suit. Next came the heart. Partner rose with the Ace and returned the ♦8; you ruffed West's Queen.

Lay the ♠J on the table. What message does it convey?

It suggests a five-card suit. Fourth best from the five-bagger is not clear enough. You are hinting at an unusual line of defense, thereby excluding the possibility of a trump promotion.

This will make partner at least consider ducking the spade. If he does, we will eventually get the club trick.

ALARM - CLOCK PLAY 3

An „alert” signal may direct partner’s attention to a suit which defenders are normally reluctant to attack due to its structure.

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Pass
1♥	1♠	2♥	3♠
4♥	Pass...		

N		
W		E
	S	

♠ A 6 4
 ♥ K 9 6 5
 ♦ Q 10 8 6
 ♣ K 4

♠ K 10 7 5
 ♥ 8 7
 ♦ K 5
 ♣ J 10 8 5 3

Lead: ♠Q.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

a) Here comes the full deal:

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

Only a “wake-up signal” may persuade North to switch to diamonds after getting in with the ♥A. You should drop the ♠K under dummy’s Ace.

Alarm - clock Play 3

b) Let's imagine a slightly different layout:

	♠ Q J 9 3 2				
	♥ A 3				
	♦ A 9 7				
	♣ 9 7 6				
♠ 8 ♥ Q J 10 4 2 ♦ K 4 3 2 ♣ A J 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; 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 6 4 ♥ K 9 6 5 ♦ Q 10 8 6 ♣ K 4
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ K 10 7 5				
	♥ 8 7				
	♦ J 5				
	♣ Q 10 8 5 3				

Here we don't expect anything out of the ordinary from partner. The count signal (♠5) does not encourage any sort of active defense.

ALARM - CLOCK PLAY 4

Do something unusual – play the?

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♠	Dbl	3♠
4♥	Pass...		

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

Lead: ♠A

Plan the defense.

Alarm - clock Play 4

Here is the full deal:

	♠ A K 8 7 5					
	♥ A					
	♦ 10 7 5 3					
	♣ Q 7 3					
♠ 9 ♥ Q J 10 6 ♦ A K 9 ♣ A 9 6 5 4	<table border="1" 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	♠ Q 4 2 ♥ K 9 8 4 2 ♦ J ♣ J 10 8 2	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ J 10 6 3					
	♥ 7 5 3					
	♦ Q 8 6 4 2					
	♣ K					

South should follow with the Jack (meaning: “Partner, do something counter-intuitive!”).

Notice that the preemptive jump to 3♠ (no one vulnerable) normally guarantees four trumps (unless your style is different). “Do something counterintuitive” means, in this case, the club switch. This is the last suit North would imagine to attack at trick two.

In our example, however, switching to clubs is the only way to finding the ruff – the setting trick.

One of my student ask: why not ♠3 – suit-preference?

Good question. Because ♠3 looks like routine count discard.

INFORMATION 1

Achieving a high level of defensive play is impossible without the ability to cooperate effectively with partner, the basic component of the dialogue being the precise exchange of information. Moreover, it is important to reveal only the information that may be useful to partner.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Pass	Pass
2♥	2♠	4♥	Pass...

♠ K Q J 9 6 3

♥ A

♦ 8 3 2

♣ Q 6 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 5 4

♥ K J 4

♦ Q 9 6 5 4

♣ A K

Lead: ♠K. West won the Ace and played a trump to your Ace (♥8 from South).

What now?

Did you play the ♠Q?

Information 1

a)

	♠ K Q J 9 6 3											
	♥ A											
	♦ 8 3 2											
	♣ Q 6 5											
♠ A 10 8 ♥ Q 10 9 6 5 ♦ A J 10 ♣ 9 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ 7 5 4 ♥ K J 4 ♦ Q 9 6 5 4 ♣ A K	
N												
W		E										
	S											
	♠ 2											
	♥ 8 7 3 2											
	♦ K 7											
	♣ J 10 8 7 4 2											

On this layout partner should pitch two diamonds on your good spades, and ruff a diamond.

b)

	♠ K Q 10 9 6 3											
	♥ A											
	♦ J 3 2											
	♣ Q 6 5											
♠ A J 8 ♥ Q 10 9 6 5 ♦ A 10 8 ♣ 9 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ 7 5 4 ♥ K J 4 ♦ Q 9 6 5 4 ♣ A K	
N												
W		E										
	S											
	♠ 2											
	♥ 8 7 3 2											
	♦ K 7											
	♣ J 10 8 7 4 2											

Here getting rid of a diamond on the ♠Q would prove fatal for the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Obviously, North made a simple mistake.

In the a) scenario he should have played the Jack, not the Queen of spades at trick three. Throwing two diamonds would then be straightforward for South. The play of the Queen, it follows, denies possession of the Jack and, as a consequence, South should not part with a diamond.

c)

	♠ K Q J 10 9 6 3										
	♥ A										
	♦ J 3 2										
	♣ Q 6										
♠ A 8	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 5 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q 10 9 6 5		♥ K J 4									
♦ A 10 8		♦ Q 9 6 5 4									
♣ 9 5 3		♣ A K									
	♠ 2										
	♥ 8 7 3 2										
	♦ K 7										
	♣ J 10 8 7 4 2										

Here North should continue spades at the third trick with the Queen, not the Jack, to prevent partner from discarding a diamond.

I am in favor of supplying partner with maximum data in defense, even if you are not always sure what it can be used for, especially if the information is unrevealing to declarer. In the b) scenario, information about the position of the ♠J was important solely for partner.

INFORMATION 2

Sharing information should always serve a purpose. Sometimes the only way to success is, on the contrary, hiding information – the art of camouflage.

Pairs tournament. None vulnerable.

W	N	E	S
2♠	Pass	2NT	3♥
Pass	Pass	4♠	Pass...

2♠ = 5♠ +5 minor, 7–11 HCP

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

Lead: ♥7. Your ♥9 held the trick and...

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Here comes the full deal:

	♠ 10 7 5 4										
	♥ 7 2										
	♦ 5 4 3										
	♣ A 8 7 4										
♠ K J 9 6 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 6 4			♥ Q 10 8								
♦ K J 10 9 2			♦ A Q								
♣ 3			♣ K Q J 10 9 2								
	♠ 8 3										
	♥ A K J 9 5 3										
	♦ 8 7 6										
	♣ 6 5										

- a) Lead: ♥7. You took the nine and continued with two more rounds of hearts. At the third trick declarer discarded the club. Goodbye, trump promotion!
- b) Lead: ♥7. You took the nine and switched to clubs. Partner won the Ace and tried to give you a ruff. Why?

Information 2

The layout he imagined was somewhat different:

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

In this case his defense would have been correct to hold declarer to ten tricks.

So how do we handle this problem?

a) Evidently, playing three rounds of hearts will lead to the trump promotion only if we cash the club trick first.

It took you 40 or 50 seconds to come up with this analysis. Accordingly, you switched to clubs at trick two. Partner understood your dilemma perfectly well and he returned a heart (instead of a club for you to ruff) at the third trick.

The director, called by the opponents, changed the result to +420 for EW.

I absolutely concur in the director's ruling. The North defender received illegal information about the position of the club singleton.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

There is, however, a purely technical solution to this problem.

- a) If the first trick is taken with the king, partner will believe that the jack of hearts is in the declarer's hand. Having already revealed ten cards in spades and diamonds, West will have a place left for just one club. After such preparation, the club shift cannot mislead partner. He will return to hearts after winning the ♣A and, this time, the promotion will work.
- b) If you want a club ruff you might win ♥A!

INFORMATION 3

Sometimes the true meaning of information is well hidden. Discovering it meaning may require meticulous analysis.

Pairs tournament. EW vulnerable.

W	N	E	S
		1♥	1♠
Dbl	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

♠ J 2
♥ A 5 4
♦ J 8 5 4 2
♣ K 8 7

N		
W	E	
S		

♠ 4 3
♥ K Q J 10 9 3
♦ 9 3
♣ A J 3

Lead: ♠J. Partner follows with the ♠10 and declarer holds up.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Here comes the full deal:

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

Lead: ♠J. Partner follows with the ♠10 and declarer holds up.

♠10 from partner (together with the hold-up by West) means: „My spades are great, but I have no quick side-suit entry to them”.

Based on this information we can put together a sensible defense. Our objective is to cut declarer off from the heart winners. Leading the King of clubs at trick two will serve the purpose.

But how do we know who has the club Queen, you may ask.

Information 3

Let's imagine a slightly different layout:

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

Here South should overtake the Jack and, if it is ducked, switch to diamonds.

It follows from this analysis that the ♠10 at the first trick not only denies quick entry, but also says: „Partner, I'm not sure about the best defense”, suggesting precisely one top club honor.”.

INFORMATION 4

Failure to play a card that conveys precise information about one's values denies the possession of that card.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
2♠	Pass	4♠	Pass...

2♠ = weak two

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

Lead: ♣Q.

West discards a heart on the second club, cashes the ♥A and ruffs a heart.

He continues with a diamond to the king and another diamond. Your Queen holds the trick. Partner follows with the ♦2 and ♦9.

Plan the defense.

Information 4

a)

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

Lead: ♣Q.

West discards a heart on the second club, cashes the ♥A and ruffs a heart.

He continues with a diamond to the king and another diamond. Your Queen holds the trick. Partner follows with the ♦2 and ♦9.

Declarer's distribution is now clear: 6=2=4=1.

The crucial piece of information is the position of the ♦10.

By playing the nine on the second round of diamonds, partner denied the possession of the ten. From ♦A1092 he should have followed with the ♦2 and the ♦10.

Therefore, a trump promotion remains the only chance.

Obviously, declarer erred. He should have drawn trumps and only then attacked diamonds. Further evidence of his poor technique is his prematurely getting rid of the heart loser at trick two, while still running the risk of a club ruff.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

b)

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

Lead: ♣Q.

West discards a heart on the second club, cashes the ♥A and ruffs a heart.

He continues with a diamond to the king and another diamond. Your Queen holds the trick. Partner follows with the ♦2 and ♦8.

Failure to play the nine denies the possession of this card, i.e. confirms the possession of the ten.

Now the correct defense is to lead trump twice.

AGAINST ROUTINE

Unusual deals come up rarely. Success normally results from solid bridge craftsmanship.

Pairs tournament

The bidding wasn't particularly exciting.

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass...		

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

Lead: ♦Q. West wins the Ace and plays a spade to the Queen and your King.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Here is the full deal:

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

Lead: ♦Q West wins the Ace and plays a spade to the Queen and your King.

An experienced player would typically say: "I return a diamond. Nothing else comes to my mind".

We are, however, entitled to the club ruff.

The guide dog would act differently: "In with the ♠K, I cash the ♣A and switch back to diamonds. Partner will get in with the trump Ace (West, a passed hand, has already shown ♦A and ♦K) and cash the diamond winner. I will pitch my last club and take the club ruff at the next trick. Finally, I will exit with a trump and await my heart trick".

SIGNALS INTERPRETATION

Fuzzy logic is a generalization of the classic two-valued logic. In fuzzy logic, between the values of 0 (false) and 1 (true) there are a number of intermediate values.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
	2♥	Pass	4♣
4♠	Pass...		

2♥ = 5♥ - 4+ minor, 8-11 HCP

4♣ = support for both minors

♠ J
♥ K Q J 9 6
♦ K 9 7 2
♣ 9 7 6

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

Lead: ♥K. West grabbed the Ace (an unreadable ♥7 from South), cashed the Ace of spades and continued with another spade.

What do you discard?

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Here comes the full deal:

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

Lead: ♥K. West grabbed the Ace (an unreadable ♥7 from South), cashed the Ace of spades and continued with another spade. North discarded ♦2. When a diamond was played from dummy at the next trick, South rose with the Ace, fearing singleton King in declarer's hand.

The defense was helpless. Soon declarer got the clubs right (small to the jack) and the four certain defensive tricks shrank to just three.

Signals Interpretation

However, the whole deal might have looked like this:

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

♠ 8 4
♥ 7
♦ A J 6 5 4 3
♣ K 10 8 2

Here ducking the diamond would prove disastrous, argued South.

So who erred?

The answer is far from obvious and the problem admits varying interpretations. It's not easy to find a sensible solution.

I like the guide dog's view.

With:

♠ J
 ♥ K Q J 9 6
 ♦ Q 9 7 2
 ♣ 9 7 6

or

♠ J
 ♥ K Q J 9 6
 ♦ Q 9 7 3 2
 ♣ 9 7

I would give partner a count signal in diamonds. Why?

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Let's imagine a slightly different layout:

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

Partner needs to know whether he ought to jump up with the Ace, or not.

Admittedly, it requires a lot of skill to know what signal partner may need in a specific situation.

Discarding a diamond, it follows, strongly suggests the possession of the Queen and carries count information.

Holding the ♦K, therefore, we should throw a heart, telling partner: I failed to discard a diamond, so I don't have the Queen in the suit.

This is, no doubt, a very difficult and possibly controversial interpretation, requiring a great deal of thoughtful discipline from both partners and the proper understanding of the defensive position.

This defensive position is a situation which requires supplying partner with a specific piece of information at the moment that he needs it.

SHARED KNOWLEDGE OF THE BRIDGE PARTNERSHIP

Even entirely conscious, rational actions by a defender may not be sufficient if the partnership lacks shared knowledge and detailed, thoroughly discussed agreements.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
	2♣	Dbl	Pass
4♥	Pass...		

2♣ = 11–15 HCP, 5+♣ –4M or 6♣

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

♠ 10 8 4 3
♥ J 6 4
♦ 8 7 3 2
♣ 5 3

Lead: ♣Q. The opening lead was unusual, but very thoughtful. Here it conveys only the simple message that all the top club honors are in the North's possession. Simple it may be, but it will prove vital for the defense.

Next partner cashes the Ace of clubs and exits with the ♣10.

What is he aiming at?

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Here is the full deal:

a)

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

Lead: ♣Q. At trick two, North cashes the Ace of clubs and exits with the ♣10.

Playing the highest club spot says: don't ruff with your highest trump. I have the trump Ace, so we will complete the trump promotion when I get in.

Here we are dealing with an unusual finesse of dummy's ♥7.

Suppose we ruff partner's ♣10 with the trump jack. Declarer overruffs and plays the ♥K. The next club is ruffed with dummy's ♥7 and the promotion fails.

So, according to partner's wishes, we ruff with the ♥6. West overruffs as before, but when North gets in and returns another club we put up the ♥J, promoting partner's ♥8 into the setting trick.

What if partner wanted to give suit preference with the ruff? I need to say that IF DECLARER CANT OVER-RUFF THEN IT IS SUIT PREFERENCE.

Shared Knowledge of the Bridge Partnership

Suppose the layout were a little bit different:

b)

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

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

Lead: ♣Q. At trick two, North cashes the Ace of clubs and exits with the ♣2.

Playing the lowest spot card says: ruff with your highest trump. You do as you're told and the promotion ensues.

In this case ruffing with the ♥6 would not do. Declarer would overruff with the ♥8, cash the trump Ace, enter dummy in spades and play a heart. No promotion this time.

Note that leading the ♣Q at the first trick helped explain the situation to partner.

Routinely cashing the Ace and King would conceal the position of the Queen. Playing low or high club spot at trick 3 would then be a suit preference signal rather than a subtle message.

THE RULE:

THE LOWEST THE CARD WE EXIT, THE HIGHEST THE TRUMP WE WANT PARTNER TO RUFF WITH.

It is difficult, I admit – it requires knowledge and concentration.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The b) version of the problem would be solved by thousands of bridge pairs. Version a) would be handled properly (and fully consciously) only by a dozen or so of the best partnerships in the world.

THE CONCEPT OF A CONDITIONAL THIRD-HAND RUFF

The rules formulated in the previous problem may apply in various situation in a somewhat different context.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♥	3♥	Pass
4♠	Pass...		

3♥ = invitation with support in ♠.

♠ J 5
♥ A K J 9 7
♦ A Q 9 8
♣ 8 6

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

Lead: ♥A. You cashed the King, too, and everyone followed (the Queen falling from West).

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Here comes the full deal:

a)

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

Lead: ♥A. You cashed the King, too, and everyone followed (the Queen falling from West).

You will say: the problem is easy and trivial. We cash the ♦A and play a heart for partner to ruff with the trump Queen. Unfortunately, the analysis all too often stops at this point.

The Concept of a Conditional Third-Hand Ruff

Let's imagine a slightly different layout:

b)

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

♠ 10 4
♥ 10 8
♦ 10 5 4 3
♣ Q 10 5 4 2

Here the superficial analysis has let the contract go.

You cashed the ♦A at trick 3 and led a heart. Partner ruffed with the ten, but declarer overruffed and could now ruff three diamond losers in dummy.

So how should the defense proceed?

At trick 3 North should play the nine (!) of hearts, and South should then pitch a diamond.

What do the various hearts played at trick 3 by North mean?

♥J – I'm not interested in a promotion. Get rid of your diamonds, partner.

♥9 – I'm interested in a promotion, but only conditionally. Ruff, if you hold an honor.

♥7 – I have the Q J, so ruff even with the ten.

In all three variations South may discard a diamond if he does not have the trump cards required by partner.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

c)

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

Lead: ♥A. You cashed the King, too, and everyone followed (the Queen from West).

You continue with the ♥7 and partner ruffs with his ♠10. The trump promotion is thus established.

The Concept of a Conditional Third-Hand Ruff

d)

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

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

Lead: ♥A. You cashed the King, too, and everyone followed (the Queen from West).

You continue with the ♥J – “I’m not interested in the promotion, throw a diamond”.

Nevertheless, partner ruffs with the ♠J. Why?

Declarer does not need three diamond ruffs. The bidding indicates clearly that he is almost sure to hold either the ♦A or ♣K-Q. The only chance is to find North with the ♠10.

THE RULE:

THE LOWEST THE CARD WE EXIT, THE MORE WE WANT PARTNER TO RUFF.

COOPERATION 1

The effective exchange of information between defenders is a prerequisite for sophisticated defense.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
4♠	Dbl	Pass...	1♥

♠ K 10 8
♥ A 7 5
♦ K 8 6 5
♣ 6 5 3

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

Lead: ♦5. Declarer won your partner's Jack with the Ace and played a heart. You ducked while partner followed with the ♥10. Declarer continued with a spade to the Queen. You took the King and ...

Cooperation 1

This is the full deal:

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

What did partner's ♥10 mean at the first heart trick?

Two things at the same time:

- Count signal showing odd number of hearts.
- Lack of the ♥J.

These two pieces of information allow us to reconstruct declarer's hand as:

♠ AQJxxxx
 ♥ Jxx
 ♦ A10
 ♣ x

The only chance for an additional trick is the trump promotion. Through which suit? Hearts.

The big task is to keep the West hand off lead, lest declarer draws trumps.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Let's review the play so far.

Lead: ♦5. Declarer won your partner's Jack with the Ace and played a heart. You ducked, while partner followed with the ♥10. Declarer continued with a spade to the Queen. You took the King and ...

You have to underlead the heart Ace. Much to West's surprise, his second heart honor will hold in dummy, but eventually he won't be happy about it at all.

Perforce, declarer continues with a minor suit. Partner wins and plays another heart to unblock the Ace. All we need to do now is to reach partner with the other minor suit to get him to play the fourth round of hearts for the hard-earned promotion

COOPERATION 2

The defenders may cooperate to mislead declarer.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
4♠	Pass...		

2NT= invitation with support

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

Lead: ♥7. West wins your Queen with the Ace and follows with a club to the King (N – ♣9, S – ♣Q) and the ♠9 from dummy. North takes the Ace and cashes the ♦A.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♥7. West takes your Queen with the Ace and follows with a club to the King (N – ♣9, S – ♣Q) and the ♠9 from dummy. North takes the Ace and cashes the ♦A.

The key play is to follow to this trick with the ♦3 – encouraging partner to continue the suit.

Considering the tricks so far, you have to assume that your partner has made an unusual and deceptive play in trumps. He must have some cunning plan, connected with the diamond suit.

We should assist him in guiding declarer onto the false track.

IRON LOGIC

Iron logic, unlike the fuzzy variety, is considered the basic kind of logic. It expresses admiration for correct reasoning and faith in the power of reason.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	4 ♠	Pass...

2♣ = waiting

2NT = game forcing

3♥ = transfer: 6+♠

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

Lead: ♣J. You win the King (♣6 from West) and cash the Ace, dropping the Queen from declarer and the ♣9 from partner.

What now?

Do you know the layout of the club suit?

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

a)

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

Here it is necessary to give partner the club ruff.

b)

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

In this case, however, you'd better switch to the ♦Q.

Iron Logic

Do we have to guess?

No – from holding b), North should play the ♣10 under our Ace!

Why? Because it allows us to see through declarer's actions.

There is no way West could follow with the Queen at trick two from ♣Q 9 6. So the play of the ♣10 explains the situation.

As a consequence, the ♣9 from North should persuade South to give partner the club ruff – scenario a).

True, in a slightly different layout:

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

switching to the ♦Q at the third trick leads to two down, but this is a different story altogether.

GUIDE DOG 1

The guide dog protects his partner from danger.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
			1♦
Dbl	Pass	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass...		

	N		♠ J 9 6 4
W		E	♥ 9 2
			♦ 9 2
	S		♣ 10 9 8 4 3

♠ K 10 7
 ♥ Q 8 7 4
 ♦ A Q J 5 4 3
 ♣ —

Lead: ♦10. North holds the trick and continues diamonds.

How do you defend?

Guide Dog 1

The full deal:

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

Lead: ♦10 and another diamond. South took the Ace and returned the ♦Q.

At the third diamond trick North discarded a club a pardonable but expensive error.

As a consequence, declarer got four, instead of just three, club tricks.

How could we have assisted partner?

By playing the ♦Q at trick two. Why?

- 1) As a suit preference – we are showing better spades than hearts. The position of the diamond Jack is obvious at this point.
- 2) The risk of getting endplayed with the third round of diamonds is negligible.
- 3) Finally – and this is the conclusive consideration – partner may conceivably have a hard time finding the right discard to the third diamond.

GUIDE DOG 2

The subtle suggestion, asking for a specific play, is such a difficult art to master.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Dbl
Pass	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass...		

2♣ = check back

2♥ = 13–14 HCP with 3 spades

	N		♠ A 10 9
W		E	♥ A 9 6
			♦ K 6 2
	S		♣ Q 10 4 2

♠ 7 4 2
 ♥ K J 10 2
 ♦ A 10 3
 ♣ 8 6 3

Lead: ♥3. As declarer grabbed the Ace, you signaled with the ♥2 (even number of hearts). West led a club to the Jack and North's King. In the third trick partner switched to the ♥Q. What do we do?

Notice partner's excellent play of the Queen, opening up the possibility of cooperation.

Guide Dog 2

We can take one of the three actions:

- a) follow with the ten;
- b) follow with the Jack or
- c) overtake with the King.

a)

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

Here we should play the ten, meaning: “You can lead diamonds, partner, if you wish, but I’m not overly enthusiastic about it”. In this case it will be obvious for North to switch to diamonds. However, with unsupported ♦Q (without the Jack), North should refrain from leading the suit.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

b)

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

Lead: ♥3. As declarer grabbed the Ace, you signaled with the ♥2 (even number of hearts). West led a club to the Jack and North's King. In the third trick partner switched to the ♥Q. What do we do?

Follow with the Jack: "Partner, please lead diamonds through, preferably the Queen" (declarer may duck, hoping for ♥QJx in the North hand).

Guide Dog 2

c)

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

Here we should overtake and continue hearts. We are not interested in the diamond switch at all.

GUIDE DOG 3

Good bridge is about making life easier for partner.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	Pass...		

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

♠ K
♥ A 7
♦ 10 9 8 7 6 4 2
♣ 9 6 2

Lead: ♠2. You win the King.

Plan the defense.

Guide Dog 3

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♠2. You win the King. At trick two you switch to clubs. Partner wins the Ace and continues with another club.

You should have delayed the club switch until after winning the ♥A. It was best to start with the ♦10 as suit preference. When you play a club after the trump Ace, partner will win and duly return the spade for you to ruff.

And how would we get partner to give us the club ruff if we had singleton in that suit?

By cashing the ♥A and leading clubs.

GUIDE DOG 4

The 12th commandment;

When appropriate, thou shalt disillusion thy partner.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2NT	3♥
3NT	Pass	4♥	Pass...

2NT = invitational with support

3♥ = 5♠ - 5+minor

♠ 10 8
 ♥ 8 4 3
 ♦ Q 10 8 7 4 2
 ♣ J 4

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

Lead: ♠10. Partner cashes the King and Ace and continues with the ♠4. West follows with the ♠7, ♠9 and ♠Q.

Plan the defense.

Guide Dog 4

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♠10. Partner cashes the King and Ace and continues with the ♠4. West follows with the ♠7, ♠9 and ♠Q.

The conclusion: partner holds the King of clubs and nothing in diamonds.

How do we know?

- a) From the order the spade tops were played (the King first, then the Ace).
- b) By his playing ♠4 from ♠642 for us to ruff.

This is an unemphatic way to show a club value.

All the tested defenders chose a passive trump exit at the fourth trick – a typical error of ignoring partner's problems.

As indicated by the bidding, West has a balanced hand (5332).

Passively waiting for the club trick may pose a difficult problem for partner...

An astute declarer will win the trump exit in dummy and lead the ♣Q.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

It is far from obvious to cover with the King.

Let's alter the layout a little bit:

	♠ 10 8					
	♥ 8 4 3					
	♦ K 10 8 7 4 2					
	♣ 4 2					
♠ Q 9 7 ♥ K 10 9 6 2 ♦ A Q 5 ♣ A J	<table border="1" 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	♠ J 5 3 ♥ A Q J 5 ♦ J 6 ♣ Q 10 9 7	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ A K 6 4 2					
	♥ 7					
	♦ 9 3					
	♣ K 8 6 5 3					

Here covering the Queen would provide declarer with two discards and let through the contract.

True, North's failure to switch to clubs increases the chances of his holding the Jack – it suggests he might have been afraid of something. Still, the trump exit is unthinking.

In the original layout, only playing a low diamond at trick 4 (underleading the Queen) will make the situation absolutely clear for partner. It will dispel partner's illusions about the chances of a defensive diamond trick.

GUIDE DOG 5

Avoid sophisticated signals if a simple and absolutely clear alternative exists.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
		3♦	Pass

4♥ Pass...

3♦ = Transfer preempt

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

Lead: ♠2. West took your King with the Ace and played a diamond. Partner won the ♦A and cashed the ♣A.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♠2. West took your King with the Ace and played a diamond. Partner won the ♦A and cashed the ♣A.

Since the opening lead suggests four spades to the Queen, we have two spade tricks to cash.

The card that will certainly make partner switch back to spades is the ♣Q.

Playing the Queen denies the possession of the King, so, from North's perspective, a club continuation would be pointless.

GUIDE DOG 6

Lead your partner by the hand, but in the right direction.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♥	2♣	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

♠ K Q 5 2
 ♥ A Q 8 7 4
 ♦ 10 9
 ♣ 9 6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9 3
 ♥ 6 5 3
 ♦ K 6
 ♣ A K Q 10 7 2

Lead: ♠K. Partner encourages with the ♠2.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

a)

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

♠ A 8 2
♥ J 2
♦ 8 7 5 3 2
♣ 8 5 4

Lead: ♠K. Partner encourages with the ♠2. We continue with the Queen of spades! Why?

We want partner to play a heart, not a spade, through declarer.

Many beginners assume when we continue with the spade queen that our partner may overtake and run the suit. On the contrary, the play of the spade queen denies the jack! With a queen-jack combination we would play the jack if we wanted our partner to overtake. Hence the queen implies we do not want partner to overtake.

Guide Dog 6

b)

Low spade continuation would be necessary in a different position:

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

When we return the ♠4 after winning the King, partner will know to play the third round of spades.

DOUBTS 1

Not all defensive positions are clear.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♠	3♥
4♠	Pass...		

	N		♠ 4 3 2
W		E	♥ Q 9 2
			♦ K 8 7 4 2
	S		♣ 7 3

♠ 9 5
♥ A K 10 8 7 5
♦ Q
♣ Q 9 8 4

Lead: ♥J.

Plan the defense.

Doubts 1

a)

	♠ Q 6										
	♥ J 3										
	♦ J 10 9 6 5										
	♣ J 10 6 5										
♠ A K J 10 8 7	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 4 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 6 4		♥ Q 9 2									
♦ A 3		♦ K 8 7 4 2									
♣ A K 2		♣ 7 3									
	♠ 9 5										
	♥ A K 10 8 7 5										
	♦ Q										
	♣ Q 9 8 4										

Lead: ♥J. South overtakes the Jack (in case it is singleton), cashes the other heart top and continues with the third heart to promote the trump trick for partner. Declarer ends up with ten tricks only.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

b)

	♠ 7 6				
	♥ J 6				
	♦ A 10 9 6 5 3				
	♣ 10 6 5 2				
♠ A K Q J 10 8 ♥ 4 3 ♦ J ♣ A K J	<table border="1" 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	♠ 4 3 2 ♥ Q 9 2 ♦ K 8 7 4 2 ♣ 7 3
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 9 5				
	♥ A K 10 8 7 5				
	♦ Q				
	♣ Q 9 8 4				

Lead: ♥J. South overtakes the Jack, cashes the other top heart and shifts to his singleton diamond. He then gets the diamond ruff for down one.

c)

	♠ Q 6				
	♥ J 6				
	♦ A J 10 9 6 3				
	♣ 10 5 2				
♠ A K J 10 8 7 ♥ 4 3 ♦ 5 ♣ A K J 6	<table border="1" 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	♠ 4 3 2 ♥ Q 9 2 ♦ K 8 7 4 2 ♣ 7 3
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 9 7 5				
	♥ A K 10 8 7 5				
	♦ Q				
	♣ Q 9 8 4				

South overtakes and plays the diamond, to combine two possibilities:

Doubts 1

If the diamond ruff is immediately available, he will get it.

If declarer also has a singleton diamond, this trick needs to be cashed at once, before playing for the promotion.

I have presented three mutually exclusive lines of defense.

South has no clues as to which of them is correct.

d)

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

Lead: ♥J. South overtakes the Jack, cashes the other top heart and shifts to ♣4 – for down one.

DOUBTS 2

There are situations where our task is easier – bidding analysis assists in reconstructing the position. Partner will have to rise to the challenge, too.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	Pass...		

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

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

Lead: ♥A. Partner follows with the ♥2, while West drops the Queen.

Plan the defense.

Doubts 2

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♥A. Partner follows with the ♥2, while West drops the Queen.

West's bidding indicates lack of heart cue-bid. Playing him for:

♠ A Q J 10 8 7
 ♥ Q
 ♦ A K 5 4 3
 ♣ K

would be inconsistent with the auction.

Cashing the ♥K should clear the way to the setting trick, too.

Why? We will continue with another heart at trick 3, providing partner with the opportunity to get rid of his two diamonds.

Will that be such an obvious thing for him to do?

The 6=3=4=0 distribution of declarer's hand is probable.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

An interesting ethical problem might arise. Say North hesitated for a while after cashing the ♥A. The next two hearts were played in standard tempo.

Could it be argued that the break in tempo helped South realize that with only four hearts his partner would have an obvious heart continuation at the second trick? Consequently, it facilitates finding the defense of throwing two diamonds instead of ruffing?

DOUBTS 3

Fortunately, extremely difficult problems come up only rarely in every day bridge.

Pairs tournament. EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♠	3♥
4♠	5♥	Dbl	Pass
5♠	Pass...		

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

♠ J 7 2
♥ A K Q 10 8
♦ Q 5 3
♣ 8 6

Lead: ♣A, ♣K and another club.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♣A, ♣K and another club. Hats off to North for finding the club continuation at trick 3. But how is he to tell partner not to ruff, but discard a diamond instead?

This difficult problem might on a different day have been already addressed in the bidding:

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♠	3♥
4♠	5♣	Dbl	Pass
Pass	5♥	Dbl	Pass
5♠	Pass...		

Showing clubs may even induce partner to sacrifice with a slam, if his hand turns out to be something like:

♠ J
♥ A K Q 10 8 3
♦ 5 3
♣ Q 10 8 6

Doubts 3

However, does introducing clubs at the five level promise five cards in the suit? No – it only shows side values accompanying the heart fit.

Maneuvering with the honors does not help either. I don't use a system of opening leads whereby leading the Ace or the King depends on the number of cards in the suit (even though it might be very useful at times).

The problem is very hard indeed. Playing the third club after a long thought is, of course, out of the question. Partner must use his imagination. Which of the two West hands corresponds better with the auction?

a) ♠ A K Q 10 8 5
 ♡ —
 ♦ A 10 9 7 4
 ♣ 5 3

b) ♠ A K Q 10 8 5
 ♡ —
 ♦ A 10 9 7
 ♣ 5 4 3

Definitely hand a).

East supported spades at the two-level and his subsequent double of 5♥ discouraged further bidding from partner. Hence West must have a freak hand.

Successfully handling this problem should be regarded as a great achievement by any partnership.

MAKING LIFE EASIER 1

Making life easier for partner reduces significantly the number of errors he or she commits.

This approach certainly requires a lot of effort, but, if applied consistently by both partners, it should lead to a noticeable improvement in the partnership's level of play.

Pairs tournament. NS vulnerable.

The bidding wasn't particularly precise.

W	N	E	S
1NT	2♣	3NT	Pass...

2♣ = majors

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

Lead: ♠4. You put up the ten, won by declarer's Queen.

When West advanced the ♥6, partner rose with the King (you followed with the ♥7) and cashed the ♠A. Which card will you play in this trick?

Making Life Easier 1

a)

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

It is not enough to give partner a count signal with the ♠5 (or perhaps the ♠7) – as West drops the King – to solve all his problems.

Why not?

b)

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

What should South play to his partner's Ace at trick 3 in this case?

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

♠7 – a true count signal, according to the length of his remaining holding in spades. Again, the King drops from West.

c)

	♠ A 8 6 4 2													
	♥ K 10 8 3													
	♦ 5													
	♣ K J 9													
♠ K Q J 7	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N			W		E			S			♠ 9
	N													
W		E												
	S													
♥ A 9 6 2		♥ Q J 5												
♦ K 10		♦ A Q J 9 6												
♣ Q 3 2		♣ 10 8 7 4												
	♠ 10 5 3													
	♥ 7 4													
	♦ 8 7 4 3 2													
	♣ A 6 5													

What should South play to his partner's Ace at trick 3 here?

♠5 – a true count signal, according to the length of his remaining holding in spades. Again, the King appears from West.

Which card would solve partner's problems in scenario a)?

The ♠J, of course.

The hand contained one more minor difficulty. In the b) and c) variations partner, having cashed the ♠A, should switch to the ♣9. It will be necessary for South to continue clubs, instead of switching back to spades, after winning the Ace.

MAKING LIFE EASIER 2

It is both wise and highly advisable to create a situation where partner's play will be beneficial or at least neutral.

Pairs tournament. NS vulnerable.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	3NT	Pass...

♠ J 9 4 2
♥ A 9 8 6 4
♦ A
♣ 9 7 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 7 3
♥ 5
♦ J 10 9 6 3 2
♣ A 10

Lead: ♥6. West took South's ♥10 with the King and exited with the ♦K to your Ace. Partner followed with the ♦7.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

a)

	♠ J 9 4 2										
	♥ A 9 8 6 4										
	♦ A										
	♣ 9 7 2										
♠ A 10 ♥ K Q 5 3 ♦ K Q 5 4 ♣ Q J 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 7 3 ♥ 7 ♦ J 10 9 6 3 2 ♣ A 10
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 8 6 5										
	♥ J 10 2										
	♦ 8 7										
	♣ K 8 5 4 3										

Lead: ♥6. West took South's ♥10 with the King and exited with the ♦K to your Ace. Partner followed with the ♦7.

Unfortunately, the seven of diamonds is ambiguous. North is reduced to guessing.

Here only the club switch will hold declarer to ten tricks.

Making Life Easier 2

b)

	♠ J 9 4 2 ♥ A 9 8 6 4 ♦ A ♣ 9 7 2										
♠ 10 8 ♥ K Q 5 3 ♦ K Q 8 4 ♣ K Q J	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 7 3 ♥ 7 ♦ J 10 9 6 3 2 ♣ A 10
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A 6 5 ♥ J 10 2 ♦ 7 5 ♣ 8 6 5 4 3										

However, on a slightly different layout, the spade switch at trick three would lead to down two.

c)

	♠ J 9 4 2 ♥ A 9 8 6 4 ♦ A ♣ 9 7 2										
♠ A 10 ♥ K 5 3 2 ♦ K Q 8 4 ♣ K J 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 7 3 ♥ 7 ♦ J 10 9 6 3 2 ♣ A 10
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 8 6 5 ♥ Q J 10 ♦ 7 5 ♣ Q 8 5 4 3										

Finally, in this layout it is necessary to continue hearts after getting in with the ♦A.

It is precisely this scenario where we can make life easier for partner.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

At the first trick we should have played the Jack, not the ten of hearts. This way we paint a different picture of the whole deal for partner. From North's perspective, only two variations are now possible:

1)

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

Lead: ♥6. West took South's ♥J with the King and exited with the ♦K to your Ace. Partner followed with the ♦7.

Now North switches to the ♥9. South overtakes with the Queen and returns another heart through.

One down.

Making Life Easier 2

2)

	♠ J 9 4 2										
	♥ A 9 8 6 4										
	♦ A										
	♣ 9 7 2										
♠ 10 8 5 ♥ K Q 10 5 ♦ K Q 8 4 ♣ K Q	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">N</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">W</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">E</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N			W	E				S	♠ K Q 7 3 ♥ 7 ♦ J 10 9 6 3 2 ♣ A 10
N											
W	E										
		S									
	♠ A 6										
	♥ J 3 2										
	♦ 7 5										
	♣ J 8 6 5 4 3										

Lead: ♥6. West took South's ♥J with the King and exited with the ♦K to your Ace. Partner followed with the ♦7.

North plays the ♥9 again, but no trick is lost since declarer had a second natural heart trick anyway.

Holding the contract to nine tricks gives N-S a well above average result.

MAKING LIFE EASIER 3

Putting up the highest card from a sequence in a suit played by declarer often provides partner with very desirable information and makes his life easier.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass...			

♠ A 7 6 4
♥ K 10 8
♦ J 10 9 8 6
♣ 5

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

Lead: ♦J.

Declarer won the Ace (♦2 from South) and played a spade to the King. Partner followed with the ♠9.

Plan the defense.

Making Life Easier 3

The full hand:

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

At the table North ducked the spade King. He imagined a different distribution of the suit: West ♠KQx – South ♠J98. If this were the case, taking the Ace would make the play much easier for declarer.

But why did West make such a risky play in the first place?

At matchpoints every trick counts. Playing a spade at such an early stage is actually very clever. At this point, defenders have a very inaccurate picture of the location of honors and the layout of declarer's hand.

Inserting the ♠Q at trick two would help partner immensely.

MAKING LIFE EASIER 4

There is more to successful defending than correct signaling, no matter how helpful it might be for partner.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3NT	Pass...

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

♠ 10 8 4 2
 ♥ 8 5 4
 ♦ Q 10 3
 ♣ 8 7 2

Lead: ♠6. Declarer won South's ♠10 with the King, overtook his ♥Q with dummy's Ace and exited with the ♣9.

Which cards do you play in hearts and clubs? What message do you intend to convey?

Making Life Easier 4

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♠6. When declarer won South's ♠10 with the King and overtook his ♥Q with dummy's Ace, you followed with the ♥4. He then exited with the ♣9, and you played the ♣2.

What do these spot cards mean?

The play of the ♥4 (the lowest card in the suit) at the first heart trick may be construed as a suit preference signal indicating lack of support in spades.

It's now time for a substitute count signal in clubs.

Playing the ♣2 shows an even number of spades and allowed partner to cash the Ace as soon as he gets in. Unfortunately, (and not surprisingly!) North did not get the message: he won the ♣K and... switched to diamonds.

You were trying to make life easier for partner, but you failed.

The real analyst, however, will not play the ♠10 at the first trick. As can be deduced from the rule of eleven, West holds exactly two cards higher than the ♠6.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

On the basis of his own spot cards South can say they are both honors.

In order to truly assist partner, South should have, therefore, played the ♠2 at trick 1. Declarer would take the King, revealing the layout of the suit.

MAKING LIFE EASIER 5

Difficult plays are frequently very rewarding indeed. Their success, however, too often depends on the tempo in which they are made.

Pairs tournament. EW vulnerable.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	3♦	Pass
6♦	Pass...		

3♦ = 7–9 points, 4+♦ (2♦ = inverted minors response)

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

♠ K 10 9 8 6 5 3

♥ 7 2

♦ 3

♣ Q 7 3

Lead: ♠2.

Declarer put up the Queen.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♠2. Declarer put up the Queen.

You should duck the Queen, showing count with the ♠10. And do it smoothly. Hesitation will betray your intention of helping partner. But how can we assist him?

Let's imagine the play after your routinely covering the Queen with the King. A clever declarer will exit with a club from his hand immediately after winning the ♠A.

What will North do? He will surely rise with the Ace to cash the Jack of spades.

Ducking the ♠Q will disable this attractive line of defense. In addition, it will reveal the spade shortness, thereby strongly suggesting more than one club in the West hand.

Making Life Easier 5

One of my students observed that the ♠10 may be interpreted by partner as suit preference for hearts.

In this case, declarer's hand would look something like:

♠ A K
♥ A 10 7 5
♦ A K Q 10 9 6
♣ 4

It would then be necessary to jump up with the ♣A.

In my opinion, with:

♠ 10 9 8 6 5 3
♥ K 2
♦ 3
♣ Q 7 3 2

South should give the correct count signal in spades (♠3). The King of hearts is a card whose position should be concealed from declarer under all circumstances.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

One might object, finally, that if the opening lead were a singleton, holding up the King would give declarer an extra trick in the suit. For example:

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

Do you really believe West would risk another spade finesse when dummy's Queen holds?

I think he would rather look for the missing trick in hearts.

MAKING LIFE EASIER 6

Playing the highest card from the sequence in a suit led by declarer may provide partner with a priceless piece of information and thus make his life easier.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1 ♠	2 ♣	4 ♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass	4NT
5 ♠	Pass...		

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

♠ 10 4
♥ Q 10 9 7
♦ 10 9 8 7 4
♣ K 2

Lead: ♠2. Declarer wins in dummy and plays a diamond.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♠2. Declarer wins in dummy and plays a diamond.

South smoothly put up the ten (important information), inspiring North to unblock the Queen and the Jack.

Why is it crucial for North to unblock?

If he fails to get rid of his diamond honors, declarer will play three rounds of diamonds, discarding two clubs from dummy. North will get in, but will have no more trumps to lead.

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTEXT

Learning your alphabet of signals by heart is not enough. It is no less important to know when to use particular signals and to be able to draw correct conclusions. It's all about context; location, location, location!

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

1NT = 14–16 HCP

♠ 10 5 4 3 2
♥ 7 6
♦ 8 7
♣ A Q 5 3

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

Lead: ♠3.

Declarer wins South's ♠Q with the Ace and runs the ♦9 to partner's Queen.

You follow with the ♦7, hoping to indicate club values. At trick three partner cashes the ♠K.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

a)

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

Lead: ♠3.

Declarer wins South's ♠Q with the Ace and runs the ♦9 to partner's Queen.

You follow with the ♦7, hoping to indicate club values. At trick three partner cashes the ♠K.

Play the ♠10. If it's to be useful, it should say more than merely denying the possession of the Jack. It also suggests a switch. One look at dummy makes clear which suit we have in mind.

b)

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

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

Here playing the ♠10 would make no sense. Although it would convey true information, it would also suggest to partner the wrong line of defense. Since North wants the spade continuation, he should play the ♠2, showing five cards, hence a source of tricks in the suit.

THE RIGHT TRACK 1

Some of partner's mistakes are very hard to avoid. Instead of complaining, you should reflect on how you could have helped him out.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♥	1♠	2NT	Pass
4♥	Pass...		

2NT = invitational with support

♠ 10 9 8 7 5 4

♥ 4

♦ A 10

♣ K Q 10 3

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

Lead: ♣K.

Partner follows with the encouraging ♣2.

Plan the defense.

The Right Track 1

The full hand:

	♠ 10 9 8 7 5 4					
	♥ 4					
	♦ A 10					
	♣ K Q 10 3					
♠ A Q ♥ K Q J 10 8 6 5 ♦ 5 2 ♣ J 7	<table border="1" 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 3 2 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ Q J 9 3 ♣ 8 4	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ 6					
	♥ 9 7					
	♦ K 8 7 6 4					
	♣ A 9 6 5 2					

Lead: ♣K.

Partner follows with the encouraging ♣2.

You continued with the ♣Q. South overtook with the Ace and switched to... spades.

You should have cashed the ♦A prior to leading the second club.

This way you would have protected partner from making a natural and difficult to avoid play.

THE RIGHT TRACK 2

It is often declarer instead of partner, whom the less experienced defenders put on the right track.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	6NT	Pass...

N		
W	E	
S		

♠ K J 2
♥ A 9 2
♦ K 6 3
♣ A Q 8 6

♠ 8 7 6 3
♥ Q 7 6 5 3
♦ 8 7 4
♣ 2

Lead: ♠10.

Declarer cashed four rounds of spades. Partner discarded the ♦2 and the ♥8.

Time for clubs. Plan the three discards you need to make.

The Right Track 2

The full hand:

	♠ 10 4										
	♥ J 8 4										
	♦ A J 9 2										
	♣ 10 7 5 3										
♠ A Q 9 5 ♥ K 10 ♦ Q 10 5 ♣ K J 9 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">N</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">W</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">E</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	N			W	E			S		♠ K J 2 ♥ A 9 2 ♦ K 6 3 ♣ A Q 8 6
N											
W	E										
	S										
	♠ 8 7 6 3										
	♥ Q 7 6 5 3										
	♦ 8 7 4										
	♣ 2										

Lead: ♠10.

Declarer cashed four rounds of spades. Partner discarded the ♦2 and the ♥8, while dummy disposed of a heart.

On the clubs you threw two hearts and a diamond.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Here is the ensuing ending:

♠ —	♠ —	♠ —
♥ K 10	♥ J 4	♥ A 9
♦ Q 10 5	♦ A J 9	♦ K 6 3
♣ —	♣ —	♣ —

♠ —	♠ —	♠ —
♥ Q 7 6	♥ Q 7 6	♥ Q 7 6
♦ 8 7	♦ 8 7	♦ 8 7
♣ —	♣ —	♣ —

♠ —	♠ —	♠ —
♥ K 10	♥ J 4	♥ A 9
♦ Q 10 5	♦ A J 9	♦ K 6 3
♣ —	♣ —	♣ —

At this point West cashed the two heart tops and played a diamond to the Queen.

A magician or a peeping Tom?

Both defenders exposed their hands with their discards.

The dangerous opening lead of the ♠10 betrayed an awkward diamond combination, unsuitable to lead from. The routine discards of a diamond and two hearts revealed the distribution of the relevant suits. As a consequence, declarer could play double-dummy.

What was wrong?

South should have parted with only one heart and two diamonds, in order to confuse the count of the hand. Similarly, North should have thrown a heart first to make the diamond discard look enforced.

Such defense would make declarer's task much tougher.

THE RIGHT TIME

Great defending includes, among other things, knowing the right time to share the necessary information.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
	1NT	Dbl	Rdbl
2♣	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass...			

1NT = 12–14 HCP

Dbl (E) = 5+M–4+m

Rdbl (S) = strong

2♣ = pass or correct

Dbl (N) = penalty

Rdbl (E) = 6M–4+♦

Dbl (S) = penalty

♠ A 5 3
 ♥ 9 7 6
 ♦ K 7
 ♣ K Q 10 6 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K J 8 7 4 2
 ♥ A Q
 ♦ 10 9 4 3
 ♣ A

Lead: ♦K

Trick 1 – ♦K, ♦3, ♦6, ♦5

Trick 2 – ♦7, ♦4, ♦A, ♦8

Trick 3 – ♦2, ♦J, ?, ♦9

What would you discard in the third trump trick?

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

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

It is necessary to give partner a count signal in hearts – the ♥9 – informing him about your possession of three small cards in the suit. This should persuade South to at least consider the master play of ducking the Queen of hearts!

Which, needless to say, makes a two-trick difference.

CAMOUFLAGE

Camouflage serves to put the opponent on the wrong track.

Often an analysis of the defenders' actions allows declarer to adopt the winning line of play.

The ability to effectively manipulate an opponent is priceless. Only a few or perhaps a dozen players in the world boast it.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♥	Pass...		

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

Lead: ♦4 (4th best).

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♦4. West wins the Ace and plays a heart.

Declarer's layout is clear already: 2=6=1=4.

We are entitled to two trumps and one club only and a club lead by partner won't remedy it. West will duck, or else win the Ace, draw two more trumps and dispose of two club losers on the third and fourth rounds of spades. If active defense does not contribute to defeating the contract, we have to try something else.

At the table I followed with the ♦5, instead of the routine ♦8. Next, I played the ♥8, drawing partner's attention away from the club suit.

Accordingly, North, after getting in with the ♥A, continued diamonds. Declarer ruffed my King, cashed two trump honors and exited with another heart. I discarded the ♦8 and the ♦J. Now partner got in and, a bit confused with my signals, rather reluctantly switched to clubs. Declarer took my ♣9 with the Ace.

Camouflage

Here are the remaining cards:

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

While discarding diamonds on the hearts, let me remind you, I prudently kept the two.

Declarer now feared the 4-2 spade break with Jack-fourth in the South hand. Fortunately, he had recently read about strip squeezes. So he cashed the last trump. Satisfying his expectations, I discarded the ♣J.

Now declarer, having exposed my hand as 4=2=4=3, triumphantly cashed the ♠K and throws me in with a club.

The long-hidden ♦2 hits the table.

It would have been better for declarer to duck the ♣9, you will say, for it would lead to a spade-club squeeze against South. Here, the 3-3 spade break would be revealed, since South would be forced to part with his invaluable two of diamonds.

True, but, be that as it may, defenders must do their best regardless of declarer's performance.

In this subtle deal, the defenders did all they could to put declarer on the wrong track.

PROTECTION 1

Instead of putting partner on the right track (which in any event does not always exist), it is sometimes better to tackle the problem yourself.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♣	3♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass...

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

♠ 9 6 4
 ♥ K 9 8 7
 ♦ J 7 4
 ♣ 10 6 2

Lead: ♣K. Declarer wins the Ace, pitching a heart from his hand. Next he ruffs a club, draws two rounds of trumps (North discards a club on the second round) and ruffs another club.

Now West cashes the ♥A and exits with the ♥J, covered by your partner's Queen.

Plan the defense.

Protection 1

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♣K. Declarer wins the Ace, pitching a heart from his hand. Next he ruffs a club, draws trumps twice (North discards a club on the second round) and ruffs another club. Now West cashes the ♥A and exits with the ♥J, covered by your partner's Queen.

Declarer's distribution – 6=3=4=0 – is, at this stage, which is known to South but not to North. South should have overtaken the Queen of hearts and lead trumps.

One diamond discard is not enough for declarer – he has to find the Jack anyway.

PROTECTION 2

Partner is often forced to part with a potential stopper in one of the suits. You have to help him make the right choice.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
			1NT
Pass	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♥	Pass...		

2♣ = majors

	N		♠ K Q 7 6
W		E	♥ Q J 7 6
			♦ Q 3
	S		♣ Q 5 3

♠ A J 9 2
 ♥ A K 8
 ♦ A 9 7 6
 ♣ J 9

Lead: ♥2. The defender with a very weak hand should use trumps to show the general distribution of his hand (Vinje trump signal). Here it means the even tendency (even number of cards in three suits, odd in the remaining one).

Plan the defense.

Protection 2

The full hand:

	♠ 10 8 5 4											
	♥ 4 2											
	♦ J 10 5											
	♣ 10 8 7 6											
♠ 3 ♥ 10 9 5 3 ♦ K 8 4 2 ♣ A K 4 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 7 6 ♥ Q J 7 6 ♦ Q 3 ♣ Q 5 3	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A J 9 2											
	♥ A K 8											
	♦ A 9 7 6											
	♣ J 9											

Lead: ♥2. We take the King and, quite naturally, continue trumps.

In the third trick partner discards a club. The contract can no longer be beaten.

North had a tough decision. We could have let him know about the necessity of keeping the club stopper by switching to the ♣J at trick two.

Declarer will win the Ace and probably return to trumps himself. We shall persist with clubs, to West's King.

Now, when the third heart is played, North will no doubt throw a diamond.

Does it conclude the matter? Far from it – the battle has just begun.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The following end position will be reached:

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

Declarer plays a spade, but, to your surprise, calls for a small card from dummy.

Partner made an innocent-looking mistake – he failed to insert the ♠8.

This leaves you endplayed. You exit with the ♠2 to dummy's Queen (West pitching a club), but declarer cashes the ♣Q. This time it is you who are squeezed, and it is genuine this time:

- if you discard a spade, declarer will establish an extra trick by ruffing a spade in hand
- if you part with a diamond, the same thing will happen in that suit.

Note declarer's precision. He won both club tricks in his hand. He must have envisaged this ending.

You assisted your partner as much as you could. Putting up the ♠8 required a lot of concentration, which is hard to maintain if your play is unimportant. Or so it seems.

THE WRONG TRACK

Leading your opponent astray is among the basic defensive tasks.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3NT	Pass...

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 9 8
♥ Q 10 8 5
♦ K 4 3
♣ Q 7 5

♠ J 6 2
♥ 9 4 3
♦ J 8 2
♣ A 10 4 2

Lead: ♠4.

Your Jack holds the trick.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

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

South takes the Jack and returns the ♠2!!! North wins the King and continues with the ♠5.

So far we managed to convince declarer about the 4-4 spade split:

N ♠K543 – S ♠AQJ62.

From the West's perspective there is no easy route to nine tricks. It may be best to win the second spade and return the suit, hoping for some kind of a squeeze to materialize in the future. By contrast, conceding two clubs seems to be an absurd line of play, assuming a 4-4 spade break.

How will it end? It is hard to tell. Declarer will have difficulties finding a route to success.

But how will the play proceed if defenders reveal the 5-3 spade break?

Let's look at an account of the events at the table.

“North led the four of spades, dummy played low and South's Jack won the trick. South continued with the 6 of spades, covered

The Wrong Track

by the ten and Queen, dummy playing low. North exited with a spade to dummy's now bare Ace, declarer discarding a low diamond from hand.

Declarer had seven top tricks and needed to develop another two in clubs. As the spades were clearly five-three, this needed to be done without North gaining the lead. So declarer crossed to his hand with the king of hearts to play a low club, finessing dummy's seven. South won the ten of clubs and, with an unattractive holding in diamonds, exited passively in hearts. Declarer took this with the Queen in dummy and cashed the Ace of hearts before playing a second club towards dummy.

When the Jack of clubs appeared, his precaution of gathering information about hearts proved unnecessary. He called for the Queen of clubs from dummy and claimed nine tricks when East took this with the Ace".

I seek educational aspects in every interesting bridge deal. The analysis of analogous positions greatly improves our understanding of the game.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Here is a slightly different scenario.

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

Lead: ♠4. Your Jack holds the trick.

Now you ought to return the six and follow with the two on the third round of the suit. If you manage to convince declarer about the 5-3 spade split with North holding five, he will take the safe finesse against the ♣J right into your open arms.

A CONTROVERSY

A seemingly ordinary situation may cause unexpected trouble at times. It turns out to be necessary to discuss a lot of lead positions with partner.

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Pass	2NT
5♦	Pass...		

2NT = invitation with support

♠ A 9 6 5 4
♥ 9 7 6
♦ 8
♣ A K 6 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 10 7
♥ Q J 10 5 2
♦ A 7
♣ 10 4 3

Lead: ♣A. Partner drops the Queen, West following with the ♣5.

Plan the defense.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The full hand:

♠ —	♠ A 9 6 5 4	♠ J 10 7									
♥ A K	♥ 9 7 6	♥ Q J 10 5 2									
♦ K Q J 10 6 5 3 2	♦ 8	♦ A 7									
♣ 9 8 5	♣ A K 6 2	♣ 10 4 3									
	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K Q 8 3 2										
	♥ 8 4 3										
	♦ 9 4										
	♣ Q J 7										

Lead: ♣A. Partner drops the Queen, West following with the ♣5.

The solution seems to be easy enough. Since you received attitude rather than count signal from partner, you have to provide him with count information, transferring, in a way, the problem to his hand.

At trick two you continue with the ♣2.

1) In our case South plays the third round of clubs.

2)

♠ K Q 8 3
♥ 8 4 3
♦ 9 4
♣ Q J 9 7

Here South will cash the spade trick.

Is this method universally effective?

A Controversy

3)

South

♠ K Q 8 3 2
♥ 8 4 3
♦ 6 4 3
♣ Q J

West

♠ —
♥ A K
♦ K Q J 10 9 5 2
♣ 9 8 7 5

A low club continuation makes defense more difficult when declarer has four small clubs. Instead, the simple club ruff beats the contract right away.

The contract can still be defeated, but now it's entirely up to partner.

When we play the low club to partner's Jack, he will have to switch to diamonds to deprive declarer of one of his dummy entries. If he plays a spade instead, West will unblock hearts and exit with a trump honor. When the ♦8 appears, he will overtake with the Ace and play good hearts, eventually forcing out one of South's trumps (or pitching the losing clubs).

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

Let's read the description of an authentic deal.

“Greece against Germany

European Championship Malmo – 2004.

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

♠ K Q 8 3 2
♥ 8 4 3
♦ 9 4
♣ Q J 7

Closed Room

W	N	E	S
Papakyri	Ludewig	Filius	Reps
	1♠	Pass	2♠
5♦	Pass...		

Ludewig led the King of clubs on which Reps played the Queen. Reasoning that South was more likely to hold four-four in the black suits, South then continued with the club Ace and tried the spade Ace.

Greece were plus 400 and set for a nice swing. Or so we thought.

A Controversy

The open Room was the scene of a horror show:

Open Room

W	N	E	S
Piekarek	Triant	Gotard	Kannavos
	1 ♠	Pass	2 NT
5 ♦	5 ♠	Pass	Pass
6 ♦	Dbl	Pass...	

Five spades would have been a little expensive but it helped push the Germans overboard. North led the club Ace (three, Queen, five) and continued...the spade Ace, South having promised four or more. That was plus 1090 and 12 IMPs in, rather than minus 300 and 12 away. Looking at all four hands it is rather easier to get these situations right than it is at the table. In this case, defending at the six-level, North might have reasoned that his partner would have given a count card with five clubs rather than the queen”.

But the case is more complex than it would seem from the reporter’s account.

What should South play to the Ace of clubs from the following combinations?

- a) ♣Q J 7 – I’m in doubt – the ♣Q is the routine card.
- b) ♣Q J 9 8 7 – I’m in doubt (the ♣9 or the ♣Q)
- c) ♣Q J 9 7 – I have no doubt – the ♣7 (count signal)
- d) ♣Q 9 7 (J 9 7) – I have no doubt – the ♣9 (count signal)

Evidently, there is no good solution with the b) hand.

How can we put partner on the right track while defending against the diamond slam?

With our original hand, we know we have no spade to cash. Therefore, we should convince partner to continue clubs.

Part 1: Putting on the Right Track

The play of the Jack of clubs (from ♣Q J 7) will place the Queen in declarer's hand, no doubt prompting partner to cash the other high club, too. Whether or not he will continue the suit at the third trick is a different matter altogether.

But the jack, you would protest, usually works as an alarm-clock play to make partner switch. Well, as you can see, it's all about context. Location, location, location.

Part 2:

SUIT PREFERENCE

SUIT PREFERENCE (subsequently referred to as S/P) falls into the category of attitude signals. It conveys information about the position of side suits honors. We can use it whenever we deem it necessary to show a suit with substantial honor values, in order to assist partner in making optimum defensive decisions.

Playing a high card shows values in the higher-ranking and a low card – in the lower-ranking of the remaining two suits.

Basic applications of this method are commonplace.

EXAMPLES

I.

One advantage of S/P is its simplicity.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dbl	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass...

		♠ 7 2									
		♥ A K Q 6 5									
		♦ 7 5									
		♣ Q J 3 2									
♠ 10 9 8 6 4	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K Q
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ J 8 3	♥ 10 9 2										
♦ Q 3 2	♦ A K J 6 4										
♣ K 10 8	♣ A 4										
		♠ J 5 3									
		♥ 7 4									
		♦ 10 9 8									
		♣ 9 7 6 5 2									

Lead: the Ace, King and Queen of hearts.

The author of the problem suggests discarding a discouraging high club to prevent a club shift from partner. But this is not sufficient to obtain the heart continuation from North – the position of the ♦Q is by no means obvious.

Examples

a)

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

S/P is much more effective. An unequivocal discard of the ♦10 cries out for a heart continuation at Trick 4.

b)

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

Since a heart continuation would prove fatal here, providing declarer with ruff and sluff, South should help partner with the S/P ♣2.

Note that, according to Bridge World Standard Defense, in both cases South should merely discourage the club shift.

Part 2: Suit Preference

II.

Against a no-trump contract, defenders use their cards in the first suit played by declarer to express their preferences.

Pairs tournament. NS vulnerable.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

a)

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

Lead: ♦J. West wins the Ace (South follows with the ♦7 – an odd number of diamonds) and continues with a club to the Queen. We duck and take the next club.

The diamond situation is clear enough. Much more significant are partner's club signals, relating to spades and hearts.

As South followed with the ♣8 and the ♣3 (implying spade values), we switch to the ♠8. This way, regardless of whether partner holds two or three spades, we cash the three spade tricks we are entitled to.

The result – just made.

Examples

b)

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

♠ 7 6 3
♥ A J 8 4
♦ 7 4 3
♣ 8 5 3

This time South followed with the ♣3 and the ♣8 (betraying interest in the heart suit); accordingly, we switch to the ♥10.

Again, declarer is held to just nine obvious tricks (four clubs, three diamonds, one spade, one heart).

Part 2: Suit Preference

III.

Whenever our opening lead established winners in dummy – S/P applies.

Pairs tournament. Both vulnerable.

W	N	E	S
1♥	1♠	1NT	2♠
4♥	Pass...		

a)

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

Lead: ♠A. South follows with the Jack.

We duly proceed to cash three diamond tricks.

Examples

b)

♠ 9 6	♠ A 10 8 7 5				
♥ A K Q J 10 6 2	♥ 5 3				
♦ A	♦ K J 5				
♣ 7 4 3	♣ Q 10 9				
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 80px; margin: 0 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	♠ K Q 2
N					
W E					
S					
		♥ 9 8 4			
		♦ 7 6 3			
		♣ K 6 5 2			
	♠ J 4 3				
	♥ 7				
	♦ Q 10 9 8 4 2				
	♣ A J 8				

Lead: ♠A. This time South plays the ♠3 and is instantly rewarded by the club shift from us. The Club Queen is the most helpful card we can play to reward partner's S/P signal.

Part 2: Suit Preference

IV.

Whenever partner on gaining the lead, has an alternative of opening a new suit or trying to reach us and get us to play that suit through declarer or dummy, we must clarify the situation for him.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	4♥	Pass...

a)

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

Lead: ♦Q. Partner (South) follows with the ♦7, expressing his interest in the spade suit (S/P applies when shortness appears in dummy in a suit contract).

Declarer plays the ♣J.

It's no time for count signals – we must tell partner what to do. We follow with the ♣2 – „do not switch to spades!“. South duly exits with a trump.

Eventually the contract will go one down.

Examples

The theme contained here may be controversial; but essentially when both members of a partnership can see that a shift might be essential, S/P over-rides count.

b)

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

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

Lead: ♦Q. Partner (South) follows with the ♦7, expressing his interest in the spade suit (S/P applies when shortness appears in dummy in a suit contract).

Declarer plays the ♣J.

Here we follow with the ♣7 and South opens the spade suit. It boils down for declarer to finding the heart Queen.

Part 2: Suit Preference

V.

Covering with an honor is routine. Ducking, on the other hand – inasmuch as it requires some intellectual effort – means something specific.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♦	2♥	4♦
4♠	Pass...		

1♣ = 15+ HCP

2♥ = 6+♠, weak (4–7 HCP) or strong (12+ HCP)

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

Lead: ♦7(4th). Declarer cleverly disposes of a heart from dummy. If he ruffed a diamond next, we would get a chance to show suit preference.

Suppose, however, that South wants to draw partner's attention to his clubs immediately. As the Rule of Eleven makes clear, West holds only one diamond higher than the ♦7; it surely is the Ace.

Examples

It is therefore an excellent S/P signal for clubs to duck by following with the $\spadesuit 2$.

How were we to show the heart values?

By covering the $\spadesuit 7$ with the $\spadesuit 9$. When West takes the Ace, partner will know the whole story.

Part 2: Suit Preference

VI.

Whenever you have a choice of playing one of the two small cards from a suit – S/P applies.

Pairs tournament

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass...			

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

Lead: ♥J. Your Jack held the trick (♥9 from West).

Time for a straightforward.

- 1) ♥7 – I'm interested in spades.
- 2) ♥5 – I'm interested in diamonds.

Note that declarer will follow with the ♥9 and the ♥10, revealing the layout of the suit completely for partner.

The diamond switch from South on the third trick = 9 tricks.

The spade switch – two down.

Examples

VII.

If it is clear for both defenders that the opening lead was singleton, S/P applies in that suit.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	2♦	2♥
2♠	4♥	4♠	Pass...

	♠ A 4				
	♥ K J 9 7 6 4				
	♦ 4				
	♣ A Q 10 5				
♠ K Q 10 9 5 3 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ J ♣ K 7 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ J 8 6 2 ♥ 2 ♦ A K Q 10 3 2 ♣ J 3
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 7				
	♥ A Q 5				
	♦ 9 8 7 6 5				
	♣ 9 8 6 4				

Lead: ♦4. Declarer wins in his hand and exits with the ♠K.

We take the Ace and...

The author of the problem comes up with the following analysis:

To beat the contract, we have to find partner with one of the two cards: the ♥A or the ♣K. There is, however, no need to guess. After getting in with the trump Ace, we can gather some intelligence by means of cashing the ♣A. If partner encourages, we continue with another club to his King and get a ruff. Otherwise the only remaining chance is the ♥A.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The reality was very brutal indeed – North turned out not to be the only player in possession of a singleton diamond.

This is often the result of technical speculations unaccompanied by cooperation between partners. The suit in which S/P applies is not spades – South may have no choice there – but diamonds.

The correct commentary to the above deal should thus be as follows.

Lead: ♠3. Partner follows with the ♠9 (indicating heart values). West takes the Jack and exits with the ♠K. We win the Ace and shift to the lowest heart, asking for a club back. It is obvious to South that the diamond opening lead was a singleton.

He will thus switch to clubs, according to his partner's suggestion if declarer is also out of diamonds.

Had the West hand been different:

♠ K Q 10 9 7 5
♥ 10 8 3
♦ J 6 5
♣ K

the contract would have been beaten by a diamond ruff followed by the cashing of the ♣A.

Examples

VIII.

If you decide to lead trumps, you should treat the opening lead card as a S/P signal.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	Pass...

1NT = 12–14 HCP

	♠ A 9 7 5				
	♥ 8 7 5				
	♦ 8 7 2				
	♣ 9 3 2				
♠ 4 3 2 ♥ K J 4 3 ♦ J 10 9 4 ♣ A K	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <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	♠ K J 6 ♥ A Q 10 9 ♦ Q 5 ♣ 8 7 6 4
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ Q 10 8				
	♥ 6 2				
	♦ A K 6 3				
	♣ Q J 10 5				

Lead: ♥8. Declarer won in dummy and switched to diamonds. You rose with the King as North signaled an odd number with the ♦8. Thanks to S/P in trumps you know about partner's ♠A right away. This, in turn, allows you to imagine West's hand as:

a)

♠ x x x
♥ K J x x
♦ J 10 9 x
♣ A K

Part 2: Suit Preference

- b)
- ♠ x x
 - ♥ K J x x
 - ♦ J 10 9 x
 - ♣ A K x

In the a) case the spade shift is a must.

In b), on the other hand, we must not play spades ourselves. Misplaying the suit by declarer remains our only hope.

Are we condemned to guessing?

The opening lead analysis may come in handy.

a) Let's sketch out partner's hand.

- ♠ A x x x
- ♥ x x x
- ♦ x x x
- ♣ x x x

- b)
- ♠ A x x x x
 - ♥ x x x
 - ♦ x x x
 - ♣ x x

With the former hand, the trump lead is justified by the lack of other attractive options. With the latter, the club lead would seem more logical. Here it would be, in addition, the killing lead.

Based on S/P information from the first trick and the correct analysis, South may find the effective defense – the spade switch.

Examples

IX.

Let's look at another scenario where partner has doubled, asking for a heart lead.

Being in possession of a high card to play through dummy's values, you are normally going to lead that card.

If, however, you lead from two or more small, S/P applies – particularly if the full count of the suit is already known.

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Dbl
Pass...			

2♣ = waiting

2NT = 13–14 HCP with two cards in hearts

	♠ 8 7 2										
	♥ 4 3										
	♦ A 7 6 5 4										
	♣ 8 4 3										
♠ A K Q ♥ 8 6 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ K J 10 9 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 6 5 4 ♥ Q J 7 5 2 ♦ Q 10 ♣ A Q
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 10 9 3										
	♥ A K 10 9										
	♦ K 9 8										
	♣ 7 6 2										

Lead: ♥3. South took dummy's Jack with the King.

All tested defenders chose the routine spade switch in Trick 2.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The ♥3, however – the lowest card in the suit (deuce is in dummy) – suggests values in the lower-ranking suit.

The unusual diamond shift can be found solely with the help of S/P signal.

Examples

X.

Whenever the subsequent line of defense is unclear, the cards we play should indicate location of our values, according to the S/P principles.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♠	Pass...

1NT – forcing

a)

	♠ 3 2										
	♥ Q J										
	♦ 10 8 7 5										
	♣ K J 7 3 2										
♠ A K Q 6 5 ♥ 8 7 5 ♦ A K Q 6 ♣ 9	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W				S		♠ J 10 8 7 ♥ K 10 6 2 ♦ 3 2 ♣ Q 10 5
N		E									
W											
	S										
	♠ 9 4										
	♥ A 9 4 3										
	♦ J 9 4										
	♣ A 8 6 4										

Lead: ♥Q. Partner's Queen is covered by dummy's King and your Ace.

The situation is unclear, but if you decide to return a heart all the same, do it the S/P way. Play the ♥3, showing the ♣A.

Partner will now switch to the ♣J (another S/P), awaiting the heart ruff.

Is this defense obvious?

Part 2: Suit Preference

b)

	♠ Q 3										
	♥ Q J										
	♦ 10 8 7 5										
	♣ J 8 7 3 2										
♠ A K 6 5 2 ♥ 8 7 ♦ A K Q 6 ♣ K 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 8 7 ♥ K 10 6 2 ♦ 3 2 ♣ Q 10 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 9 4										
	♥ A 9 5 4 3										
	♦ J 9 4										
	♣ A 9 6										

Lead: ♥Q. Partner's Queen is covered by dummy's King and your Ace.

The situation is unclear, but if you decide to return a heart all the same, do it the S/P way. Play the ♥3, showing the ♠A.

Partner's switch to the ♣J will pose a difficult problem for us. Should we try to cash another club or shift back to hearts for the trump promotion?

In my opinion, the high club led by North demands a heart from partner (a sort of S/P or perhaps simply denying a top club). In the original layout, North should play the ♣3, leaving both options open for partner.

Examples

c)

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

♠ Q 3
♥ Q J 5
♦ 10 8 7 5
♣ K J 7 3

♠ 9 4
♥ A 9 4 3
♦ J 9 4
♣ A 8 6 4

Needless to say, North should cash the ♣K after getting in with the ♥J.

Part 2: Suit Preference

d)

	♠ A 2										
	♥ Q 5										
	♦ 10 8 7 5										
	♣ J 9 7 3 2										
♠ K Q 6 5 3 ♥ J 8 7 ♦ A K Q J ♣ K	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">N</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">W</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W				S		♠ J 10 8 7 ♥ K 10 6 2 ♦ 3 2 ♣ Q 10 5
N		E									
W											
	S										
	♠ 9 4										
	♥ A 9 4 3										
	♦ 9 6 4										
	♣ A 8 6 4										

Lead: ♥Q. Partner's Queen is covered by dummy's King and your Ace.

The situation is unclear, but if you decide to return a heart all the same, do it the S/P way. Play the ♥3, showing the ♣A.

In with the ♠A, North will cross to South via a high club to receive the heart ruff.

THE OTHER FACE OF SUIT PREFERENCE

Information about the position of the defenders' honors may prove invaluable indeed... for declarer.

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♠	Dbl	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

♠ K J 9 7 6
♥ 8 5
♦ A 9 6
♣ 9 4 3

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

Lead: ♠7. Dummy's ♠10 held the trick. Partner signaled with the ♠8, showing odd number of cards.

Declarer proceeded to cash the ♣A and continued with the ♣10.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

a)	♠ K J 9 7 6 ♥ 8 5 ♦ A 9 6 ♣ 9 4 3		♠ 10 4 ♥ J 9 7 4 ♦ Q 3 ♣ K J 7 5 2								
♠ A Q 2 ♥ K 10 ♦ K 10 8 2 ♣ A Q 10 8	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 5 3 ♥ A Q 6 3 2 ♦ J 7 5 4 ♣ 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										

Lead: ♠7. Dummy's ♠10 held the trick. Partner signaled with the ♣3, showing an odd number of cards.

Declarer proceeded to cash the ♣A and continued with the ♣10.

North followed with the ♣9 and the ♣3, while South discarded the ♥6 on the second round. North's sequence encouraged a spade return and showed a diamond value (otherwise he could have played the ♣4).

The decision about the order in which the red suits are attacked is crucial for the whole deal. Declarer resorted to an extraordinary discovery play. Having learned the location of honors, he led a diamond to the Queen and a heart towards the King.

Can this unpleasant situation be controlled by defenders?

In my opinion, it is extremely difficult. There's always a price to pay.

The Other Face of Suit Preference

Let's imagine a slightly different layout:

b)

	♠ K J 9 7 6										
	♥ 8 5										
	♦ A 9 6										
	♣ 9 4 3										
♠ A Q 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> <td style="width: 40%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K Q		♥ J 9 7 4									
♦ 8 7 5 2		♦ Q 3									
♣ A 10 8		♣ K J 7 5 2									
	♠ 8 5 3										
	♥ 10 6 3 2										
	♦ K J 10 4										
	♣ Q 6										

Unaware of the diamond Ace, South, after getting in with the ♣Q, will naturally return a spade unless North tells him what to do.

SUBTLE 1

Subtle signals help partner solve very difficult technical problems.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

♠ 8 6
 ♥ K 9 8 6
 ♦ A J 7 5 3
 ♣ 9 6

<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 40%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 4 3 2 ♥ A Q J 4 ♦ K 8 ♣ A Q 3
	N									
W		E								
	S									

Lead: ♦5. Declarer wins the King (partner follows with the ♦9 – count signal) and cashes his club tricks.

- 2) ♣A, ♣5, ♣2, ♣6
- 3) ♣Q, ♣J, ♣4, ♣8
- 4) ♣3, ♣10, ♣K, ♠6
- 5) ♠8, ♠8, ♠2, ♠10

What do you think partner (S) was trying to tell you with his cards (♣5, ♣J, ♣10, ♠10) and what, as a consequence, would you discard to the fifth club?

Subtle 1

The full hand:

a) 3NT

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

Lead: ♦5. Declarer wins the King (partner follows with the ♦9 – count signal) and cashes his club tricks.

As South, we have three key cards for the defense – the Queen of diamonds, the Ace of spades and... the ten of hearts.

We informed partner about the odd number, by playing the ♦9 on the first round of the suit. Then we showed the Queen of diamonds with the ♣5.

On the second round of clubs, we had a choice of playing either the ♣10 or the ♣J.

The ♣J, in my opinion, suggests spade values.

Finally, it's time to show partner the ten of hearts by discarding the ♠10 on the fourth round of clubs.

Note that none of this information will be of use for declarer.

Why is the ♥10 so important?

If we hold this card, partner can safely part with one of his hearts on the fifth round of clubs, and, as a result, set the contract one trick. The ♦Q will allow us to hold the trick if West, following the successful heart finesse, smartly exits in diamonds.

Part 2: Suit Preference

We will get the ♠A and four diamonds tricks.
 The result – one down.

b) 3NT

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

Lead: ♦5. Declarer wins the King (partner follows with the ♦9) and cashes his club tricks.

2) ♣A, ♣5, ♣2, ♣6

3) ♣Q, ♣J, ♣4, ♣8

4) ♣3, ♣10, ♣K, ♣6

5) ♣8, ♠8, ♠2, ?

Here I discard the ♠5, the message being: “I don’t have the ♥10”. Accordingly, North will get rid of a small diamond on the fifth club trick, holding declarer to nine tricks.

SUBTLE 2

A subtle touch may soothe partner's sufferings.
The bidding was relatively unsubtle:

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♠	Pass...		

2NT = game forcing with support

5♠ = 2A + ♠Q

	N		♠ K Q 8 2
W		E	♥ A Q 5 4
			♦ K 5
	S		♣ 8 5 3

♠ 9 7
♥ 9 6 2
♦ 8 7 6 4 3
♣ 10 4 2

Lead: ♦J. Declarer wins the Ace, cashes two rounds of trumps and overtakes his ♦Q with dummy's King.

What is your play?

Part 2: Suit Preference

a)

	♠ 10 4										
	♥ J 8 7 3										
	♦ J 10 9 2										
	♣ A J 7										
♠ A J 6 5 3	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 8 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 10		♥ A Q 5 4									
♦ A Q		♦ K 5									
♣ K Q 9 6		♣ 8 5 3									
	♠ 9 7										
	♥ 9 6 2										
	♦ 8 7 6 4 3										
	♣ 10 4 2										

Lead: ♦J. Declarer wins the Ace, cashes two rounds of trumps and overtakes his ♦Q with dummy's King.

First comes the count signal – ♦8.

According to our agreements, with a Yarborough the order of cards in the trump suit is a substitute count signal.

Why?

Because partner knows the distribution of only one suit (diamonds in this case).

So I follow with the ♠9 and the ♠7, showing an odd number of clubs (the shorter of the dummy's two remaining suits).

Finally, on the second diamond trick, it's time for suit preference.

Note that by now, courtesy of substitute count in trumps, partner knows my exact distribution – 2=3=5=3.

I play the ♦3, showing a low honor in clubs. From North's perspective it will be obvious that the honor is the ten.

Armed with this knowledge, North will capture declarer's ♣K with the Ace and return the ♣J, leaving West with no chance of making the slam.

Subtle 2

b)

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

Lead: ♦J. Declarer wins the Ace, cashes two rounds of trumps and overtakes his ♦Q with dummy's King.

This time on the second diamond trick I play the ♦7, showing the ♥10.

Now North has two options:

- 1) Ducking the King of clubs.
- 2) Winning the Ace and switching to hearts.

In both cases West can make the contract, provided he guesses the layout but the defenders have done their best.

Part 2: Suit Preference

c)

	♠ 10 4										
	♥ J 8 7 3										
	♦ J 10 9 2										
	♣ A J 7										
♠ A J 6 5 3 ♥ K 10 ♦ A Q ♣ K Q 10 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 8 2 ♥ A Q 5 4 ♦ K 5 ♣ 8 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 9 7										
	♥ 9 6 2										
	♦ 8 7 6 4 3										
	♣ 9 4 2										

Lead: ♦J. Declarer wins the Ace, cashes two rounds of trumps and overtakes his ♦Q with dummy's King

I play the ♦6 (or the ♦4) in the second round of diamonds, to let partner know I have no support in any suit.

The implication for North is that he **MUST** duck the club.

And how do I signal, you might ask, with both tens? I choose to show the ♣10 (by means of ♦3), since it is more important for partner.

SUBTLE 3

The prerequisite of precise defense is providing information about all the critical cards.

W	N	E	S
			1♦
Dbl	4♦	Pass	Pass
4♥	Pass...		

♠ 10 4 2
 ♥ 2
 ♦ J 8 7 6 5 2
 ♣ Q 5 3

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

Lead: ♦2 – sixth best.

Notice an important partnership agreement. Whenever we have shown at least five cards in a suit, the fourth-best lead indicates exactly five-card suit. With six-bagger, we lead the lowest card.

Partner wins the Ace (for the sake of camouflage, just in case), dropping West's Queen.

At Trick 2, South switches to the ♥Q. Declarer takes the King, cashes the Ace, too, and continues with another trump. What do you discard?

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

a)

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

Lead: ♦2 – sixth best.

Partner wins the Ace (for the sake of camouflage, just in case), dropping West's Queen.

In Trick 2, South shifts to the ♥Q. Declarer takes the King, cashes the Ace, too, and continues with another trump.

I am about to make two S/P signals.

I discard the ♦5, on the second heart trick to show something in clubs.

At the next trick, I play the ♦8, suggesting spade support.

This information will assist partner in the thorough analysis of the hand.

From South's point of view, after the sixth-best lead, we can tentatively reconstruct declarer's hand as follows:

♠ A?x
♥ AKxxx
♦ Q
♣ A?xx

Subtle 3

Six hearts are unlikely – otherwise partner might have been more active in the bidding.

The lack of a second double perhaps indicates three spades and four clubs, rather than the other way round.

At Trick 2, we passively exit with the ♥Q.

To the subsequent three rounds of trumps, North follows only once, discarding the ♦5 and the ♦8. The club honor comes as no surprise.

The key card, however, is the ♠10. Why?

If North holds that card, we (South) must switch to clubs irrespective of what declarer has in the suit (♣AKxx or ♣AQxx). Not only because one trick in each suit is enough to set the contract. After the alternative of the diamond return, this ending will be reached:

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

Now declarer simply plays three rounds of clubs and no matter who wins the third one, the spade trick will disappear for the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Let's imagine a slightly different layout.

b)

	♠ 9 4 2										
	♥ 2										
	♦ J 8 7 6 5 2										
	♣ K 5 3										
♠ A 10 7 ♥ A K 7 5 4 ♦ Q ♣ A Q 7 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <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 style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 6 5 ♥ 10 8 6 3 ♦ 10 9 ♣ 10 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K 8 3										
	♥ Q J 9										
	♦ A K 4 3										
	♣ J 9 8										

Partner will discard the ♦5 and the ♦6, denying any help in spades whatsoever.

Here is the ensuing end position:

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

In this case the club switch would prove disastrous.

Instead, we ought to exit with a spade (or diamond) and wait for the two club tricks.

SUBTLE 4

Last-moment signals – when defenders finally grasp what declarer is up to – can be very sophisticated.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	Pass....		

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

Lead: ♣Q. Declarer won with the Ace, cashed two rounds of trumps, played a club to the King and ruffed the third club in hand. It's time for hearts – the Ace and small.

North signalled the ♦A, South – good hearts.

To the three heart tricks North followed with the ♥10, ♥3 and ♥7.

What does that order indicate?

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♣Q. Declarer won with the Ace, cashed two rounds of trumps, played a club to the King and ruffed the third club in hand. It's time for hearts – the Ace and small.

North signalled the ♦A, South – good hearts.

To the three heart tricks North followed with the ♥10, ♥3 and ♥7.

Subtle 4

In the ending:

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

South must exit in diamonds.

The key here is the proper understanding of the defensive position by both NS players. Declarer has three diamonds to the Queen. The big question is the position of the ♦8.

South himself holds the ♦8. No problem here; he simply plays a low diamond to his partner's ten.

North holds the ♦8 – the same solution.

West holds the ♦8. South must lead the Jack, hoping declarer will misguess location of the ten.

S/P is the only way to locate the eight of diamonds.

Such plays are extremely subtle, last-minute signals, possible only when defenders understand the logic of declarer's actions.

The ♥10 was a count signal. The handling of the other two hearts provided an opportunity to pass S/P information to partner.

In keeping with the general rule, S/P in hearts refers to the other two suits – diamonds and clubs.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Playing the two remaining hearts from the top – ♥7, ♥3 – shows something significant in diamonds, i.e. the ♦8. Accordingly, South will exit with a small diamond in the ending discussed.

The opposite order – ♥3, ♥7 – draws partner's attention away from the diamond suit. Hence, it denies the ♦8.

In this case, South should confidently put the Jack of diamonds on the table

SUBTLE 5

The key to this sort of problems is the understanding of the position the defenders found themselves in, to be able to assist partner in his dilemmas.

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass...		

1♥ = transfer to spades

1♠ = a minimum blanced hand with three spades

♠ A K 5 3
 ♥ 8 6 5
 ♦ 10 8 4 3
 ♣ 8 5

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

Lead: ♣8. West wins the Jack (South follows with the ♣4) and plays the ♠8 to South's Jack. Partner continues the club attack, returning the ♣9. Declarer wins the Queen and persists with trumps. You go up with the King and shift to the ♦3, to South's King and West's Ace. Declarer plays another round of trumps. You jump up again and switch back to the ♦4. West captures your partner's Jack with the Queen and exits with a heart to dummy's King. This time partner produces the Ace and gives you the long-awaited club ruff.

Any other challenges along the way, do you think?

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

	♠ A K 5 3					
	♥ 8 6 5					
	♦ 10 8 4 3					
	♣ 8 5					
♠ 10 8 7 ♥ Q 10 4 2 ♦ A Q 6 ♣ A Q J	<table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 100px; border-collapse: collapse; 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	♠ Q 9 6 4 ♥ K 9 ♦ 7 5 2 ♣ 7 6 3 2	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ J 2					
	♥ A J 7 3					
	♦ K J 9					
	♣ K 10 9 4					

Here is the four-card ending:

	♠ —					
	♥ 6 5					
	♦ 10 8					
	♣ —					
♠ — ♥ Q 10 4 ♦ ? ♣ —	<table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 100px; border-collapse: collapse; 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	♠ Q ♥ 9 ♦ 7 ♣ 7	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ —					
	♥ J 7					
	♦ ?					
	♣ K					

Lead: ♣8. West wins the Jack (South follows with the ♣4) and plays the ♠8 to South's Jack. Partner continues the club attack,

Subtle 5

returning the ♣9. Declarer wins the Queen and persists with trumps. You go up with the King and shift to the ♦3, to South's King and West's Ace. Declarer plays another round of trumps. You jump up again and switch back to the ♦4. West captures your partner's Jack with the Queen and exits with a heart to dummy's King. This time partner produces the Ace and gives you the long-awaited club ruff.

Which club did South play for you to ruff? Good question!

- 1) If it was the King, then declarer holds the key card – the ♦9. We should cash the ♦10, giving up the hope for the setting trick.
- 2) If, however, the ten was led, then partner has the ♦9. Now we can let partner in with the ♦9, allowing him to cash the setting club trick.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL

Sometimes there is more than one reasonable line of defense. To handle these situations successfully, we have to be armed with the full arsenal of signals in order to choose the winning option.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

2NT = forcing

♠ A 10 8 4
 ♥ K 7 4 2
 ♦ 9 6 5
 ♣ 7 6

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

Lead: ♥2. The ♥8 from dummy, partner covers with the nine, and declarer wins the Queen.

When he finesses the ♣10 next, partner ducks. This is followed by the Ace and a small club, to South's King. You followed high-low (♣7, ♣6), indicating interest in spades.

What should you discard now?

Multidimensional

a)

Lead: ♥2. The ♥8 from dummy, partner covers with the nine, and declarer wins the Queen.

When he finesses the ♠10 next, partner ducks. This is followed by the Ace and a small club, to South's King. You followed high-low (♣7, ♣6), indicating interest in the spade suit.

For an informed answer you need to know the order in which South played the clubs.

1) South followed with the ♣9 and then the ♣5, showing a spade honor.

The four hands:

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

I discard the ♥K.

It can hardly get any clearer that we are interested in spades, not hearts.

Partner will switch to the King and the nine of spades. The result – one down.

Part 2: Suit Preference

2) South followed with the ♣5 and the ♣9, denying the spade honor.

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

I discard the ♠10, demanding the heart shift.

b)

Let's imagine a slightly different layout.

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

Multidimensional

Lead: ♥2. The ♥8 from dummy, partner covers with the nine, and declarer wins the Queen.

When he finesses the ♣10 next, partner ducks. This is followed by the Ace and a small club, to South's King. You followed high-low (♣7, ♣6), indicating interest in the spade suit. Partner, who now has the lead, played the ♣9 and the ♣5 (in that order) in the first two club tricks.

How do we confirm our interest in spades, but with no enthusiasm?

By discarding the ♦5 – „I have a spade honor, but without the ten”.

Partner will switch to the ♠2, which, together with his previous signals in clubs, should guarantee the King. The spade return squeezes dummy.

Notice that with this precise layout of hearts, the second spade trick must be won by South for the squeeze to operate.

A similar position occurs when South leads the Queen from ♠Q-10.

We will return spades with an attitude seven, squeezing dummy.

Part 2: Suit Preference

c) 3NT

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

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

Lead: ♥3. The ♥8 from dummy, partner covers with the nine, and declarer wins the Queen.

When he finesses the ♣10 next, partner ducks. This is followed by the Ace and a small club, to South's King. You followed high-low (♣7, ♣6), indicating interest in the spade suit. Partner, who now has the lead, played the ♣9 and the ♣5 (in that order) in the first two club tricks.

How do we confirm our interest in spades, but with no enthusiasm?

Discarding the ♦5 – „I have a spade honor, but without the ten”.

South should now switch to the ♠7.

Declarer must guess the position of the spade honors. If he puts up the King, we win the Ace and confidently continue with the ♠8 – dummy is squeezed.

If, instead, he plays low from hand, we, likewise, win the Ace and throw him into dummy with a diamond.

Multidimensional

d)

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

Lead: ♥2. The ♥8 from dummy, partner covers with the nine, and declarer wins the Queen.

When he finesses the ♠10 next, partner ducks. This is followed by the Ace and a small club, to South's King. You followed high-low (♣7, ♣6), indicating interest in the spade suit. Partner, who now has the lead, played the ♣5 and the ♣9 (in that order) on the first two club tricks.

I discard the ♦9, demanding the spade shift.

South should now exit with the ♠6. When declarer puts up the King, I win and throw dummy in with a diamond.

Yes. I did remember South's club spots.

THE INTERPRETATION OF SIGNALS

The correct interpretation of signals requires enormous shared knowledge of the partnership.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

♠ J 5
♥ A Q 10 4 3
♦ 9 5
♣ J 5 4 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 4 2
♥ 7 5
♦ K Q 10
♣ Q 9 8 7 3

Lead: 4 ♥. West takes partner's Jack with the King and starts running diamonds.

Partners follows with the:

- 1) ♦2
- 2) ♦6
- 3) ♦3

What does it mean?

The Interpretation of Signals

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♥4. West takes partner's Jack with the King and starts drawing diamonds. Partner's three diamond spots can be interpreted as follows:

- 1) ♦2 – shows a club honor, according to the general rule of giving S/P on the first suit played by declarer in no-trump contracts unless count is obviously critical.
- 2) The high-low order – ♦6, ♦3 – may serve as:
 - a) a substitute count signal in hearts, indicating an even number of cards; this information may subsequently prove invaluable; or
 - b) a suggestion of a spade value; as we should find out shortly, this will be confirmed by further play.

The question of which of these variations is used will be a matter of partnership agreement.

On the third and fourth diamond tricks we discard two clubs, as partner gets rid of the ♠8 – count signal (odd) in spades.

The critical discard, however, comes at Trick 6.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Remember, South showed clubs first. The bidding indicates he holds the ♠K, too. The problem arises when he has both black kings. We part with a spade, South following in our footsteps.

Finally, declarer throws us in with a heart. Cashing our tricks in that suit would squeeze partner, so we must lead the black suit in which South holds the ten. Trusting partner's hint from the first diamond trick – we exit in clubs.

Here is the ending we have been discussing:

	♠ J										
	♥ A Q 3										
	♦ —										
	♣ J 5										
♠ A 10 9	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 8		♥ —									
♦ —		♦ —									
♣ A 6		♣ Q 9 8									
	♠ K 7 6										
	♥ 2										
	♦ —										
	♣ K 10										

North won the heart and led a club through dummy. West was helpless.

INFORMATION 1

Providing information seems to be the basic task of suit preference.

W	N	E	S
	3♥	Dbl	Pass
4♠	Pass...		

♠ 7 6
 ♥ A Q 10 8 6 4 3
 ♦ 5
 ♣ K 6

N	♠ A K 5 4
W	♥ J 5 2
E	♦ K J 2
S	♣ A 4 2

Lead: ♦5.

Declarer wins South's ♦9 with the Ace, draws two rounds of trumps, ending with the Queen in hand, and exits with the ♥7.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

a)

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

♠ 7 6
♥ A Q 10 8 6 4 3
♦ 5
♣ K 7 6

♠ 10 2
♥ 9
♦ Q 10 9 6 4 3
♣ Q J 5 3

Lead: ♦5.

Declarer wins South's ♦9 with the Ace, draws two rounds of trumps, ending with the Queen in hand, and exits with the ♥7.

Again, information about partner's trump spots is missing. Here, he should have played in the low-high order – ♠2, ♠10 – to draw our attention towards clubs.

We rise with the ♥Q and switch to clubs. The result: one down.

Why is ducking the heart dangerous? Declarer may come back to hand in spades to play the ♣10. South will get in with the Jack and return:

the ♣Q – West will hold-up, win the next club and play the King and Jack of diamonds; the result – 10 tricks.

a small club – declarer will take our King and continue the suit, with the same result.

Information 1

b)

Let us, however, imagine a different distribution of the key honors.

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

Lead: ♦5.

Declarer wins South's ♦9 with the Ace, draws two rounds of trumps, ending with the Queen in hand, and exits with the ♥7

In this case South should follow to the trump tricks in the opposite order – ♠10, ♠2 – indicating a heart value.

Naturally, we duck. Partner wins the King and returns the ♣8 (!). The result – two down. Why?

Trick 5 – ♣8, 9, 10, A

Trick 6 – ♣2, 7, Q, K.

Trick 7 – ♥A, 5, ♦6, ♥9

Trick 8 – ♣6, 4, 3!, 5

Trick 9 – ♥Q, J, ♣J, ♠9

On top of everything else, declarer couldn't escape the diamond loser.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Ducking the ♣10 at the fifth trick, or switching back to hearts after winning the ♣A, would improve declarer's result by one trick. Nonetheless, you can't blame declarer for clutching at the straw of the favorable position of the club King.

INFORMATION 2

S/P is helpful, provided you draw the correct conclusions from each piece of information in your possession.

W	N	E	S
			3♠
3NT	Pass...		

♠ A
♥ K 8 7 6 3
♦ 9 8 6 3
♣ Q 5 2

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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	♠ 8 ♥ J 10 9 ♦ Q J 10 ♣ J 10 9 8 7 4
N				
W E				
S				

Lead: ♠A. You get the ♠7 from partner, the ♠3 from West.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♠A. You get the ♠7 from partner, the ♠3 from West.

If this can confidently be assumed to be a S/P signal not an attitude signal, then the seven of spades is a high, although surely not the highest, card that partner held. It suggests a minor honor in hearts.

Why in hearts? S/P refers here to two suits only. Clubs, as the opponents' potential source of tricks, are excluded.

A competent defender is capable of making good use of correct information.

If you switch to the ♥K in Trick 2, declarer will be helpless. He has only eight tricks ready to cash (including one in spades), and an attempt to establish clubs leads to building a fifth winner for the defense.

INFORMATION 3

We are in a position to share information with partner more often than we realize.

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
			3♠
4♥	4♠	5♥	5♠
6♥	Pass...		

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

♠ K J 10 9 8 5 3

♥ —

♦ Q 9 4 2

♣ 9 4

Lead: ♠A.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The first trick is a S/P situation. Why?

Let's say partner will hold the trick (West will follow with the Queen).

Bearing in mind that the second trick may prove decisive, it is vital to provide precise information.

- 1) ♠3 – shows a club value.
- 2) ♠10 – shows the King or the Ace of diamonds.
- 3) ♠9 – implies the Queen of diamonds.
- 4) ♠8, ♠5 – „I have nothing of interest to you”. The ♠J may play a similar role; as a general rule, signaling the sequence (KJ10) is neutral and says – “I have nothing else to show”.

a)

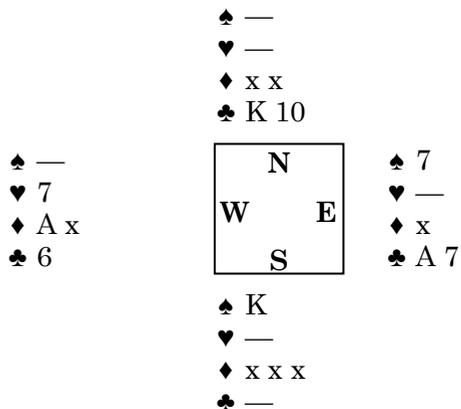
♠ —	♠ A Q					
♥ A K 10 9 7 6 4 2	♥ Q 8 3					
♦ A J	♦ K 8 7 3					
♣ 6 3 2	♣ K 10 8 5					
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 80px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S		
N						
W E						
S						
			♠ 7 6 4 2			
			♥ J 5			
			♦ 10 6 5			
			♣ A Q J 7			
			♠ K J 10 9 8 5 3			
			♥ —			
			♦ Q 9 4 2			
			♣ 9 4			

When partner leads the ♠A, we follow with the ♠9. The information about the Queen of diamonds may prove helpful.

Failure to shift to diamonds after getting in with the ♥Q exposes North to the risk of a non-simultaneous double squeeze.

Information 3

This is the relevant ending:



When the last heart is led, both defenders have little choice but to shed a diamond (a club is thrown from dummy). Now a club to the Ace forces South to give up the diamond guard. This line of play is not without its risks, to be sure. If clubs are 3–3, the cold slam will go down.

Information about the ♦Q – the ♠9 at Trick 1 – was very useful. Having taken the trump Queen, North exited with the ♦K, breaking up the squeeze.

Part 2: Suit Preference

b)

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

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

Lead: ♠A. This time we follow with the ♠J – “I have nothing of interest for you”.

West ruffs and plays the Ace and a small heart to partner’s Queen.

Time to lead declarer astray. By following with the ♠10 and the ♠9, we suggest the possession of the ♦K.

Perhaps West will try to combine two chances: the 3–3 club break and the diamond finesse.

Partner knows right from the start that he can’t expect from us any help in diamonds.

INFORMATION 4

It is sometimes necessary to ignore S/P and choose another line of defense. In other words, partner's suggestions should never be treated as a substitute for a thorough analysis.

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
1NT Pass...			

1NT = 12–14 HCP

<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">N</td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	<p>♠ J 10 6 4</p> <p>♥ J 7 4 3</p> <p>♦ Q J 3</p> <p>♣ J 8</p>
N		E					
W		S					

♠ A 9 5
 ♥ 10 9
 ♦ A K 10 2
 ♣ Q 10 6 5

Lead: ♠7. (2nd from 3/ 4 small). You carefully played the five. Declarer won the Queen and continued with the ♠K. North followed with the ♠8, while you held up again. Perforce, you took the third spade (♠2 from North).

Your plan?

Part 2: Suit Preference

Partner is no doubt showing heart values. Nonetheless, instead of mechanically following his suggestions, you should undertake a solid analysis.

Based on the opening lead from three small spades, North's distribution can be reconstructed as either $3\spadesuit=3\heartsuit=4\diamonds=3\clubsuit$ or $3\spadesuit=3\heartsuit=3\diamonds=4\clubsuit$. Declarer holds one of the heart honors (probably the King or the Ace). As a consequence, the heart switch would result in establishing tricks for the opponents.

Despite partner's S/P, it is necessary to attack the club suit.

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

The order in which we followed to the first two spade tricks – ♠5, ♠9 – was not insignificant, either. It directed partner's attention to the minors.

The best declarer can do after winning the third round of clubs with the Ace is leading a heart towards the jack.

It will not be overly difficult for North to rise with the Queen and play a diamond through.

This way the defense will come to ten tricks: one spade, two hearts, four diamonds and three clubs.

INFORMATION 5

Holding a Yarborough is hardly an incentive to meticulous signaling.

Nevertheless, we must never cease to provide partner with true information – something than demands some effort.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Dbl	1♦	Pass
2♠	4♥	Rdbl	2♥
Pass	Dbl	4♠	Pass
		Pass...	

Rdbl = three spades

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 8
 ♥ 6 3
 ♦ Q J 10 7 6 3
 ♣ K 7

♠ 10 9 5 2
 ♥ 8 5 4 2
 ♦ 9 5 4
 ♣ 8 6

Lead: ♥A, ♥K.

What do you follow with?

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♥A, ♥K.

From ♥8 5 4 2, South should play the ♥2 (even number of hearts), followed by the ♥5 (“I have nothing of interest for you”).

Next, partner switches to the Ace and another club, and you follow with the ♣6 and the ♣8.

When declarer calls for one of dummy’s diamonds, you supply partner with a clear count signal – the ♦9.

The picture of the entire hand is now complete for North. Accordingly, he returns a third round of clubs, promoting a trump trick in your hand.

Nothing special here, just a piece of sound defense, you will say. No need for any sophisticated signaling.

However, here is what happened at the table (NS being a generally solid partnership).

Lead: ♥A, ♥K. South sequence of the ♥2, then the ♥4, was construed as encouraging. North obediently continued the suit.

Declarer ruffed in dummy (pitching a club from his hand) and exited with a diamond towards the King. North persisted with

Information 5

hearts, so West ruffed in hand (throwing a diamond from dummy) to reach the following position:

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

Now West led a club to the King. North put up the Ace and shifted back to the fifth heart!!!

Declarer got rid of the club King (!!!) and ruffed in hand. He then ruffed a club in dummy, pitched the penultimate club on the ♦Q and executed a trump coup twice.

Part 2: Suit Preference

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

In the above ending, West leads a diamond from dummy. When South inserted the nine of trumps, declarer overruffed, ruffed his last club in dummy and finished with another successful trump coup.

INFORMATION 6

Give partner true information even if you are uncertain what use he can make of it.

W	N	E	S
2♦	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass...

2♦ = 7–10 HCP, both majors, at least 5–4

3♥ = 5+♥ – 5♠.

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

Lead: ♦K.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

	♠ K 10 4 2										
	♥ A Q										
	♦ K Q J 9										
	♣ 8 6 3										
♠ J 8 7 6 5 ♥ K J 10 9 8 ♦ 6 ♣ K 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 9 ♥ 6 5 2 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ A Q J 10 9
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 3										
	♥ 7 4 3										
	♦ 10 8 7 5 2										
	♣ 7 5 4										

Lead: ♦K.

We should follow with the ♦10.

With five cards to the ten, the natural count signal would be the second highest (here the ♦8). Playing the ten should be treated as suit preference for spades. Showing the modest Queen in that way denies the ♣K. Why? If we held that card, there would be no need to attack spades.

The bonus trick we are expecting may come from the overruff of the third spade. Without such an alert signal, North would find it difficult to underlead the ♠K after getting the lead.

Note that the alternative S/P in trumps wouldn't be sufficiently clear.

The ♥4 will hardly persuade partner to switch to spades (and we can't afford the ♥7).

INFORMATION 7

S/P should be used at every opportunity. The earlier, the better.

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass...	1♦	Pass

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

Lead: ♠7.

Trick 1 – ♠7, ♠2, ♠9, ♠3

Trick 2 – ♠Q, ♠8, ♠10, ♠5

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Here comes the full deal:

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

Lead: ♠7.

Trick 1 – ♠7, ♠2, ♠9, ♠3

Trick 2 – ♠Q, ♠8, ♠10, ♠5

Would partner risk leading the seven from ♠AK107? He usually cashes the Ace first from such a combination. Therefore, the opening lead of the ♠7 may well suggest ♠AK1074. If so, the ♠10 in trick 2 should be interpreted as S/P, indicating an honor in the higher ranking suit. Our choice is between the minors.

The diamond switch means eight tricks for the defenders. The passive club exit, on the other hand, gives declarer two overtricks.

THE RIGHT TIME

Information should be shared at the right time. One must never forget about it.

W	N	E	S
Pass	2♥	3♦	1NT
3NT	Pass...		Pass

1NT = 12–14 HCP

2♥ = transfer

♠ J 9 6 4 2
♥ 9 8
♦ 8 6
♣ A J 7 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10
♥ Q 10 7
♦ A K J 10 7 5
♣ Q 5 3

Lead: an uninspired ♠4 as opposed to a club. South takes the Ace (♠3 from West) and returns the ♠7, to declarer's King.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

a)

	♠ J 9 6 4 2										
	♥ 9 8										
	♦ 8 6										
	♣ A J 7 2										
♠ K Q 8 3 ♥ A 6 5 3 ♦ 9 2 ♣ 8 6 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">N</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">W</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W				S		♠ 10 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ A K J 10 7 5 ♣ Q 5 3
N		E									
W											
	S										
	♠ A 7 5										
	♥ K J 4 2										
	♦ Q 4 3										
	♣ K 10 9										

Lead: ♠4. South takes the Ace (♠3 from West) and returns the ♠7, to declarer's King. Winning the King strongly suggests that West holds the Queen, too. When declarer lets the ♦9 ride in Trick 3, I (North) follow with the ♦6.

Unfortunately, this signal is unintelligible for my partner. It may show either a heart value (if made from ♦6 2) or a club value (from ♦8 6). The problem should thus be dealt with earlier, on the second spade trick. Rather than the count signal in spades, the play of the ♠2 should be S/P for clubs. This will allow us to cash three club winners after getting in with the ♦Q.

The Right Time

b)

	♠ J 9 6 4 2											
	♥ A 9 8											
	♦ 8 6											
	♣ J 7 2											
♠ K Q 8 3 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A 8 6 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ 10 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ A K J 10 7 5 ♣ Q 5 3	
N												
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A 7 5											
	♥ K J 4 2											
	♦ Q 4 3											
	♣ K 10 9											

Here, on the second spade trick I drop the nine. We get the spade, the diamond and four hearts.

c)

	♠ J 9 6 4 2											
	♥ 9 8											
	♦ 8 6											
	♣ J 7 4 2											
♠ K Q 8 3 ♥ A 6 5 3 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A 8 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ 10 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ A K J 10 7 5 ♣ Q 5 3	
N												
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A 7 5											
	♥ K J 4 2											
	♦ Q 4 3											
	♣ K 10 9											

Finally, on this layout I follow with the ♠6 – a neutral card. I have nothing to show. Partner wins the Queen and exits passively in diamonds.

LIKE MUSIC 1

Smooth cooperation between defenders is the prerequisite of the effective S/P signaling.

Suit preference is like music.

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass...		

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

Lead: ♦2. Declarer calls for dummy's Queen. You win the King and return the ♦3.

Partner takes the ♦9 and cashes the Ace.

Plan the defense.

Like Music 1

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♦2. Declarer calls for dummy's Queen. You win the King and return the ♦3.

Partner takes the ♦9 and cashes the Ace, indicating the possession of the ♠A.

Why?

Note that the play of the diamond Queen from dummy at the opening trick placed the Jack in the North hand. The choice between cashing the Ace and the Jack carries S/P connotations.

You should cooperate by following with the ♦8 – a suggestion of your interest in the spade suit, too.

When North shifts to a low spade, declarer is doomed, even if he guesses to put up the King.

The defenders carefully preserved their communication in diamonds.

LIKE MUSIC 2

Suit preference is also like musicin, that it varies considerably, depending on the interpretation.

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	4♠	Pass...

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

Lead: ♠6.

Plan the defense.

Like Music 2

The full hand:

a)

	♠ A 6 3										
	♥ 9 7 2										
	♦ A 9 4 2										
	♣ 10 5 4										
♠ K Q 5 4	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W</td><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 9 8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 3		♥ A Q J 10									
♦ 10 8 5		♦ K J 6									
♣ K Q 8 3		♣ 9 2									
	♠ 7 2										
	♥ 8 6 5 4										
	♦ Q 7 3										
	♣ A J 7 6										

Lead: ♠6.

The spade six is the highest trump spot outstanding. According to our agreements, it shows values in the higher-ranking suit, i.e. diamonds. We ought to cooperate with partner by following with the seven.

When declarer returns trumps, partner will win the Ace and switch to a low diamond.

Now it will be all up to declarer.

Rising with the King won't give him an overtrick.

Playing low produces one down

Part 2: Suit Preference

b)

	♠ A 6 3										
	♥ 9 7 2										
	♦ 9 4 2										
	♣ K 10 5 4										
♠ K Q 5 4 ♥ K 3 ♦ A 10 8 5 ♣ Q 8 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 9 8 ♥ A Q J 10 ♦ K J 6 ♣ 9 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 7 2										
	♥ 8 6 5 4										
	♦ Q 7 3										
	♣ A J 7 6										

Lead: ♠3.

This time the opening lead card is the lowest trump spot. We cooperate by signaling club values with the ♠2.

In with the ♠A, partner will decide to cash two club tricks.

Why didn't West open 1♦? It is becoming more and more popular to open 1♦ with a 5-card suit (or 4-card with unbalanced distribution) only.

This is based on the camouflage principle.

COOPERATION 1

The ability to make life easier for partner is one of the great virtues of a good defender.

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♥	3♣	Pass
3NT	Pass...		

3♣ = 9–11PC with +5♣

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

♠ K J 3 2
♥ 3
♦ J 10 9 4
♣ K 8 5 3

Lead: ♥Q. Declarer won the Ace and let the ♣Q ride.
Partner shed the ♥9.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

	♠ A 10 7 4													
	♥ Q J 9 8 5 2													
	♦ 8 7 2													
	♣ —													
♠ Q 8 6 5 ♥ A 7 4 ♦ A Q 6 ♣ Q 7 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N			W		E			S			♠ 9 ♥ K 10 6 ♦ K 5 3 ♣ A J 10 9 4 2
	N													
W		E												
	S													
	♠ K J 3 2													
	♥ 3													
	♦ J 10 9 4													
	♣ K 8 5 3													

Lead: ♥Q. Declarer won the Ace and let the ♣Q ride.

Partner shed the ♥9, hinting at his interest in spades.

You won the club with the King and, in a display of flawless technique, switched to the Jack of spades.

West covered with the Queen, but partner won the Ace and... shifted to diamonds.

The spade Jack was the only card that guaranteed defeating the contract – alas, partner did not get the message.

The guide-dog would duck the first club with the ♣8 (spade values), win the next one and only then would he exit with the ♠J. Now the problem would become a piece of cake from North's perspective.

COOPERATION 2

Defending gets really fascinating sometimes.

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
		1♣	1♥
1♠	3♠	4♥	Pass
4♠	5♥	Pass	Pass
5♠	Dbl	Pass...	

3♠ = splinter

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

♠ 8 7 4
♥ K Q 10 4 3
♦ Q 9 2
♣ Q 2

Lead: ♥A. West ruffs, while you follow with the ♥10, showing some diamond values.

Declarer leads a club towards the King in hand. North wins the Ace and, fulfilling your wishes, switches to the ♦5. This is taken with dummy's Ace and another club is played. In with the ♣Q, how do you continue?

Part 2: Suit Preference

a) North follows with the ♣10.

	♠ 10										
	♥ A 9 8 7 6 2										
	♦ J 6 5										
	♣ A J 10										
♠ K J 9 3 2	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 5		♥ —									
♦ 7 4 3		♦ A K 10 8									
♣ K 7 4		♣ 9 8 6 5 3									
	♠ 8 7 4										
	♥ K Q 10 4 3										
	♦ Q 9 2										
	♣ Q 2										

Lead: ♥A. West ruffs, while you follow with the ♥10, showing some diamond values.

Declarer leads a club towards the King in hand. North wins the Ace and, fulfilling your wishes, switches to the ♦5. This is taken with dummy's Ace and another club is played to your ♣Q. Partner follows with the ♣10.

The distribution of the club suit seems clear: W ♣K74, N ♣AJ10.

If so, the ten should be construed as S/P. Partner is asking us for the diamond shift. We duly underlead the Queen and declarer captures North's Jack in dummy.

Cooperation 2

Here is the ending:

♠ K J 9 3 2	♠ 10	♠ A Q 6			
♥ J	♥ 9 8 7 6 2	♥ —			
♦ 7	♦ 6	♦ 10 8			
♣ 7	♣ J	♣ 9 8 6			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; 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	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 8 7 4				
	♥ K Q 4 3				
	♦ Q				
	♣				

Declarer is helpless. Say he concedes the diamond. South wins and exits in trumps.

West can't ruff a heart and pitch his club loser on the last diamond – South's third spade prevents this. Down two is a well-deserved reward for excellent defensive cooperation.

Part 2: Suit Preference

b) This time North follows with the ♣J.

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

Lead: ♥A. West ruffs, while you follow with the ♥10, showing some diamond values.

Declarer leads a club towards the King in hand. North wins the Ace and, fulfilling your wishes, switches to the ♦5. This is taken with dummy's Ace and another club is played to your ♣Q. Partner follows with the ♣J.

In this case there is no reason to shift to diamonds. North's play of the Jack is either from the original holding of AJ, or a SP signal (from original AJ10) discouraging the diamond return.

COOPERATION 3

Cooperation may bring about an unexpected change of preferences.

Rarely as it happens, it is possible to redirect partner's attention from one suit to another.

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♥	Pass...		

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

Lead: ♠A.

Defensive opportunities unfold during the play of the hand.

You start with the „two in one” ♠9 – signaling count with the highest card (from 5 cards) often suggests interest in the higher-ranking of the two remaining suits. West follows with the ♠10.

North continues with a low spade. By playing the ♠2, you are suggesting club values. When declarer wins and exits with the trump ten, partner follows with the ♥2.

What now?

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♠A.

You start with the „two in one” ♠9 – signaling count with the highest card often suggests interest in the higher-ranking of the two remaining suits. West follows with the ♠10.

North continues with a low spade. By playing the ♠2, you are suggesting club values. When declarer wins and exits with the trump ten, partner follows with the ♥2. This shows the Ace of clubs. You are confirming club values – by playing the ♥5 and then the ♥6, as North wins the Ace.

Partner reaches you via clubs for the spade ruffs. One down.

THE SUGGESTED LINE OF DEFENCE 1

The bidding was neither particularly scientific nor overly precise, but it fulfilled the requirement of camouflage.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	4♠	Pass...

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

Lead: ♥Q, won by declarer's Ace – you play ♥2 –suit preference for clubs.

Next comes the heart ruff – both defenders follow with their lowest spots, expressing interest in the club suit.

Now West plays the ♠A and another spade to your King.

What next?

Part 2: Suit Preference

a)

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

Lead: ♥Q, won by declarer's Ace.

Next comes the heart ruff – both defenders follow with their lowest spots, expressing interest in the club suit.

Now West plays the ♠A and another spade to your King.

When signaling in hearts, North showed the ♣A. When following to trumps, he should suggest a line of defense. The low-high order (♠6, ♠8) will confirm the interest in clubs, i.e. the possible promotion of the trump Jack.

The Suggested Line of Defence 1

b)

Let us, however, switch the Jacks (in spades and diamonds) in the North and West hands.

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

Now the high-low order of the trump spots (♠8, ♠6) should draw our attention away from clubs in favor of the forcing defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Here is the end position:

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

In with the ♠K, South exits with a heart. Declarer ruffs, draws trumps and switches to clubs. Now South must win this trick and force declarer again with another heart. From this point the contract can no longer be made.

THE SUGGESTED LINE OF DEFENCE 2

Whenever partner's signal suggests a line of defense that is different from the routine one, we ought to carefully analyze the whole defensive situation.

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	1NT	2♥
3♦	Pass	3♠	Dbl
Pass...			

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

♠ A 8
 ♥ A Q J 9 6 3
 ♦ 3
 ♣ K J 10 2

Lead: ♥10. Dummy and you both ducked. Declarer ruffed the second heart, crossed to dummy with the ♦Q and led a trump. You rose with the Ace, declarer followed with the ♠3, and partner – the ♠2.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

	♠ 10 9 5 2										
	♥ 10 4										
	♦ J 10 8 7										
	♣ Q 9 5										
♠ K Q J 4 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 5		♥ K 8 7 2									
♦ A K 9 4 2		♦ Q 6 5									
♣ 6 3		♣ A 8 7 4									
	♠ A 8										
	♥ A Q J 9 6 3										
	♦ 3										
	♣ K J 10 2										

Lead: ♥10. Dummy and you both ducked. Declarer ruffed the second heart, crossed to dummy with the ♦Q and played a trump. You rose with the Ace, declarer followed with the ♠3, and partner – the ♠2.

It looks only natural to shift to a low heart for partner to ruff, expecting to get the diamond ruff in return and hoping that the Ace of hearts continuation will result in some trump promotion. Nonetheless, partner strongly suggests the club switch (♠2).

The play of a low heart at Trick five proved fatal for the defenders. All they could get was three trump tricks and a heart.

After South's club switch at Trick five, according to North's suggestion, the contract was doomed.

PRECISION

Every card may mean something.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	3NT	Pass...

1NT = 12–14 HCP

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

Lead: ♣2. You put up the Queen, but West wins the Ace and plays the ♥Q. Partner follows with the ♥3.

Declarer overtakes with the Ace and continues hearts. North gives you the ♥6 and the ♥4 on the second and third heart tricks, as you take your King eventually.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

a) Declarer holds the Jack of diamonds.

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

Lead: ♣2. You put up the Queen, but West wins the Ace and plays the ♥Q. Partner follows with the ♥3.

Declarer overtakes with the Ace and continues hearts. North gives you the ♥6 and the ♥4 on the second and third heart tricks, as you take your King eventually.

- 1) The ♥3 showed the ♣K-10. Without the ten partner would not be inclined to stress clubs in such manner.
- 2) The ♥6 meant a spade value. We should express our interest in spades, too, by following high-low (♥8, ♥4), just in case.

The potentially communication-breaking diamond shift seems to be the obvious continuation after getting in with the ♥K.

If West holds the ♦J, he will win the trick with this card and play a club. Partner will hop up with the King and we will proceed to cashing four spades.

b) West holds the Jack of spades

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

If, however, the ♦J is in our partner's possession, the diamond switch will serve as a classic attack on declarer's entries.

- 1) If West wins in hand and cashes the fourth heart, he will squeeze dummy (one spade was already released on the previous heart).
- 2) If he wins in dummy instead, there is no sensible continuation.

We must not settle for this neat analysis, though.

There remains one more scenario to consider.

Part 2: Suit Preference

c) If West holds both Jacks...

	♠ A 6 5										
	♥ 6 5 3										
	♦ 8 4 2										
	♣ K 10 8 2										
♠ J 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 8 7 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q J 10 9			♥ A 2								
♦ A J 2			♦ K Q 5 3								
♣ A 9 7 3			♣ J 6 4								
	♠ K 10 9 2										
	♥ K 8 7 4										
	♦ 10 9 7										
	♣ Q 5										

... the idea of the diamond attack against his communication will fail.

Declarer will take the Jack and play a club towards the Jack. The defense will be helpless.

Precision

Recall the ending:

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

The killing defense here is to return the fourth heart.

In this case South, a defender, will execute a squeeze – a rarity, indeed. Declarer has no idle card to throw from dummy.

Such hands demonstrate the power of suit preference. Precise information shared by means of the heart spots facilitates sharp analysis and the ensuing killing defense.

MULTIPLE

Sometimes you have to repeat your suggestions to change partner's routine ways.

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
4♠	Pass...		

2NT = invitational with support

♠ J 7
♥ K 10 5 3 2
♦ 10 4
♣ Q J 10 9

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

Lead: ♣Q. Declarer won in hand (♣5 from South). He drew trumps (finding them 2-2), cashed the ♥A, crossed to dummy with the ♣K and ruffed a heart. Finally, he exited with the third club to your ten.

You are on lead in the following ending:

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

What will you play?

Multiple

You quickly work out declarer's distribution as 5♠1♥4♦3♣. The conclusion – instead of assisting him in guessing the diamond suit, it is better to exit in hearts or clubs. One ruff and sluff will do declarer no good.

This is true, but only in part.

a)

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

Part 2: Suit Preference

You would be right on this layout.

But the reality turned out to be more exciting.

b) The actual ending was slightly different.

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

When North played a club (or heart), declarer discarded a diamond from dummy, ruffed in hand and led a small diamond to the eight, endplaying South.

This is the textbook example of a loss of concentration by the defenders caused by fast and confident declarer play. South had an opportunity to signal his diamond values in all the remaining suits: spades, hearts and clubs.

In fact, triple S/P for one suit was possible.

It is, no doubt, a record. From my long experience, for many a scatterbrained defender the last S/P is the most important. Here, they would get in with the ♣10, notice some problem and focus their attention again on this trick. Not all of them are able to recall the spots from the previous trick.

If we remember that partner followed with the ♣5 and ♣2 on the second and third club tricks, we may infer that he holds the

Multiple

♦K-Q. We play a diamond through. Partner wins the Queen and exits with a heart. We are entitled to one more diamond trick.

The category of “scatterbrained defenders”, I must admit, occasionally includes myself. I can remember momentary lapses of concentration and the desperate hope that partner’s last signals will guide me into the right track.

CONVINCING

Sometimes a technically correct play misleads partner as to the location of our honors. It requires a lot of effort to set the record straight.

In such situations it's no time for subtleties. S/P must be convincing.

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Pass
3NT	Pass...		

<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">N</td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	<p>♠ K 6 2 ♥ 8 3 2 ♦ A K Q 10 3 ♣ 6 3</p> <p>♠ A 8 7 5 ♥ 10 9 7 5 ♦ 8 5 ♣ A Q 2</p>
N		E					
W		S					

Lead: ♣5. In a display of supreme technique, we insert the Queen rather than the ace, to protect communications in the suit, at the first trick.

Declarer wins the King and runs diamonds.

Partner follows with the ♦4 and the ♦6.

Plan your discards.

Convincing

The full hand:

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

The task is by no means easy. For the obvious reasons, we concealed the location of the club honors on the opening trick.

“I signal with the ♦8 and the ♦5 to show the ♠A, and throw the ♣A on the third diamond!” – proudly announced one of my students.

Uncontrolled „assistance” for partner may cause disaster.

Admittedly, partner will initially read the low-high in diamonds (♦5, ♦8) as a S/P for the lower of the two remaining suits, i.e. hearts.

As a consequence, the discard on the third round of diamonds must be really convincing.

The ♥10 should, in my opinion, serve the purpose. It will show the key value in spades, hence explaining that the previous diamond signals referred to clubs, not hearts

Did you notice that North must part with all three spades when the diamonds are being cashed?

Notice further that declarer could have put North under pressure by playing the third round of diamonds from his hand.

S/P AS A TRAP-AVOIDANCE MEASURE

Protecting partner against cunning opponents is among your duties. The following pseudo-scientific auction led to the spade slam.

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

2NT – game forcing

N		
W		E
	S	

♠ Q J 10
 ♥ A
 ♦ A Q J 10 9 6 4
 ♣ A 4

♠ A 7 5 3
 ♥ K J 4
 ♦ 3
 ♣ Q 10 7 6 2

Lead: ♣3. Declarer won dummy's Ace, as you signalled count with the ten. Next he cashed the ♦A, dropping the King from his hand, and continued with the ♦Q.

You ruffed, West overruffed, crossed to dummy in hearts and led another diamond honor. After another ruff and overruff, declarer went back to dummy with a heart ruff. In the ensuing end position...:

S/P – A Systematic Approach

N		
W	E	
S		

♠ Q J
♥ —
♦ 10 9 6 4
♣ 4

♠ A 7
♥ K
♦ —
♣ Q 10 6 2

...declarer played the fourth round of diamonds. What should we do?

Part 2: Suit Preference

a)

If West has:

♠ 9 8 6 4 2
♥ Q 9 8 6 5
♦ K
♣ K 8

we must not ruff diamonds low for the third time, because the next thing we know our ♠A will be appearing on the same trick as our partner's ♠K

b)

If, on the other hand, declarer has:

♠ K 9 8 6 4
♥ Q 9 8 6 5
♦ K
♣ J 8

it is necessary to ruff the fourth diamond, too, with a trump spot.

The bidding (the 4♦ cue-bid) strongly suggests the scenario b).

S/P – A Systematic Approach

Here are the four hands:

	♠ K				
	♥ 10 7 3 2				
	♦ 8 7 5 2				
	♣ J 9 5 3				
♠ 9 8 6 4 2 ♥ Q 9 8 6 5 ♦ K ♣ K 8	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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	♠ Q J 10 ♥ A ♦ A Q J 10 9 6 4 ♣ A 4
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ A 7 5 3				
	♥ K J 4				
	♦ 3				
	♣ Q 10 7 6 2				

Fortunately, S/P comes to our rescue.

- a) North should initially direct partner's attention towards the heart suit. He should follow to diamonds in decreasing order – 8, 7, 5, 2 – to deny the King of clubs.
- b) Conversely, the increasing order of the diamond spots – 2, 5, 7, 8 – should confirm the possession of the ♣K and persuade partner to ruff the fourth diamond.

S/P – A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

Skilful spot management creates a host of opportunities.

S/P can be nuanced.

- 1) Clear S/P
- 2) Delicate S/P
- 3) Subtle S/P

How often may this nuanced approach be useful?

From time to time, but it costs nothing, save for a little effort and concentration.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Pass	3♥
3♠	4♥	4♠	Pass
Pass	5♦	Dbl	Pass
Pass	5♥	5♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass...	

3♥ = preemptive

♠ K 3 2
 ♥ A K 7 6 5 3
 ♦ A K 10
 ♣ 3

<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">N</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">W</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">S</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 9 5 ♥ 4 ♦ Q J 7 4 ♣ A J 9 7 6
	N									
W		E								
	S									

Lead: ♦A. Partner follows with the ♦2 – an even number of cards. You decided to switch to the ♣3 (♣5 from South), won by West's ten.

S/P – A Systematic Approach

He continues with the Ace and another trump. You jump up with the ♠K (South discards the ♦6).

When you cash the ♦K, partner follows with the ♦5 (from the original holding of ♦9652).

The question is: what does South have in hearts?

The full hand:

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

S/P can be ordered in a sensible way. Here is how South should signal the respective heart values.

- 1) With ♥A(K)xxxx he should throw the ♦9 – the highest diamond spot. It is a clear S/P signal: “I hold an important heart honor (the King or the Ace)”
- 2) With ♥Qxxxx he should discard the ♦6 on the second trump trick – a delicate S/P. The second highest diamond shows the Queen of hearts.

True, not all the diamond spots are known at this point, but the situation will clarify as soon as the ♦K is cashed (South will follow with the ♦5).

Part 2: Suit Preference

Note that if North held $\spadesuit AKxx$ – and, therefore, would not be able to cash the King – he would already know partner's complete diamond combination.

- 3) With $\heartsuit Jxxxx$ he should signal with the $\spadesuit 5$ on the second spade trick – a subtle S/P.

The lowest of the remaining diamond spots shows the Jack of hearts.

- 4) With $\heartsuit xxxxxx$ he should throw his highest heart – a clear S/P signal denying any heart honor whatsoever.

Scenario 2) answers the question about South's heart holding.

Isn't this „expansion” of signals pushed a bit too far, though?

Well, the sequence is coherent and logical. How often will such a detailed agreement be useful?

Variations on this theme are my favorite exercise of analytical skills.

Let's imagine a slightly different layout.

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Pass	3♥
3♠	4♥	4♠	Pass
Pass	6♥	Pass	Pass
6♠	Dbl	Pass...	

3♥ = an overly aggressive pre-empt

6♥ = North detected the spade shortness in partner's hand

	♠ A 3 2										
	♥ A K Q 6 5 3										
	♦ A K 10										
	♣ 3										
♠ K J 10 8 7 4 ♥ 10 ♦ 8 3 ♣ K Q 10 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">N</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">W</td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N			W		E			S	♠ Q 9 5 ♥ 4 ♦ Q J 7 4 ♣ A J 9 7 6
N											
W		E									
		S									
	♠ 6										
	♥ J 9 8 7 2										
	♦ 9 6 5 2										
	♣ 8 5 4										

Lead: ♦A. Partner follows with the ♦2 – an even number of cards. You decided to shift to the ♣3 (♣5 from South), won by West's ten. He continues with a spade to the Queen and another spade to your Ace (South discards the ♦5).

When you cash the ♦K, partner follows with the ♦6 (from the original holding of ♦9652).

The question is: what does South have in hearts?

Part 2: Suit Preference

According to my proposition of „expanded” signals – South holds the ♥J.

With ♥109762 South should discard the ♥10.

What for?

If North had the following hand (the opening bid would probably be different, but the logic of the action does not change):

♠ A 3 2
♥ A K Q J 5 3
♦ A K 10
♣ 3

the discard of the ♥10 will allow North to reach his partner via hearts to execute the ruff.

REPEATED

You think you have told partner the whole story already. Great, then do it again – it will do you no harm.

W	N	E	S
			1♥
2♦	3♥	Dbl	Rdbl
4♦	Pass...		

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

Lead: ♥7. West took your nine with the Ace and returned another heart (♥3 from North). You win and cash the ♠A, getting the ♠2 from partner.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Here comes the full deal:

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

Lead: ♥7. West took your nine with the Ace and returned another heart (♥3 from North). You win and cash the ♠A, getting the ♠2 from partner.

The meaning of the heart signal is debatable. The second round signal may be either S/P or count. True, the bidding strongly suggests North's holding four hearts, but there are no guarantees. North played the ♥3, indicating – quite clearly, as he thought – the Queen of clubs, but it can't cost to confirm the signal in spades.

In spades, S/P is unambiguous. By following with the two, partner reassures you about the ♣Q.

In view of this information we should switch to the ♣K in Trick 4. No need to worry about the Queen being singleton. In that case partner would lead clubs, not hearts in the first place.

Why is it necessary to lead the King of clubs?

If we chose the little club instead, declarer would win partner's Queen in dummy and switch to the ♦Q. All the top honors would appear in this trick. Before long, you would find yourself endplayed with the ♣K, forced to let declarer in to dummy.

Repeated

b) Let's imagine a slightly different location of the honors:

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

Here North should follow with the ♥8 on the second heart trick, and with the highest spade spot when the ♠A is cashed. This way he would persuade South to exit passively in diamonds.

A DILEMMA

The syndrome of the last S/P comes up more often than you might expect.

Sometimes it's three in one: suit preference, substitute count and honor maneuvering.

W	N	E	S
2NT	Pass...		

♠ K J 9 4 3
♥ A 3
♦ Q 5
♣ A Q 10 4

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

Lead: ♠4. Declarer captures South's Queen with the Ace and plays a heart towards dummy.

We hold up and win the next heart with the Ace. South follows with the ♥5 and ♥6.

Plan the defense.

A Dilemma

Here comes the full deal:

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

Lead: ♠4. Declarer captures South's Queen with the Ace and plays a heart towards dummy.

We hold up and win the next heart with the Ace. South follows with the ♥5 and ♥6.

The key piece of information is the layout of the spade suit. Since South cannot signal directly, he is obliged to give a substitute count, showing (originally) an even number of spades.

Note that South's sequence – ♥5, ♥6 – was a subtle preparation to show a stopper in the higher of the remaining suits (diamonds). This would become obvious on the third round of hearts, when South played the ♥4.

After getting in with the ♥A, North may use his spade honors to tell partner which suit he ought to switch to.

So where is the „dilemma“?

Part 2: Suit Preference

In the following ending:

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

- 1) North, having cashed the ♠J, exits with the ♠3. This way he demands from South, who is now left with ♠108, some intellectual effort, i.e. winning the ♠8, not the ♠10. The ten should be kept as the second entry, necessary to repeat the play of a club through declarer.
- 2) North cashes the ♠J and continues with the ♠9. South routinely overtakes with the ten – it is easier than ducking the eight – and ... switches to diamonds. Why diamonds? The syndrome of the „last S/P” takes its toll. According to South, his partner could have exited with the nine or the three.
 Consequently, South reasoned, the nine suggests diamonds. That the Jack was cashed, not the King – he has long forgotten.

MISLEADING

Do not overuse S/P. A clever declarer may turn your efforts to his advantage.

W	N	E	S
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♥	2♦	3♦	Dbl
3♥	Pass...		

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

<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">N</td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">W</td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	♠ A J 2 ♥ K 5 3 ♦ J 2 ♣ J 9 7 4 2
N		E					
W		S					

Lead: ♦K. South overtakes with the Ace and returns another diamond. West follows with the ♦5 and the ♦8.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Here comes the full deal:

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

I trust partner. With ♦Axx, he would have signalled count instead of overtaking.

I carefully continue with the ♦9, indicating club values. Declarer discards a spade from dummy and partner... ruffs.

You can't always signal with spots safely.

Sometimes partner is unable to show his values in the other suits, because declarer may outmaneuver defenders, just like he did in this case. Here the ♦10 on the third round of the suit means nothing but possession of that card.

Typical 1

TYPICAL 1

With time, S/P becomes routine and helps solve defensive problems without unnecessary analytical effort.

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	Pass...		

♠ J 9 8 3 2
♥ A 8
♦ A 9
♣ J 10 6 5

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

Lead: ♠3. West wins partner's King with the Ace and cashes the ♣K and the ♣Q.

South follows with the ♣8 and the ♣7.

Next declarer switches to trumps.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Here is the full deal:

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

Lead: ♠3. West wins partner's King with the Ace and cashes the ♣K and the ♣Q.

South follows with the ♣8 and the ♣7.

Next declarer switches to trumps.

Many pairs understood the first club as S/P. It would make sense assuming declarer was unblocking the stiff ♣K.

For the count signal fans: the ♣8 was count, the ♣7 – S/P. The only reasonable interpretation is that South has a singleton spade.

Given this understanding, it is relatively easy to rise with the Ace and give partner two ruffs.

Note that the ♥4 on the first trump trick is by no means a sufficiently clear S/P for spades.

TYPICAL 2

The opportunity to use S/P occurs frequently. To my surprise, even great partnerships fail to take full advantage of it.

W	N	E	S
			2♥
4♠	5♥	5♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass...	

2♥ = weak in ♥.

♠ A
♥ Q 10 8 7 5
♦ 8 7 5 4
♣ A Q 9

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

Lead: ♥7. Declarer takes South's King with the Ace and cashes two rounds of diamonds, shedding a club from hand.

The third diamond is ruffed by partner. Declarer overruffs and exits with a trump.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Here comes the full deal:

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

Lead: ♥7. Declarer takes South's King with the Ace and cashes two rounds of diamonds, shedding a club from hand.

The third diamond is ruffed by partner. Declarer overruffs and exits with a trump.

This hand from the semi-final of the 1998 USA International Trials shows how it is possible to cherish your partner and cover up his errors.

Bob Hamman (he is defending 4S) saw the necessity of shifting to a club, but made the inferior play of the ♣A. Soloway unblocked the King and 4♠ went one down.

Lazard, defending against 5♠, led hearts and declarer played a spade. Lazard won and cashed the ♣A. Bramley followed with the ♣2 – unluckily for him, he was playing standard signals. Now Lazard tried to give his partner a diamond ruff.

There is basic information missing in the description of the problem. How did South handle the trump spots? If he ruffed the

Typical 2

third diamond with the ♠2 and then followed with the ♠3, he was showing a club value. It should now be easy to underlead the ♣A-Q.

Diamonds could be used to signal the location of honors, too. South should follow from the bottom up (♦6, ♦9).

TYPICAL 3

You should grasp every opportunity to send partner important information.

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass...		

♠ A J 8
 ♥ J 5 3
 ♦ J 10 5
 ♣ K J 9 7

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

Lead: ♦J – Queen, King, Ace. Declarer returns the ♦3. You rise with the ten, partner following with the ♦6.

Plan the defense.

Typical 3

Here comes the full deal:

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

Lead: ♦J – Queen, King, Ace. Declarer returns the ♦3. You rise with the ten, partner following with the ♦6.

A typical S/P position. Partner played the highest of the remaining diamond spots.

Thus, he is signaling his possession of the ♠K.

Accordingly, we cash three spade tricks, ending in the South hand.

The club shift should protect us from possible endplay.

Bermuda Bowl 2003: USA I against USA II.

Meckstroth led the jack of diamonds to the Queen, King and Ace, and Wolff shot the diamond three right back. Meckstroth won the ten and was at the crossroads. He needed to play spades, but after some thought he exited with a low heart.

Wolff went up with dummy's Ace, dropping his singleton King, cashed the Queen for a spade pitch, then played two more rounds of diamonds, discarding spades.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Meckstroth ruffed the fourth diamond, but it was with a natural trump trick. Wolff lost three trump tricks, a diamond and a spade.

NS play upside down suit preference so if South followed with high diamond it was his error!

Typical 4

TYPICAL 4

Uncertainty about the meaning of partner's signals leads to unnecessary energy loss.

W	N	E	S
Tornay	Mohan	Barfus	Sutherlin
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	Pass...		

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

Lead: ♣2. Declarer calls for dummy's ten.

Which card do you play?

Part 2: Suit Preference

The full hand:

	♠ J 7 6 4										
	♥ 10 9 2										
	♦ A J 10 8 5										
	♣ 2										
♠ A K ♥ Q J 8 7 5 ♦ 7 6 ♣ A Q J 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td> <td style="width: 20px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 20px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 9 5 2 ♥ K 6 3 ♦ Q ♣ K 10 8 7 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 8 3										
	♥ A 4										
	♦ K 9 4 3 2										
	♣ 9 5 3										

Lead: ♣2. Declarer calls for dummy's ten.

Which card do you play?

In my opinion, the first-trick signal should clarify the position. Since the opening lead was no doubt from shortness, S/P applies.

The ♣3, therefore, points to a diamond honor.

After getting in with the ♥A, we ought to lead the ♣5 for partner to ruff. This is a repeat S/P, so much liked by the bridge players.

How did the play proceed at the table?

George Tornay (W) leapt to game in order not to reveal any extraneous information to the opponents. Maybe he could induce a club lead? It worked – Mohan (N) led the club two. Tornay won with dummy's ten and led a heart. John Sutherlin went up with the Ace and played back the club nine!!! in tempo.

Typical 4

After ruffing, Mohan thought for a long time. The club nine looked like an obvious suit preference signal for spades. Equally obviously, Sutherlin needed the spade Ace or the diamond King to defeat the contract. North had jumped to game and the defense had already shown up with two Aces. Could they have a third? In other words, would Tornay have leapt to game with only one Ace? Mohan eventually concluded that he would not, and decided to play Sutherlin for the diamond King rather than the spade Ace, thus underleading his own Ace for a second club ruff. Well done! The principle of playing partner for less rather than more paid off.

NONSENSE

Some of the defenders' signals make declarer's task much easier, while being utterly useless for partner.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	1♥
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	Pass...		

N		
W		E
	S	

♠ J 10 7
 ♥ 8 6
 ♦ A Q 10 7
 ♣ A Q 10 2

♠ 6 2
 ♥ A Q J 9 7
 ♦ 9 4
 ♣ K J 8 4

Lead: ♥10.

Plan the defense.

Nonsense

Here comes the full deal:

♠ A K Q 9	♠ 8 5 4 3	♠ J 10 7			
♥ K 5 3 2	♥ 10 4	♥ 8 6			
♦ 6 3 2	♦ K J 8 5	♦ A Q 10 7			
♣ 6 5	♣ 9 7 3	♣ A Q 10 2			
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; 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	
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 6 2				
	♥ A Q J 9 7				
	♦ 9 4				
	♣ K J 8 4				

Lead: ♥10.

South took the Ace and switched to the ♠2, intended as S/P for clubs.

A typical example of a senseless S/P.

This information will be clear for declarer and he will waste no time turning it against us. He will finesse dummy's ten of diamonds, ending up with five trumps and five side suits tricks.

Without South's assistance, there was a reasonable alternative of leading a club to the Queen, which would have complicated the play enormously. The success would then depend on choosing the double diamond finesse instead of the repeated club finesse against the Jack.

SUGGESTION AND INFORMATION

Directing partner's attention to one of the suits should not interrupt the flow of other information.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

♠ J 5 3 2
♥ 7 6 3
♦ Q 6
♣ A Q 9 8

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

Lead: ♠2. Declarer won with the ♠10 and led the diamond five to the King. At the third trick he continued with the ♦J, ducking the ♦9 in hand.

South followed with, respectively, the ♦7 and the ♦2.

Plan the defense.

Suggestion and Information

Here comes the full deal:

	♠ J 5 3 2				
	♥ 7 6 3				
	♦ Q 6				
	♣ A Q 9 8				
♠ A K Q 10 ♥ K 2 ♦ A 10 9 5 ♣ 7 6 3	<table border="1" 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	♠ 8 7 6 ♥ A J 8 5 ♦ K J 8 ♣ J 10 5
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 9 4				
	♥ Q 10 9 4				
	♦ 7 4 3 2				
	♣ K 4 2				

Lead: ♠2. Declarer won with the ♠10 and led the diamond five to the King. In the third trick he continued with the ♦J, ducking the ♦9 in hand.

South followed with, respectively, the ♦7 and the ♦2.

No wonder South directed his partner's attention (♦7) to hearts. From his perspective the of the missing honors was still obscure. Nonetheless, he did very well to add the important piece of information about the King of clubs (via the ♦2).

North should make good use of it. Leading the ♣8, however, may be misinterpreted by South as asking for the spade switch when he wins the ♣K.

Every defender is obliged to protect his partner from error.

From the play so far we know West originally held four spades and four diamonds. It follows that partner has at least three clubs. This conclusion is necessary to alleviate any fears of finding partner with the King second in clubs.

Playing the ♣Q will make situation perfectly clear for partner. When his King holds the next trick, the location of the ♣A will not be a secret for him any more.

CAREFUL DEFENCE

Exchanging information is but a part of successful defense.

The key task is to prepare a plan of defense based on the gathered data.

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

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

♠ J 7
♥ K J 9 4 3
♦ Q 7 4
♣ J 4 3

Lead: ♣10.

Plan the defense.

Careful Defence

The full hand:

	♠ K 8 5 4										
	♥ Q 7 6										
	♦ A 9 8										
	♣ 10 9 8										
♠ A 6 3 2 ♥ A 10 2 ♦ K J 6 5 ♣ 7 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 50px;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 10 9 ♥ 8 5 ♦ 10 3 2 ♣ A K Q 5 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ J 7										
	♥ K J 9 4 3										
	♦ Q 7 4										
	♣ J 4 3										

Lead: ♣10.

The first play we make should be an alert signal already – the ♣J will strongly suggest the preference for hearts.

Then it's time for good defensive technique. When the ♠9 is led, we must cover to protect the value of partner's eight.

Trick 2 = ♠9, ♠J, ♠A, ♠5.

Partner will win the next spade and underlead the ♥Q.

Declarer must duck twice. North will be on lead at the end of the second heart trick and establish the setting trick in spades, which he will cash on gaining the lead with the ♦A.

EMPHASIZING AND DE-EMPHASIZING

On many occasions we can utilize subtle signaling to reinforce or de-emphasize our message.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

♠ J 9 8 3 2
 ♥ Q J 9
 ♦ A
 ♣ 9 7 3 2

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

Lead: ♠3. South covers with the King, but declarer holds up twice and wins the third round of spades. South has shown up with four spades.

Next West cashes the five club winners.

Partner follows with the ♣4 and the ♣6 and then throws three hearts: ♥3, ♥4, ♥5.

What will you discard on the fifth club?

Emphasizing and De-emphasizing

Here comes the full deal:

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

South signalled a diamond honor by playing ♣4, ♣6 and ♥3, ♥4, ♥5. Note that the proper count in hearts is far less important than the strong diamond holding.

The solution is quite spectacular but relatively easy – you must get rid of the ♦A. Do you run the risk of losing a trick?

Part 2: Suit Preference

Well, let's imagine a slightly different layout:

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

In this case parting with the ♦A leads to eleven tricks and an absolute zero for N-S. South would obviously play clubs in the same order here (♣4, ♣6), but he should discard hearts from top down (♥5, ♥4, ♥3) in order to de-emphasize his club signals (concerning the diamond values).

KEEP YOUR MIND BUSY

In order to fully benefit from the information obtained from partner, it is necessary to conduct a careful analysis of the facts.

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
			2♠
5♣	Dbl	Pass...	

2♠ = weak two

♠ A Q 7 6
♥ K Q J 10 4 3
♦ Q J
♣ J

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

Lead: ♠A. Partner follows with the ♠2.

Plan the defense.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Here comes the full deal:

a)

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

♠ K J 10 8 3 2
♥ 9 7 6
♦ K 5 3
♣ 2

Lead: ♠A. South follows with the ♠2.

No doubt partner is showing a diamond honor.

So do we switch to diamonds? A more in-depth consideration is necessary.

We won't be able to unblock diamonds. Declarer will attempt to endplay us for a ruff and discard.

Let's count tempo.

Declarer has insufficient entries, provided we do not exit in hearts in Trick 2.

Keep Your Mind Busy

Let's imagine a slightly different layout, though:

b)

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

In both cases we have to disrupt communication to prevent declarer from eliminating hearts.

In a) it is enough to exit in diamonds or clubs (not hearts, in any event).

In b) we must continue spades, to knock out one of declarer's precious entries prematurely.

The conclusion: the universal trick two play, which works in both scenarios, is the spade continuation.

A SUBTLE POSITION

One of the areas which distinguish the expert from the competent player is signaling. The expert uses his spot cards to impart subtle suit-preference messages.

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass...

♠ 7 6 5
 ♥ A 10 6 5
 ♦ 7 5
 ♣ A Q 8 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 4 3 2
 ♥ J 2
 ♦ Q 6 4
 ♣ J 9 4

Lead: ♠5.

Trick 1 – ♠5, ♠A, ♠10, ♠J

Trick 2 – ♥J, ♥4, ♥3, ♥5

Trick 3 – ♥2, ♥7, ♥Q, ♥A

Plan the defense.

A Subtle Position

Here comes the full deal:

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

Lead: ♠5.

Trick 1 – ♠5, ♠A, ♠10, ♠J

Trick 2 – ♥J, ♥4, ♥3, ♥5

Trick 3 – ♥2, ♥7, ♥Q, ♥A

The problem is straightforward. You could afford to hold up the ♥A.

On the second round of the suit partner played the lowest remaining spot.

Since the position is clearly S/P, South is showing the King of clubs.

Accordingly, we shift to the small club and cash three more tricks.

So where is the „subtle position“?

Part 2: Suit Preference

Let's imagine a different layout:

a)

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

This time you can't afford to duck the first heart.

Therefore, S/P should be given right away, on the first heart trick.

How can such S/P positions be distinguished from count signal positions?

It no doubt requires some agreements between partners. It should be possible to define defensive positions which demand count from those where S/P is more desirable.

In this case the danger lies in the possibility of pitching dummy loser(s) on declarer's hearts. The counterstrategy involves immediately cashing the fast tricks defenders are entitled to. The key is the location of honors in the South hand.

A Subtle Position

b)

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

Here playing the ♥9 on the first round of the suit will guide partner onto the right track.

S/P, BUT WHICH SUIT?

In some cases we are in doubt as to the line of defense we should suggest to partner.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	Pass...

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

Lead: ♦A.

What do you play?

S/P, but Which Suit?

The full hand:

		♠ Q 9 7											
		♥ 7 4											
		♦ A K 9 7											
		♣ J 6 5 2											
♠ 5 2		<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> <td style="width: 40%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 40%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S			♠ A J 8 6 4
	N												
W		E											
	S												
♥ K Q 9 8 6 3				♥ J 5									
♦ Q 8				♦ 5									
♣ A 9 3				♣ K Q 10 8 7									
		♠ K 10 3											
		♥ A 10 2											
		♦ J 10 6 4 3 2											
		♣ 4											

Lead: ♦A.

A spade switch at the second trick sets up a trick for defense, but at the cost of opening a line of communication for declarer.

The possibility of conveniently returning to hand with the spade ruff solves all of declarer's problems.

In view of that, we should signal our interest in the club suit, even though partner has no entry. This line of defense takes into consideration declarer's entry-management problems.

A) West wins the ♣9 and leads a heart to the Jack.

1) South takes the Ace and shifts to diamonds.

Declarer is helpless.

2) South ducks and, likewise, West has no good continuation.

B) At Trick 3 West ruffs his remaining diamond with the trump spot.

Now the ♥J is led, but South holds-up.

Again, there is no winning line of play.

Part 2: Suit Preference

C) At Trick 3 West ruffs the diamond with the ♥J and returns a heart to the nine.

This time the defenders are helpless. If South shifts to the ♠K, it will be ducked

This is a fine example of the battle raging constantly between declarer and defenders.

Complicating things for declarer pays off handsomely sometimes. Fortunately, our opponents make mistakes, occasionally.

THE RIGHT MOMENT

The value of some of our cards can only be appreciated late in the play. The ability to pass key pieces of information in the right moment is a sign of bridge excellence. It requires concentration, table presence and following the play even when we seem not to be able to participate in it any more.

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass...

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

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

Lead: ♦8. Jack from dummy, and South's Queen held the trick. South switched to the ♣10.

North took declarer's Queen with the King and continued the diamond attack.

Declarer returned to clubs himself, finessing the ♣7. North won the ♣9 and persisted with diamonds. Next came the ♠A, back to hand with the ♠K and a heart towards the King.

Part 2: Suit Preference

Here is the end position:

	N		♠ Q J
W		E	♥ 9 6
			♦ —
	S		♣ 6

♠ 9 8
♥ J
♦ 10 7
♣ —

where West cashes the two remaining spade winners.

Plan the defense.

The Right Moment

The full hand:

	♠ 10 7				
	♥ A Q 8 5				
	♦ 9 8 6				
	♣ K J 9 2				
♠ K 3 2 ♥ 10 7 3 ♦ A 3 2 ♣ A Q 8 7	<table border="1" 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 Q J 6 ♥ K 9 6 2 ♦ K J ♣ 6 4 3
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ 9 8 5 4				
	♥ J 4				
	♦ Q 10 7 5 4				
	♣ 10 5				

Lead: ♦8. Jack from dummy, and South's Queen held the trick. South switched to the ♣10.

North took declarer's Queen with the King and continued the diamond attack.

Declarer returned to clubs himself, finessing the ♣7. North won the ♣9 (as a matter of technique, he should have won with the Jack) and persisted with diamonds. Next came the ♠A, back to hand with the ♠K and a heart towards the King.

Part 2: Suit Preference

a)

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

... where West cashes the two remaining spade winners.

This is the right moment to tell partner about the ♥J (♠9, ♠8). Based on this information partner will get rid of both heart honors to avoid the throw-in.

One of my students arrogantly dismissed such signals as needed by amateurs only. For him unblocking is obligatory and obvious.

I call such a way of thinking „isolated”. It is typical for players solving problems on paper, not at the table. It does not fully recognize the implications of the fact that our hands are closed and declarers don't always guess.

Here my analysis applies to a matchpoint tournament where every trick counts.

The Right Moment

b)

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

If partner signals low-high in spades – ♠8, ♠9 – showing nothing in hearts, the discards of ♥8 and ♥A may make declarer abandon the throw-in line of play. Why?

c)

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

In this layout, exiting in hearts at Trick 11 restricts declarer to seven tricks only. EW scored 37% for one down, but only 6,5% for down two.

HARD TO BELIEVE

Sometimes partner's signal is hard to believe.

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
		1♣	2♥
2♠	3♦	Pass	Pass
3♠	Pass...		

2♠ = non forcing

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

♠ 7 6 4
 ♥ A Q 10 5 4 2
 ♦ 10 7 5
 ♣ Q

Lead: ♥8.

South took the ♥Q and paused for a longer while. A well-known play came to his mind: cashing the diamond trick and then returning to hearts for a trump promotion. Finally he decided to cash the ♥A. Partner threw the ♣2.

Plan the defense.

Hard to Believe

The full hand:

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

Lead: ♥8.

South took the ♥Q and paused for a longer while. A well-known play came to his mind: cashing the diamond trick and then returning to hearts for a trump promotion. This might work if the opening lead were from a doubleton. Since, however, he suspected the ♥8 to be singleton, South finally decided to cash the ♥A. Partner threw the ♣2.

According to suit preference principles, the ♣2 says: „I don't want the heart ruff!"

Partner led a singleton and now he doesn't want the ruff? Hard to believe.

South started thinking harder about the deal. West's bidding suggested six spades and 8–10 HCP, which left North with a singleton spade. North's signal implies this singleton is the Ace.

Therefore switching to clubs would lay the groundwork for two ruffs.

The ♦A would provide the second entry to partner's hand.

Part 2: Suit Preference

The auction was similar at the other table.

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
		1♣	2♥
2♠	3♦	Pass	Pass
3♠	Pass	Pass	4♦
Pass...			

I like South's bidding a lot, I must admit. The three-card diamond fit and the club shortness look promising.

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

Lead: ♠2.

The West defender used another version of S/P.

He carefully covered dummy's ♠4 with the ♠5, thus showing club values. When North played a club at the next trick, East, armed with partner's signal, ducked. The trump switch would restricted declarer to ten tricks.