

THE WORKING HORSE

KRZYSZTOF MARTENS
MAY SAKR

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks and gratitude for your contribution

Jacek Pszczola

Jeremy Lewis

Holly Campbell



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Please note that South is the declarer in all the examples you find in this book.

INTRODUCTION

I started playing duplicate bridge at the age of eighteen. I achieved my first success – the championship of my home town in Poland – one year after. It took me eleven years to win the European Championship (Birmingham 1981) and fourteen years to win the Olympic gold (Seattle 1984).

Today, I follow the career of an extremely talented Polish player Michał Klukowski who, before turning twenty, has two world championships and several European championship medals under his belt. As an experienced bridge teacher and coach, I am fully aware of the consequences. Michał graduated from the primary school of bridge and proceeded directly to the Bridge University in Poland; he, together with many other players from his generation, lack solid foundations provided by the secondary school of bridge. They can execute a double or criss-cross squeeze in no time. They excel at false splinters and cue bids, aggressive preempts or merciless penalty doubles. However, they often have difficulties using basic bridge players' tools.

Every bridge player needs a “Working Horse” who neighs tirelessly hand in and hand out; who never stumbles in counting up to thirteen or forty and can anticipate what happens in trick seven and prevent a simple endplay. Do you remember ‘Boxer’ from Orwell’s novel “Animal Farm”? A huge working horse, strong, laborious and helpful. Imagine Boxer at the bridge table, pulling the defenders’ wagon from the first trick until the last.

This book is not only for new players who seek to make further progress, but also for young bridge experts who would like to fill the gaps in their bridge education.

Krzysztof Martens
September, 2017

CHAPTER 1

LEARNING TO THINK

The title of this chapter, left without explanation, would sound insulting, since thinking is an inherent ability that is mastered to varying degrees through our interactions with the environment that we live in. Thus, to be taught something that we can easily grasp by ourselves is rather annoying, since we believe that it is probably us who should be giving advice to others.

“Learning bridge-thinking” would perhaps be a better title, but this will in turn insult the intelligence of those who correctly assume that the whole book is about bridge. So, without hesitation, we shall leave the original, somewhat arrogant title!

All discussions will begin with the 40 high cards points (hcp) each deck of cards contains; thirteen cards in each suit and thirteen tricks available in each board. These will be supplemented with elementary information as to bidding and hypotheses about declarer's plans and assets. Our hand discussions will be based on all or some of the aforementioned factors.

Many of these problems also concern the opening leader, but compared to defenders in later stages of the play, the opening leader acts under conditions of greater uncertainty.

The most important choices, often decisive in the case of defeatable contracts, are made at the defenders' first opportunity to lead. After the opening lead, a relatively detailed defensive scenario should be worked out. It is often the last chance to make up for any wrong opening lead.

The importance of the bidding cannot be overemphasized; defenders must bear this in mind constantly, sometimes as late in the play as the trick before the last. All the available implications from the auction, including the negative ones, will be depicted.

Plenty of valuable hints will be inferred from the declarer by analyzing his plans and looking for the purpose behind all his moves; this information will contribute greatly to the construction of a successful plan. For this task, we need the assistance of our partner who will provide us with information derived from his own experience in bridge as to which strategy he follows in the game, what he discards and the line of defense he adopts.

The **defensive plan** must take the following points into account:

1. The distribution of hcp and suits.
2. The number of fast tricks available to us.
3. The number of fast tricks available to the declarer.
4. The number of tricks we have to develop.
5. The number of tricks a declarer has to develop.
6. The minimum assets required to set the contract and the position of the remaining honors within the calculated strength of partner's hand sufficient to set the contract.
7. Predicting the necessity to use one or more of defensive techniques, such as ducking, rising, unblocking, false carding etc.
8. The anticipation of partner's problems and thinking of ways to remedy them.

To appropriately define the field of our discussion, a few words about the defensive play techniques are in order. The technical issues will be presented in many contexts, not necessarily in relation to any particular hand, with an understanding that the readers possess at least an elementary knowledge of the topic. The area of signaling, however, has been omitted almost completely. There will hardly be any mention of the count, attitude, standard or reverse signals, etc. The reason is that the issue of signaling would immensely expand the scope of the book and would weaken the picture of defensive play we seek to present here: defense as an exercise in logical thinking. With such an approach, signaling is but an addition, certainly a very useful addition that even the author makes use of on a daily basis and without which playing at a high level of professionalism would not be possible.

EXAMPLE 1

Significant value we can hope for in partner's hand

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

Vul: None

Lead: ♦A

W	N	E	S
1 ♦	X	3 ♦	Pass
Pass	X	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

After our diamond ace lead, we can see that the dummy proved to be adequate to the auction. Partner follows with the four (showing an odd count), and declarer with the nine. What should our next move be?

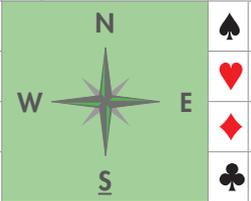
LEARNING TO THINK

SOLUTION 1

Partner's bidding is preemptive. From the count of our hand and dummy's hcp (14+21), it is evident that the only significant value we can hope for in the partner's hand is the trump king. Therefore, the defense is expected to take one trick each in spades, hearts, and diamonds. Where can the fourth trick come from?

Placing the trump king in partner's hand calls for an immediate heart switch. Playing the heart ace followed by another heart will guarantee us a heart ruff; a step that declarer cannot avoid.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 2

Is it beneficial to overruff?

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

Vul: N - S

Lead: ♥J

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

Bidding details

3♦ is natural, game forcing

The hcp distribution

5 (our points) + 13 (dummy) + 11-16 (declarer) = 29-34

For lack of better ideas, we lead the heart jack. Partner overtakes it with the queen and continues with the ace and king of hearts. Declarer ruffs the third trick with the spade jack. What is our plan?

LEARNING TO THINK

SOLUTION 2

After the third trick is played, it is clear that partner is holding between 9 and 11 hcp, nine of which are in hearts; therefore partner cannot possibly have the diamond king. Since we need two trump tricks to set the contract, it is now elementary to duck; overruffing would destroy the potential trump promotion. If we instead discard any other card, we will get two spade tricks if partner holds the spade ten.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 3

What is the suit distribution?

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

Vul: E - W

Lead: ♣2

W	N	E	S
			1 ♦
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details

1 ♦ shows 4+ ♦

3 ♦ is invitational

The hcp distribution

8 (our points) + 11 (dummy) + 14-18 (declarer) = 33-37

Partner leads the two of clubs (4th best) and the eight is played from the dummy.

Let us prepare a defense plan, taking into account the suit distribution.

SOLUTION 3

Since partner has only four clubs (he led his 4th best), and declarer's shape appears to be 4-1-4-4, we must win the first trick with the ace and switch to the heart king, in case declarer's heart singleton is the queen.

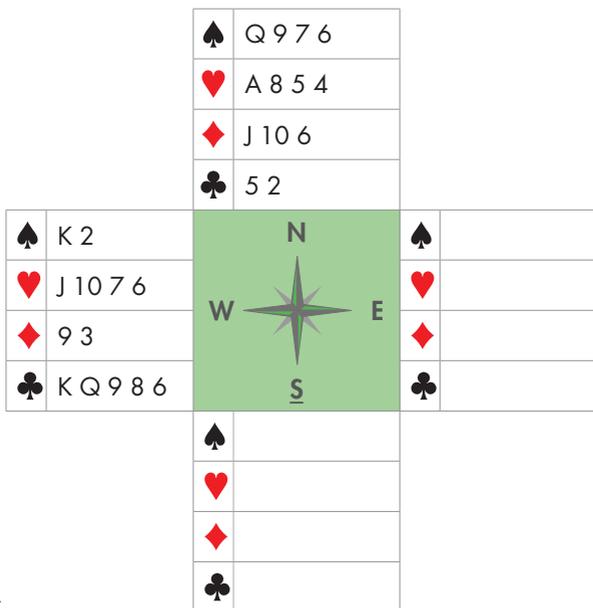
Full hand

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

The contract was set through the combination of bidding implications together with information encoded in partner's lead.

EXAMPLE 4

Never lose focus



Vul: N - S
Lead: ♣K

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

Bidding details

South holds 4+♦ and 4♠, game value (probably 5♦ and 4♠ or 4-1-4-4)

The hcp distribution

9 (our points) + 7 (dummy) + 14-19 (declarer) = 30-35

We retain the lead with the club king; partner follows with the seven and declarer with the four. We continue with the club queen, which holds as well, South follows with the jack. What should our plan be?

SOLUTION 4

Since partner has 5 to 10 hcp, including the club ace, we should switch to hearts, hoping that partner holds the king. But prior to this move, we should have already decided where the setting trick should come from, in case South has the heart king.

It will not be in diamonds (unless it is the diamond ace); declarer's layout is probably 4-2-5-2. Excluding the possibility of a trump promotion, partner has no shortness to switch to after winning with the spade king.

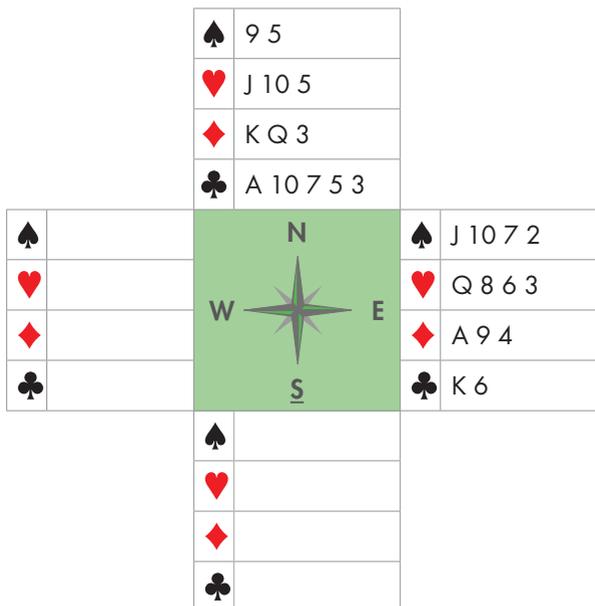
In conclusion, we can only rely on partner having the trump jack, and hope that declarer will play a small trump towards the dummy. Having anticipated this, we should play a low trump without any hesitation, instead of fidgeting nervously, as if caught unprepared.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 5

To cover or not to cover?



Vul: N - S

Lead: ♥2

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

Bidding details

1NT shows 15-17 hcp

The hcp distribution

10 (our points) + 10 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 35-37

Partner leads the heart two, followed by the ten from the dummy; accordingly, let us plan the defense.

LEARNING TO THINK

SOLUTION 5

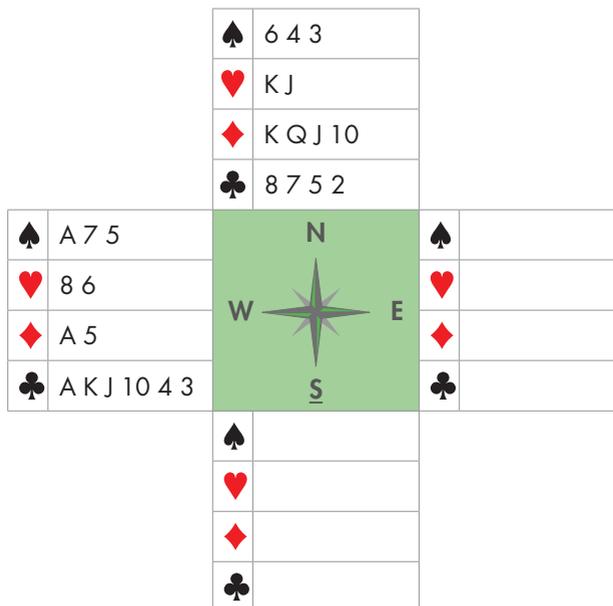
The two indicates that partner led from a four-card suit. If they were four small, declarer would have the heart ace and king second; hence, we must not play the queen. If partner led from the king, declarer has two heart stoppers. If partner originally held four hearts to the ace, we must hold up in order to limit declarer to one heart trick. The final combination to be considered is AKxx, but since declarer should have 15 to 17 hcp, there is no need to consider this option.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 6

Easy defense (if you can find it)



Vul: All
Lead: ♣A

W	N	E	S
			1 ♠
2 ♣	2NT	Pass	4 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details
2NT is invitational with 3+♠

The hcp distribution

16 (our points) + 10 (dummy) + 13-14 (declarer) = 39-40

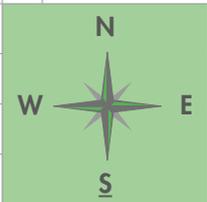
We lead the club ace, partner follows with the nine and South with the queen. We continue with the club king to guarantee a second trick in case declarer holds two clubs; unfortunately, declarer ruffs with the spade nine and plays the trump king. What next?

LEARNING TO THINK

SOLUTION 6

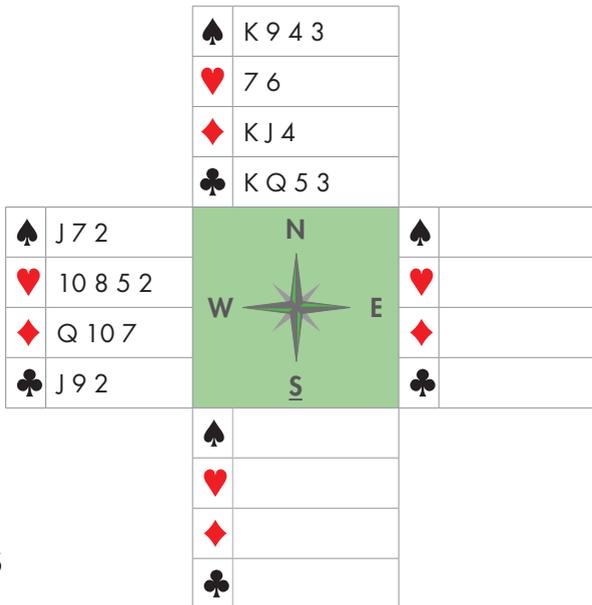
This distribution shows that the most we can hope for in partner's hand is the spade jack; in effect, we are on our own. What about the suit distribution? If South has six spades, we are helpless; but, if he has only five, a real opportunity to set the contract opens up, considering the fact that declarer had to ruff once already. We should take the spade ace and continue with clubs, forcing declarer to ruff again and reduce the number of spades he holds to two cards. Now he can either draw the remaining trumps, cash his heart tricks and exit with a diamond (in this case our hand will have all the remaining winning tricks); or, he can play a diamond before drawing trumps. At this point we will of course play the ace immediately and return a club, forcing declarer to ruff. Our spade seven will take the setting trick.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 7

Using partner's suit preference signal



Vul: N - S
Lead: ♥2

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

Bidding details
South has 12-14 hcp, balanced

The hcp distribution

4 (our points) + 12 (dummy) + 12-14 (declarer) = 28-30

We lead the heart two, partner produces the jack and declarer takes with the queen and plays a diamond towards dummy's jack. Partner wins with the ace and returns the heart nine. South wins with the ace, plays a diamond to the king and continues with another diamond to our queen (partner played the diamond nine then the diamond three); everyone follows. Let us do some planning.

SOLUTION 7

Partner originally held 10 to 12 hcp, five of which are the diamond ace and heart jack; he has 4 to 7 hcp left.

The suit distribution: South has 4-4 in both red suits.

Declarer's tricks: Three hearts and two diamonds. If declarer holds three clubs to the ace, four club tricks will give him the contract. It is, therefore, our last opportunity to attack with spades. This should be done by playing the jack, since leading small (if the dummy plays low as well), will ensure only two tricks for the defense.

Full hand

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

In a match between France and Holland during the European Championships in Birmingham, in 1981, both female players were confronted with this problem. The French player solved this problem correctly. The Dutch player attacked the spade suit by playing the spade two, and has regretted this move ever since.

SOLUTION 8

The suit distribution: Partner has three spades. Considering his maximum strength, there seems to be no other chance than finding partner with three diamonds and the jack of trumps. Therefore, we continue with the diamond king and another diamond. After winning the trick with the spade king, we play a diamond for the fourth time, thus promoting partner's spade jack, which will be the setting trick.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 9

A blocked suit

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

Vul: None

Lead: ♥2

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

Bidding details

South has 5♦ + 4♠, 15-17 hcp

The hcp distribution
 6 (our points) + 12 (dummy) + $15-17$ (declarer) = $33-35$

Partner wins our heart two lead with the ace and returns the four. We capture declarer's jack with the queen and pause to plan.

SOLUTION 9

Partner has 5 to 7 hcp, four of which have already been revealed.
The suit distribution: Unfortunately, the routine lead of the fourth best blocked the suit in which partner holds five cards.
 If we continue with hearts, declarer will knock out partner's diamond stopper (having one by partner is a necessary condition for defeating the contract when we are in a position to cash just one more heart). But let us consider the auction: since South has shown three hearts in addition to five diamonds and four spades, he has space left for just one club. Therefore, switching to the club king will solve the problem. If declarer wins it, partner will return a club after getting in with diamonds; if declarer ducks, we will simply switch back to hearts.

Full hand

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

SOLUTION 10

From the hcp distribution, partner can only have 4 to 6 hcp.

Defenders' sure tricks: One heart and one diamond.

The suit distribution: South has 5-5 in both majors, two diamonds and therefore a singleton club. If this singleton is not the ace, the path to setting the contract is correct; we should force declarer's trumps by leading with the club king and playing another club.

We will be establishing partner's fourth trump; it will be up to declarer to guess which suit will be dividing. If he plays for spades 3-3, he will surely go down.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 11

Setting up a trump promotion

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

Vul: All

Lead: ♠8

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

The hcp distribution

13 (our points) + 15 (dummy) + 11-12 (declarer) = 39-40

After the spade lead, everyone follows to the ace and king of spades. Declarer ruffs the third spade with the heart nine, crosses to a club honor in dummy and exits with the heart jack. What is our plan?

LEARNING TO THINK

SOLUTION 11

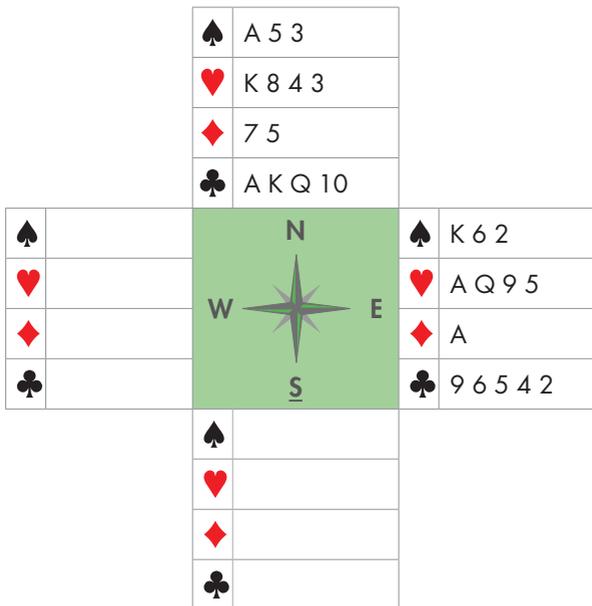
The hcp distribution tells the whole story. If we rise with the ace and switch to a minor or continue with trumps, it would only mean that we surrendered; a spade continuation is also unproductive because the heart eight is in the dummy. On the other hand, if we play the queen of hearts, declarer will win with the king and will continue drawing trumps. Therefore, it is time to win with the ace and switch to spades; we will succeed only if partner has the heart seven. Will he actually hold this card? Well, bridge problems sometimes resemble a fairytale, where correct behavior always gets rewarded.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 12

Looking for a chance



Vul: N - S
Lead: ♦J

W	N	E	S
	1NT	X	XX
Pass	Pass	2♣	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details
1NT shows 15-17 hcp
X shows a 4-card major and a 5-card minor
XX shows points
2♣ is pass or correct

The hcp distribution

13 (our points) + 16 (dummy) + 9-11 (declarer) = 38-40

After partner leads the diamond jack, we win the first trick and start planning.

SOLUTION 12

Partner can have a maximum of two points, one of them being the diamond jack.

Defensive tricks: One heart, one diamond and one trump.

Declarer's tricks: Four spades, two diamonds and four clubs – ten overall.

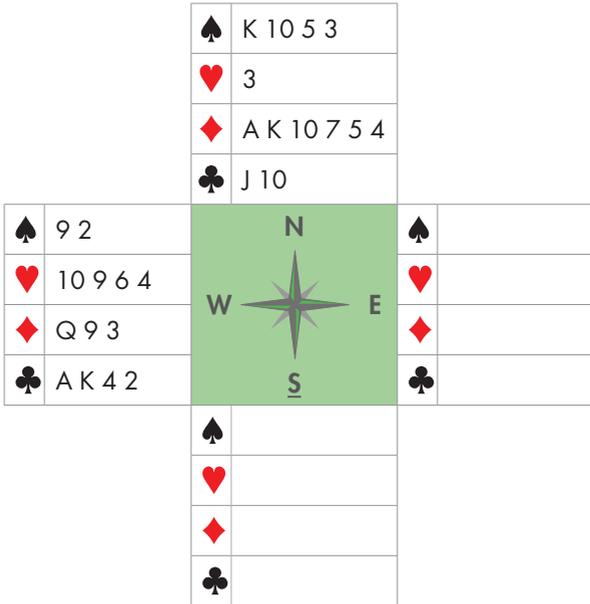
Is there any chance of defeating this contract? Only if partner holds the jack of hearts! If we switch to the heart queen now, declarer will be forced to win it in the dummy in order to avoid conceding two heart tricks. After taking the spade king, we will play a small heart to partner's jack, leading him to oblige us with a diamond ruff.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 13

Cashing tricks in the right order



Vul: None
Lead: ♣A

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

Bidding details
2♦ shows a good 2♥ raise
3♠ is distributional

The hcp distribution

9 (our points) + 11 (dummy) = 20

After we lead the ace of clubs, partner follows with the eight and South with the six. Let us start planning the defense.

SOLUTION 13

Partner and declarer both have 10 hcp each with a two-point tolerance in each way, in favor of declarer.

Defensive tricks: Two clubs and one heart if partner holds the ace. The diamond suit does not look promising. In conclusion, in order to defeat the contract, we must get a trick in trumps, partner may have it but it may be necessary to establish it by playing three rounds of clubs for a trump promotion. To make this happen, we must first cash the heart ace; otherwise, declarer will discard the singleton heart from the dummy on the third club. Therefore, we must switch to hearts in the second trick and after a club return, we must play another round of clubs.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 14

Not so fast: Take a moment to plan your defense

		♠ KJ 10	
		♥ Q 10 9	
		♦ A 10 8 6	
		♣ KJ 2	
♠			♠ A 5
♥			♥ AK 7 5 4 3
♦			♦ 9 7 5
♣			♣ A 7
		♠	
		♥	
		♦	
		♣	

Vul: N - S

Lead: ♥2

W	N	E	S
		1 ♥	Pass
Pass	X	2 ♥	2 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The hcp distribution

15 (our points) + 14 (dummy) + 5-10 (declarer) = 34-39

Partner leads the heart two to dummy's nine, he has 1 to 6 hcp.
What is our plan?

SOLUTION 14

The suit distribution: The opening lead was either a singleton or from ♥Jxx. Since we cannot hope to set the contract if South has only one heart, we should assume that he holds three of them.

Defensive tricks: Two hearts, a ruff and two black aces.

Tricks to be established: We may try for a club ruff. We can reach partner with the heart ruff, while the spade ace will ensure control of the trump suit. Therefore, we win with the heart king, then we play the club ace and another club. After winning with the trump ace, we continue with the heart ace and a small heart. Partner will ruff and return a club back.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 15

Cannot afford to lose tempo

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

Vul: None

Lead: ♣4

W	N	E	S
			1 ♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

We win the club four lead (2nd/4th) with the ace, dropping declarer's king. How do we proceed?

SOLUTION 15

The suit distribution: South holds the club king and queen and six spades. Judging from the auction, declarer's red suits must be 3-2. If he has two hearts and three diamonds, our play does not matter. However, if declarer's red suits are the other way around, only the immediate heart switch will secure a heart trick for the defense before declarer develops his diamonds.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 16

Counting declarer's tricks to find a clear-cut defense

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

Vul: All

Lead: ♠J

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

Bidding details

2NT is 12-14 hcp, balanced with 5♦

We lead the spade jack (from KJ10 or AJ10 or J10). South captures it with the queen (partner plays the spade six) and exits with a diamond. A simple defensive plan, please!

LEARNING TO THINK

SOLUTION 16

In this case, the plan to defend this contract boils down to counting declarer's tricks: Three spades, five clubs (we know from the bidding that South has at least a doubleton in clubs) and a diamond if we fail to rise with the ace; just enough to make his contract.

So, we have to bet on the only chance we have – finding partner with the ace and queen of hearts. It would, however, be a mistake to lead the standard ten from this sequence, since partner may rise with the ace and play a spade. The correct card to play is the king of hearts.

Full hand

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

In this deal, our defense consists of counting declarer's tricks as well as anticipating any possible dilemmas our partner might have.

EXAMPLE 17

Destroying declarer's communication

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

Vul: All
Lead: ♣A

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

Bidding details

2♦ shows both majors 5+ / 5+
2NT is game forcing
3NT is minimum with 5-5-2-1
or 5-5-1-2
4♠ is the final contract

We lead the ace of clubs, happy to see it win the trick. We try the diamond ace next and are lucky again. Partner plays the diamond two (discouraging). What now?

LEARNING TO THINK

SOLUTION 17

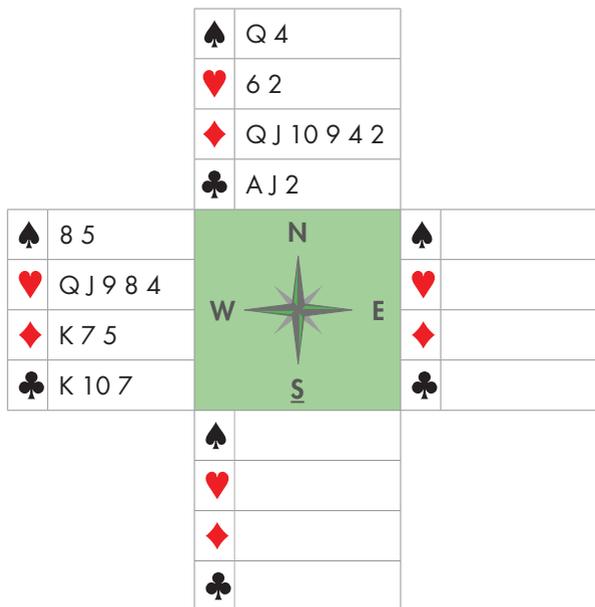
Partner is unable to provide us with any help; we are left on our own to set the contract. The key of the entire deal is the way spades are tackled. The safety play in a suit Kxxx-QJ8xx is to start with the king as insurance against a 4-0 split, since this is the only way to finesse against 10-9. To execute this, declarer will need two entries to his hand to play small spades through. By continuing with diamonds in the third trick, we are depriving him of one of those entries, before he realizes that it is necessary to finesse.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 18

Choosing the correct card



Vul: None
Lead: ♥Q

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

Bidding details
1 ♣ shows 2+♣
2 ♦ is forcing one round
2 ♠ is natural
3 ♦ is not forcing

The hcp distribution

$$9 \text{ (our points)} + 10 \text{ (dummy)} + 12-14 \text{ (declarer)} = 31-33$$

After our queen of hearts lead, partner follows with the ten, while declarer, after some thought, ducks and plays the three. Partner can only have 7 to 9 hcp. Let us plan our subsequent moves.

SOLUTION 18

The suit distribution: Partner has two hearts and South has four, including, obviously, the ace and the king.

The continuation of a suit to which we have no access to is pointless. Partner holds the diamond ace (otherwise ducking the opening lead would not be justified) and, given his hypothetical range, it is more likely that he has the club queen rather than KJ10 in spades. It is therefore necessary to switch to clubs. The correct card is, to be exact, the ten, not the seven.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 19

Suit preference

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

Vul: All

Lead: ♠2

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

Bidding details

1NT shows 15-17 hcp

The hcp distribution
 11 (our points) + 9 (dummy) + $15-17$ (declarer) = $35-37$

After the spade two lead, our king gets captured and the diamond queen is led. Partner plays the nine; we win with the king and work out the defense.

SOLUTION 19

The hcp distribution shows rather clearly that partner, apart from the spade queen, may hopefully have one more honor. To the diamond queen, partner plays the nine (suit preference), showing that he has nothing in clubs.

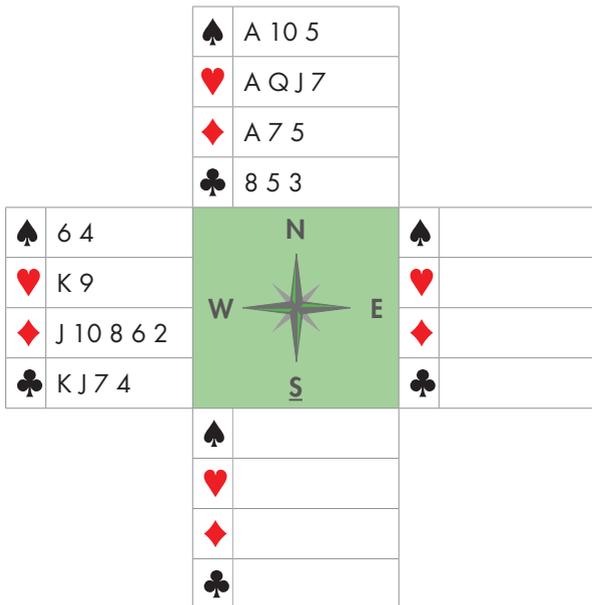
If partner has the heart queen, switching to the heart ten will set the contract, provided that partner has three cards in hearts. After getting in with spades, partner will then play the queen of hearts through dummy's king. A nice reward for both defenders.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 20

Against the routine



Vul: All
Lead: $\heartsuit J$

W	N	E	S
			1 \spadesuit
Pass	2 \clubsuit	Pass	2 \spadesuit
Pass	2NT	Pass	3 \heartsuit
Pass	3 \spadesuit	Pass	4 \heartsuit
Pass	4 \heartsuit	Pass	4 \spadesuit
Pass	4NT	Pass	5 \spadesuit
Pass	6 \spadesuit	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Bidding details

- 3 \heartsuit shows 6+ \spadesuit
- 4 \heartsuit shows shortness
- 4 \spadesuit is minimum, denies any void

The hcp distribution
 8 (our points) + 15 (dummy) +
 11-13 (declarer) = 34-36

Partner has 4 to 6 hcp, 5 of them in diamonds. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 20

Declarer's distribution is probably 6-3-1-3. After declarer wins our diamond jack with the ace, he crosses to his hand with the trump king and leads a heart. If we thoughtlessly follow with the nine, we are soon going to regret it.

When the heart finesse succeeds, the delighted declarer ruffs two diamonds, communicating through the ace of spades, plays a heart and ducks our king. Conclusion? We allowed the contract to make. What went wrong? Anticipating the endplay, we should have played the heart king on the first occasion.

Full hand Version I

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

Full hand Version II

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

In an alternative scenario, with Kxx instead of Kx in hearts, playing a small heart on the first heart trick followed by the king in the second may actually set the contract when twelve tricks were available, since the heart suit split 3-3. Of course, this will only happen if declarer ducks, assuming the former layout of the cards.

Full hand Version III

In yet another variation, with four hearts to the king, the endplay is imminent. Again, following low the first time hearts are played and putting up the king next may save the day.

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

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPING HABITS

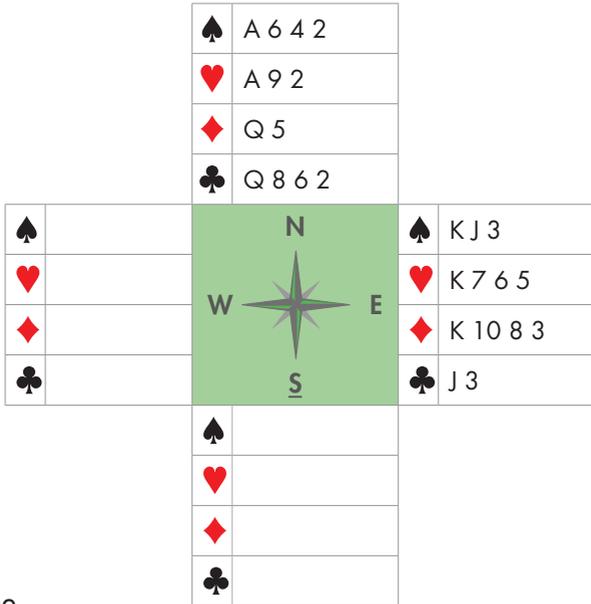
The theme of this chapter is quite similar to the previous one, except that the problems in this chapter are slightly more difficult; therefore, are of a greater challenge to defenders. Just like before, our duties in each deal are to work out the distribution of hcp and suits, as well as to count declarer's and defenders' tricks, reflect upon declarer's plans and understand the message our partner is trying to convey during the game.

The content may appear monotonous, but only in terms of the work routine; however, the problems are immensely different. Do not get discouraged by such monotony! Developing the habit of thinking over all aspects of the hand you are defending will pay off in the deals you will be playing in the future. There is no other way to develop this habit than to laboriously, deal after deal, complete this routine: hcp, suits, tricks, plans; tricks, plans, hcp, suits etc.

If you manage to apply all of this at the bridge table, you will be rewarded by effortlessly defeating opponents' contracts.

EXAMPLE 1

An unnatural play to communicate our intentions to partner



VUL: None

LEAD: ♦2

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

Bidding details

- 2♣ is a checkback
- 2♦ denies 3 cards in spades
- 3♥ is a strong invitation

The hcp distribution

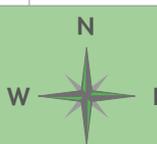
11 (our points) + 12 (dummy) + 12-14 (declarer) = 35-37

Partner leads the two of diamonds and declarer plays low from the dummy; meanwhile, we are planning the defense.

SOLUTION 1

Partner is holding 3 to 5 hcp. We also know from partner's diamond two lead that he is leading from a four-card suit. It must be headed by the ace, but without the jack. In every other case, that is if declarer holds Axx or xxx, he would have put up the queen in his attempt to score an extra trick. In light of this, combined with the conclusions from the hcp distribution, partner cannot have any other significant honors. We expect to take three diamond tricks and one heart trick. South can take a spade trick, four heart tricks, a diamond and three clubs tricks. Is there anything else we can do? The only chance is to attack with spades. Since doing so from our side of the table would result in losing a trick and the tempo (we are aware of declarer's queen), we have to persuade partner to switch to spades. We can only send him the message through diamonds. Therefore, we should

Full hand

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

win with the king and return the ten. It will be such an unnatural play that partner will probably understand what we are up to. If we find South with the following hand:

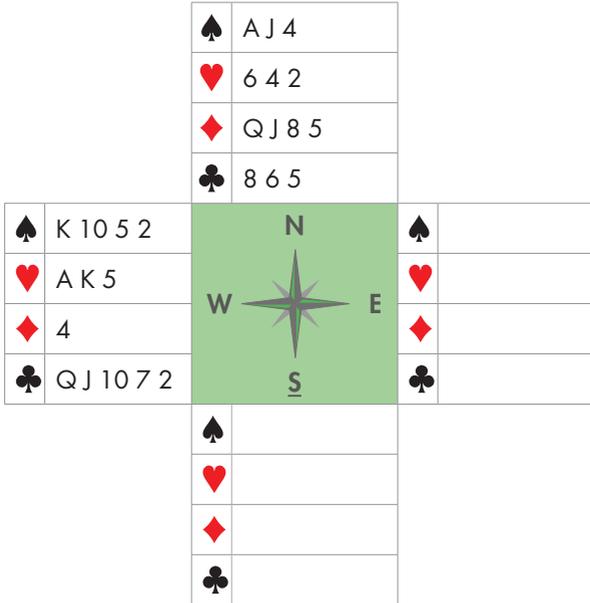
♠ Q 7 ♥ Q J 10 8 3
♦ J 6 4 ♣ A K 4

this line of defense will be successful; indeed, a success fully deserved, because it is based on careful analysis and an excellent plan. If declarer ducks the spade switch, we will

win and return a diamond, thereby taking three diamond tricks, a spade trick and a heart trick. If he rises with the ace, we get two or three spade tricks, two diamond tricks and a heart trick.

EXAMPLE 2

Choosing the line that requires the least from partner



VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♥A

W	N	E	S
			1 ♦
X	2 ♦	3 ♥	5 ♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Declarer ruffs our heart ace lead, as he did with North's two remaining hearts (entering the dummy with trumps). Partner follows with diamonds only once. Declarer proceeds to eliminate clubs by playing the ace, king and another club. To the third club, and to the second diamond, partner discards hearts. What shall we do next?

SOLUTION 2

The suit distribution: South's hand is easy to count: 3-0-7-3. To defeat the contract, we must find partner with the spade queen. If we exit with:

- ♠2, partner must have ♠Q9x
- ♠10, partner must have ♠Q9x or ♠Q87
- ♠K, declarer, forced to win with the ace, will have to play the suit himself; in this case, ♠Q86 in partner's hand will suffice.

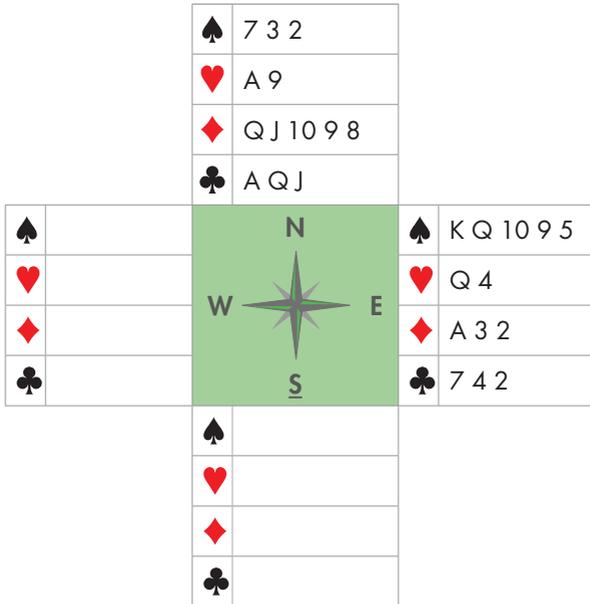
This is an effective example of how the analysis of various possibilities allows us to minimize the values we expect from our partner.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 3

Communication? nonsense...



VUL: None

LEAD: ♠6

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

The hcp distribution

11 (our points) + 14 (dummy) + 11-12 (declarer) = 36-37

Partner has 3 to 4 hcp. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 3

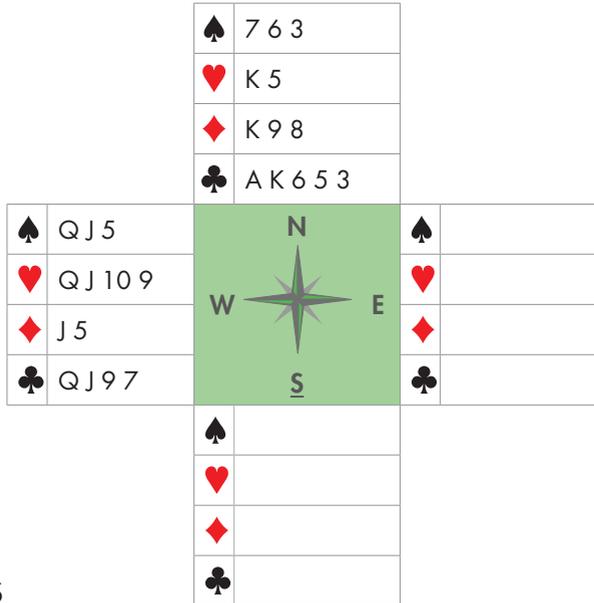
The suit distribution: The auction indicates South's double spade stoppers, namely AJx. Moreover, if the handful of hcp partner holds is either the king of clubs or the king of hearts, the situation is hopeless. Therefore, we must assume that our partner holds the diamond king. If we put up the spade queen in the first trick, declarer will hold up, effectively decreasing our would-be winning tricks. Playing the spade nine, on the other hand, will force South to win the jack. When partner gets in with the diamond king, he will have a spade left to continue this deadly attack.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 4

Destroying declarer's communication



VUL: E - S

LEAD: ♥Q

W	N	E	S
			1 ♠
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

The hcp distribution

10 (our points) + 13 (dummy) + 12-13 (declarer) = 35-36

After our heart queen lead, partner captures dummy's king with the ace and returns the four of spades. South wins with the ace and exits with a heart; partner follows with the two. How should we proceed?

SOLUTION 4

Partner has 4 to 5 hcp, but since he already presented the heart ace, he cannot possibly hold any other honor. If this is the case, South would already have ten tricks: Four spades, three diamonds, two clubs and a heart ruff. So, we ought to alter our calculations and allow for a slightly light opening bid, based on ♠AK and ♦A, which would be fully justified. Partner may then have the diamond queen. Leading the jack of diamonds at this point would be a blind jump into shallow water since we do not know the location of the ten. In turn, the spade switch will not prevent the heart ruff. What should we do

then?

Let us count declarer's tricks again: There are nine of them without the diamond queen. The tenth may be provided from a long club suit. If we switch to trumps, South will cash the ace and king of clubs, ruff a club, cross to the dummy with a heart ruff, ruff another club, and finally reach dummy's club winner with the diamond king. By playing a heart, we force him to prematurely use one of his entries.

Full hand

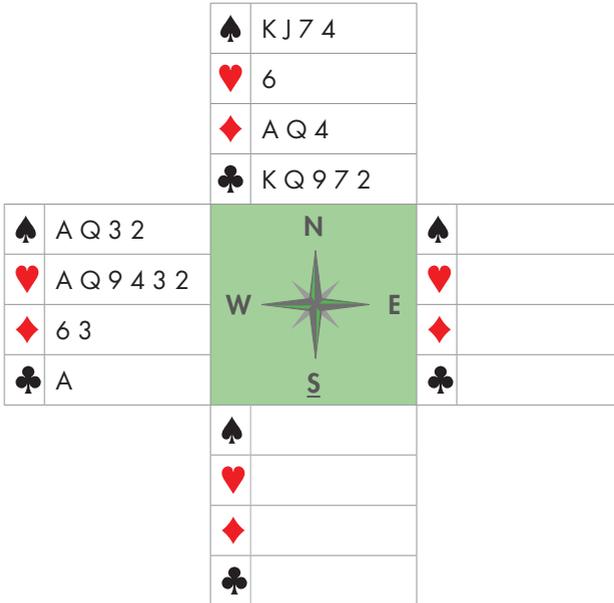
	♠ 7 6 3		
	♥ K 5		
	♦ K 9 8		
	♣ A K 6 5 3		
♠ Q J 5		♠ 10 4	
♥ Q J 10 9		♥ A 8 4 2	
♦ J 5		♦ Q 6 4 3 2	
♣ Q J 9 7		♣ 4 2	
	♠ A K 9 8 2		
	♥ 7 6 3		
	♦ A 10 7		
	♣ 10 8		

The previous hand constitutes a striking example of a radical change in defensive strategy. At trick two, partner switched to trumps to prevent a heart ruff (which would have proven effective if we had ♠Kxx), whereas two tricks later we forced declarer to take a ruff only to destroy his communication.

Some careful defensive planning was required in this example (and in the next one) in order to set the contract.

EXAMPLE 5

Protecting our trump trick



VUL: N - S
 LEAD: ♥A

W	N	E	S
1 ♥	X	4 ♥	4 ♠
X	XX	Pass	Pass
Pass			

We cash the heart ace, dropping South's king. Regrettably, the spade honors are not located as we expected them to be. How are we going to proceed?

SOLUTION 5

Partner does not promise any defensive values. South seems to hold all the remaining spades and is in a position to effectively finesse against our queen. Thank goodness the brilliant idea of cashing the club ace and reaching our partner with a heart to obtain a ruff did not occur to us! Is there any hope?

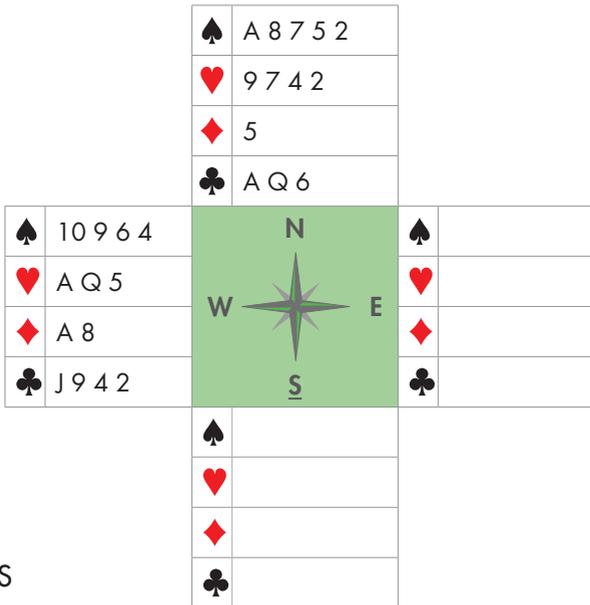
The solution lies in the distribution of suits. We continue with hearts, fully aware that declarer is now void of hearts. He ruffs in hand and plays trumps. We rise with the ace (partner discards) and persist with hearts. South ruffs in hand again, thereby shortening himself to just two spades, while we still have Qxx and the dummy has KJx. At this point, if the declarer decides to draw the remaining trumps, his clubs have not been established yet; and, on the other hand, if he attempts to knock out our club ace, we will return with yet another heart, ensuring a second trump trick.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 6

A suicidal squeeze



VUL: N - S
LEAD: ♣2

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

Bidding details
1NT shows 15-17 hcp North's sequence is game forcing with 5♠ and 4♥

The hcp distribution

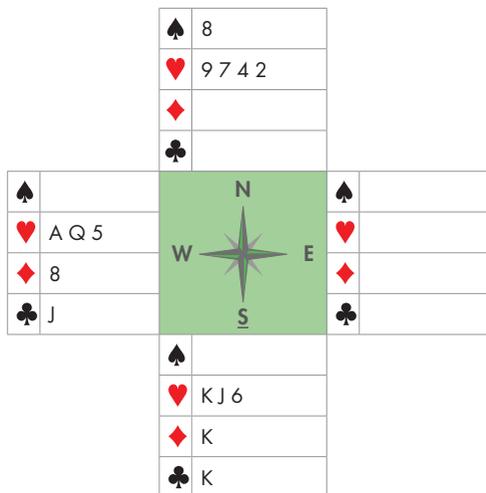
11 (our points) + 10 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 36-38

Partner has a maximum of 4 hcp. After our club two lead, partner produces the eight and declarer captures it with the ten. Declarer then plays the spade king and queen (partner follows twice with the jack and the three), crosses to a club honor and continues with the ace and another spade. East and South each discard two diamonds. We win and...?

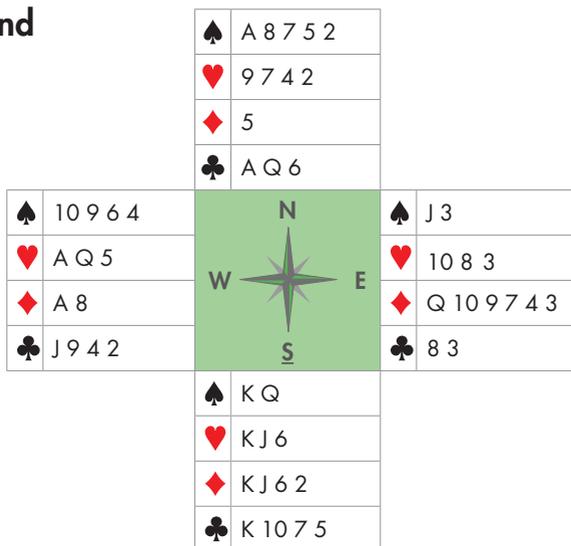
SOLUTION 6

The suit distribution: South holds four clubs, two spades and fewer than four hearts (we know this from the auction), hence, 2-3-4-4. The conclusion is clear. We must cash the diamond ace

and exit with a club, keeping a diamond in hand as an exit. In the five-card ending position, cashing the spade winner in the dummy will execute a squeeze against declarer, while sacrificing it will only postpone the inevitable, since South cannot avoid three heart losers.

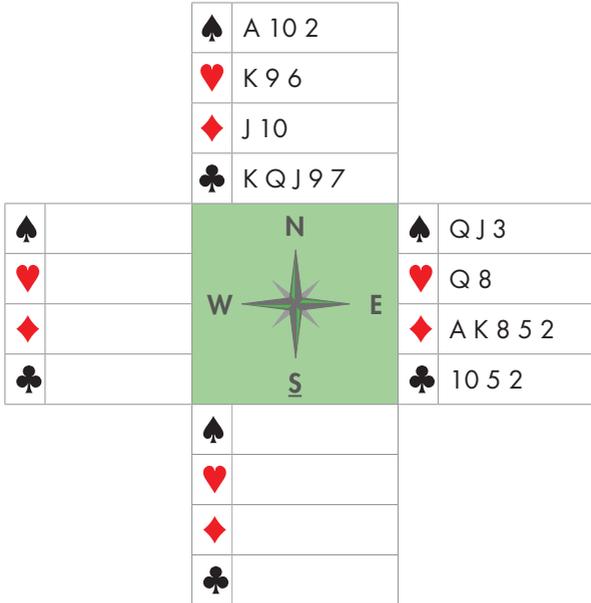


Full hand



EXAMPLE 7

No other way



VUL: All
LEAD: $\heartsuit 3$

W	N	E	S
	1 \clubsuit	1 \heartsuit	1 \spadesuit
3 \heartsuit	Pass	Pass	3 \heartsuit
Pass	4 \spadesuit	Pass	Pass
Pass			

The hcp distribution

12 (our points) + 14 (dummy) + 7-9 (declarer) = 33-35

Partner leads the diamond three (3rd/5th). Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 7

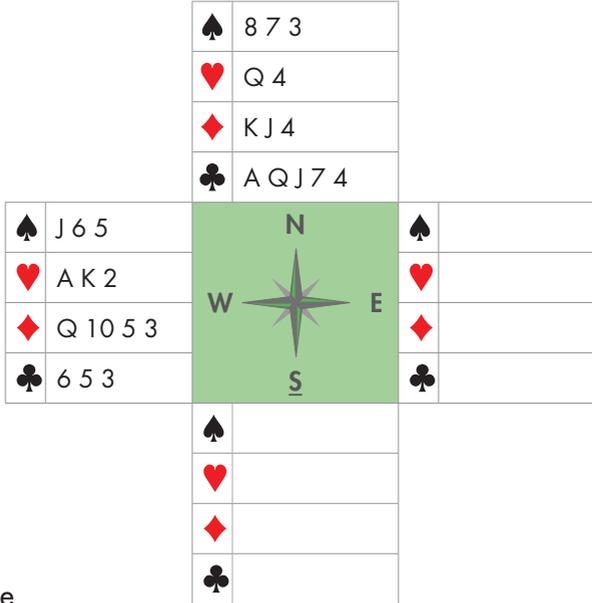
Partner should have 5 to 7 hcp. This means that we can hope for an ace in partner's hand, in addition to the diamond queen. This is a necessary condition to defeat the contract; but which ace? Before we answer, let us examine the suit distribution. What about diamonds? If we have two diamond tricks (unlikely), any ace will do. If, however, we only get one diamond trick, the contract cannot be defeated if the heart ace is in declarer's possession – he will simply establish clubs. So, we should assume that partner holds that card, accompanied by a jack or a ten. Now switching to the heart queen gives us two heart tricks – provided we resist the temptation to cash the second diamond.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 8

Combining chances



VUL: None
LEAD: ♥A

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

The hcp distribution

$$10 \text{ (our points)} + 13 \text{ (dummy)} + 12-15 \text{ (declarer)} = 35-38$$

Our heart ace is followed by the four, three and five. Partner has 2 to 5 hcp. What is our plan?

SOLUTION 8

Assuming South would probably not bid 2NT without the ace of diamonds, only the following 4 to 5 hcp in partner's hand may set the contract:

- ♠Q and ♣K, if declarer has 2-2 in the minors and takes the wrong finesse;
- ♠KQ, provided we take two top hearts; and,
- ♠A, if we play three rounds of hearts, partner will subsequently get in and play the fourth heart, thus, promoting our jack of trumps to the setting trick.

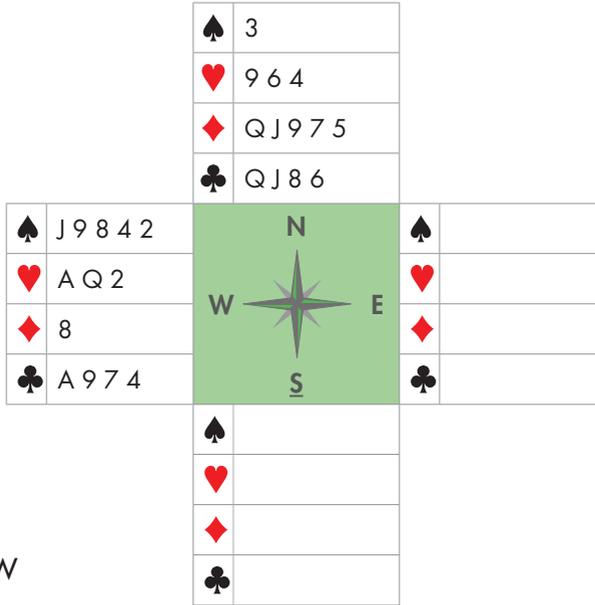
The conclusion is obvious: we continue with the king and another heart, since this line is consistent with all of the above scenarios.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 9

Using Smith Echo



VUL: E - W
LEAD: ♠4

W	N	E	S
			2 ♦
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Bidding details

2♦ shows 18-19 hcp, balanced
 2♥ is transfer to NT
 3♣ is stayman

The hcp distribution

11 (our points) + 6 (dummy) + 18-19 (declarer) = 35-36

After our spade four lead, partner plays the queen; declarer wins with the ace and plays the club king. Partner can have 4 to 5 hcp, including the spade queen which he has already revealed. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 9

Since the club king cannot possibly be declarer's ninth trick, we must duck. South continues with the club ten. We may now assume that declarer has five diamond tricks (if this suit needed developing, he would certainly have started with it); declarer has already won a spade and a club trick, adding up his tricks to seven. If declarer holds the spade king too, ducking the club again would give him the ninth trick. Therefore, we win with the ace, noticing partner's two and three, respectively. We must now locate our partner's king. If it is ♥Kxxx, the spade switch would give the contract away. The result would be exactly the same if we play the heart ace and the heart queen, only to find partner with the spade king. In any case, we ought to cash the ace of hearts and examine our partner's card: A high card will encourage a heart continuation, while a low one will deny the king. We have not yet tackled defensive signals that are outside the scope of this book. However, we mentioned it in this example in order to present a commonly used signaling method called **Smith Echo**, which is a delayed attitude signal employed against

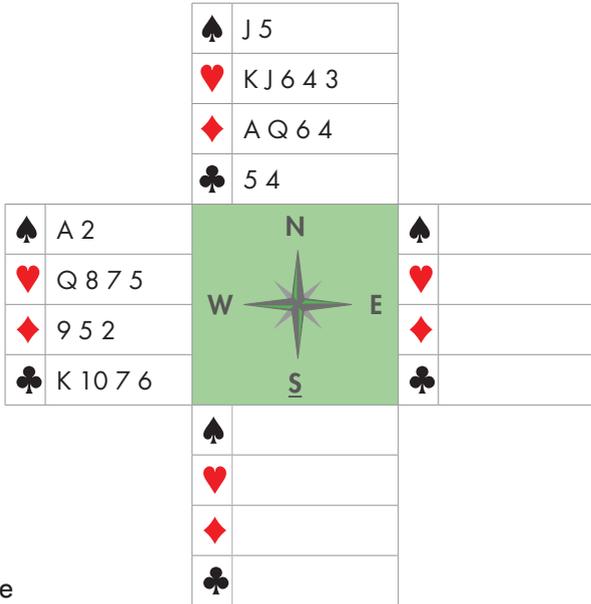
Full hand

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

no-trump contracts. It is used after partner makes an opening lead and declarer gains the lead. When following suit to declarer's lead, a high card shows encouragement of the suit partner has led, whereas a low card is discouraging.

EXAMPLE 10

Count up to 13



VUL: None

LEAD: ♣6

W	N	E	S
			1 ♦
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The hcp distribution

9 (our points) + 11 (dummy) + 13-15 (declarer) = 33-35

After our club six lead, partner plays the eight and declarer wins with the nine and plays a spade to dummy’s jack and another spade back to his queen. We win with the ace and now we need to do some planning.

SOLUTION 10

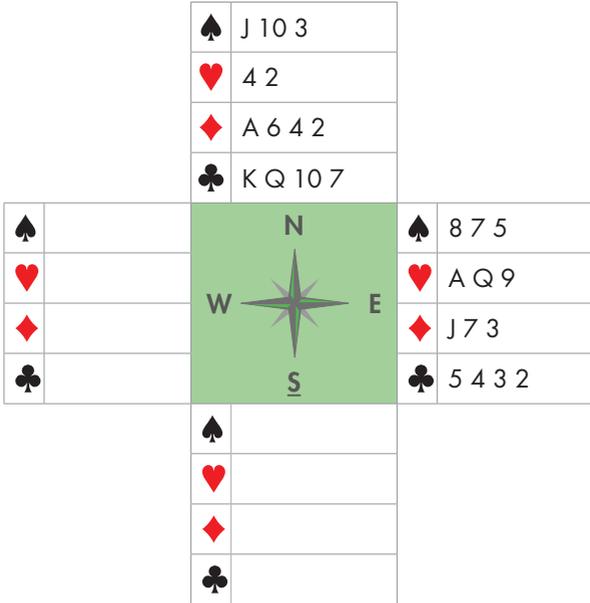
Our partner has 5 to 7 hcp. To realistically set the contract, we hope our partner has the maximum number of points he can possibly have (♥A and ♦K), since he has nothing in clubs or spades. South has shown four spades and four diamonds in the auction and is known to hold (♣AQJ9). Now we understand the problem; therefore, we must switch to the queen of hearts!

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 11

Making things easier for partner



VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♥7

W	N	E	S
			1 ♠
2 ♥	3 ♥	X	3 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The hcp distribution

7 (our points) + 10 (dummy) + 12-13 (declarer) = 29-30

After the heart seven lead, how should we defend?

SOLUTION 11

Defensive tricks:

- Two hearts, two diamonds and a spade,
if South has AQxxx Jx Qxx AJx
- Two hearts, two diamonds and a club,
if South has AKQxx Jx Qxx Jxx

Declarer's tricks:

In the first scenario: Four spades, four clubs and the ace of diamonds.
In the second scenario: Five spades, three clubs and the ace of diamonds.

The conclusion is clear – we have to cash our tricks before declarer cashes his. To achieve this, we need to play a diamond through immediately and repeat it later. The way to facilitate this line of defense is to take the first trick with the queen.

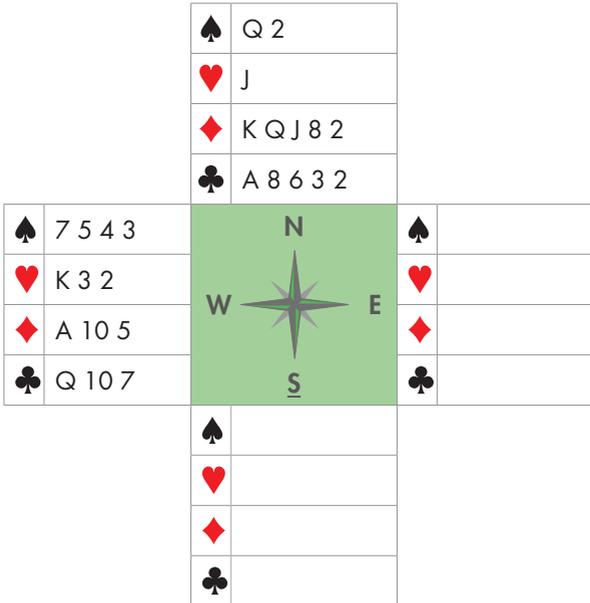
Full hand

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

Certainly, if we won the lead with the ace of hearts, partner might arrive to the same conclusion that our only possible second entry is again in hearts. There is no need, however, to demand this extra effort from partner – his analytic skills can be put to better use in the future.

EXAMPLE 12

Taking advantage of a suit preference signal



VUL: E -W

LEAD: ♥2

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

For the opening lead, we select the suit suggested by opponents' bidding – the heart two. Partner wins with the queen and continues with the heart eight. South follows with the four and seven; let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 12

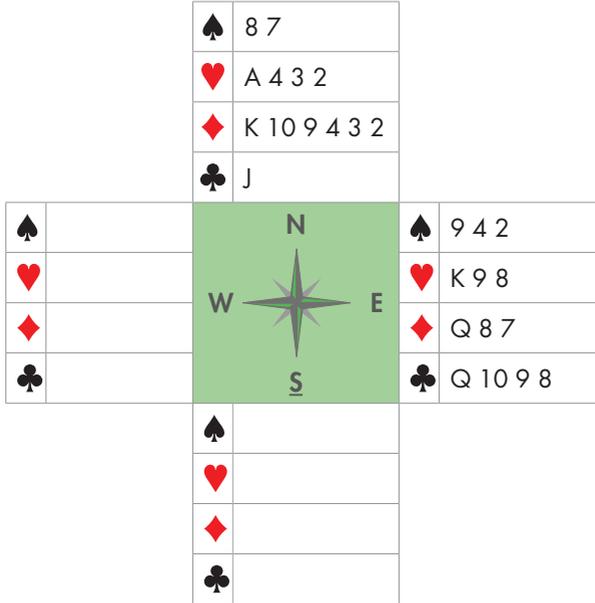
We cannot really calculate the hcp since declarer's bidding is not narrowly limited; be as it may, it is rather clear that South will take the ace in the third round and will go about establishing his diamonds. The only chance to defeat the contract is to find partner with the ace of spades (or KJ) – an entry to the heart winners; on the other hand, the heart eight from ♥Q1098 appears to be a suit preference for clubs. On the basis of this analysis, we should overtake the eight of hearts and switch to clubs. This is the last chance to develop our tricks.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 13

Attacking declarer's communication



VUL: None
 LEAD: ♠Q

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

The hcp distribution

7 (our points) + 8 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 30-32

Declarer wins our partner's spade queen lead with the ace and exits with the diamond jack, ducking in the dummy. Let us focus on the defense plan.

SOLUTION 13

Partner probably has the queen and jack of spades and the diamond ace. What about the suit distribution? West and South have four spades each. Where will the defensive tricks come from? The answer: Two diamonds and two spades.

Declarer's tricks: Two spades, one heart, four diamonds and two clubs. The solution will suggest itself as soon as we realize the consequences of the 2-2 division of diamonds in the closed hands. The only entry to the prospective diamond winners is the ace of hearts. Therefore, when we switch to the king of hearts upon getting in diamonds, declarer will not win it since by doing so he will not be able to establish four diamond tricks. After cashing a heart trick, we return to spades to gather all the tricks we have originally been entitled to.

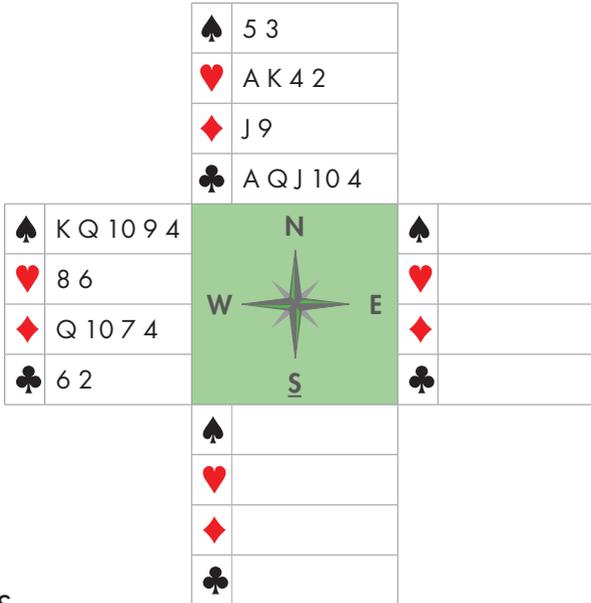
Full hand

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

Our play is an interesting variation of the **Merrimac Coup**. **The Merrimac Coup is a coup where a player (usually a defender) sacrifices a high card in order to eliminate a vital entry from an opponent's hand (usually a dummy).**

EXAMPLE 14

Choosing the right card



VUL: N - S
LEAD: ♠K

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

Bidding details
South has 12-15 hcp, 4+♦

The hcp distribution

7 (our points) + 15 (dummy) + 12-15 (declarer) = 34-37

We lead the king of spades and partner follows with the two, denying any honor; declarer plays the six. What should our next moves be?

SOLUTION 14

The suit distribution: Declarer uses the **Bath Coup** in spades, holding off with AJx.

The Bath Coup is a coup where the declarer, holding AJx in a suit ducks the left-hand opponent's lead of a king (or a queen).

To think realistically about setting the contract, we must assume the maximum of what partner may have, and that his 6 hcp consist of two minor kings. If this is indeed the case, switching to a diamond now will provide us with three tricks in the suit (only if partner has K8x), which, together with the spade trick and the king of clubs will suffice to defeat the contract.

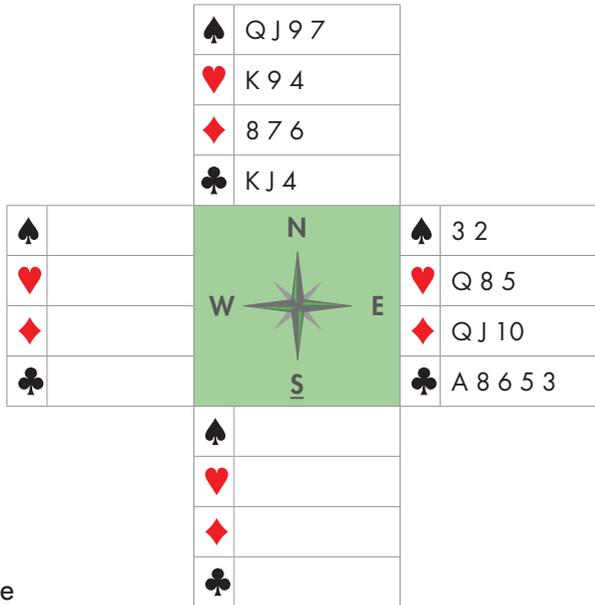
However, if we assume that partner holds two kings, is it not possible for him to hold the eight of diamonds as well? Note that when we switch to the queen of diamonds, instead of a small one, it will now be enough to find East with king third, regardless of the spots. If the queen holds, we should continue with diamonds. If the king is ducked, partner will switch back to spades, leaving declarer helpless.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 15

The optimum solution



VUL: None
LEAD: ♣10

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

Bidding details

1♦ shows 5 cards in diamonds or 4-4-4-1 with a singleton outside of diamonds, 12-14 hcp
2♥ is weak

The hcp distribution

9 (our points) + 10 (dummy) + 12-14 (declarer) = 31-33

Partner leads the club ten and declarer plays low from the dummy. What shall we do? Let us do some planning.

Partner has 7 to 9 hcp, including, in all probability, the ace and jack of

SOLUTION 15

hearts. In order to set the contract, we must rely on the partner for a spade honor. It will supply us with the third trick. A club ruff may be the fourth one. If partner's lead is a singleton, we should take the ace and return a club. If, on the other hand, the lead is from a doubleton, a hold-up is necessary. Which option do we choose?

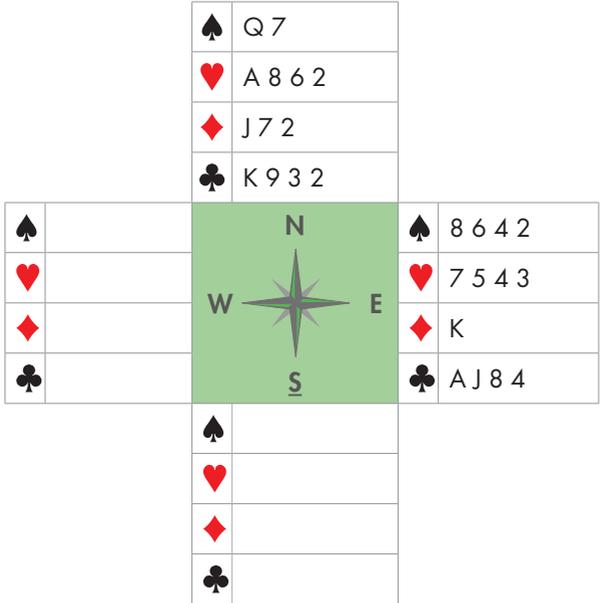
Even though we do not know partner's club length, we should think of the general suit distribution, instead of playing at random. If the opening lead is from a doubleton, South's shape must be 4-1-5-3 and we will get a diamond trick no matter what. If, however, partner's club is a stiff, failing to give him a ruff will allow declarer to get rid of one of dummy's diamonds on the fourth club.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 16

Choosing the right card



VUL: All
LEAD: ♥10

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

Bidding details
South showed 15-17 hcp with 5♦

The hcp distribution

8 (our points) + 10 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 33-35

Declarer, rather quickly, wins the heart ten lead with the king, revealing his heart holding to be (KQJ). He plays the diamond queen, which we win. Onto the familiar routine!

SOLUTION 16

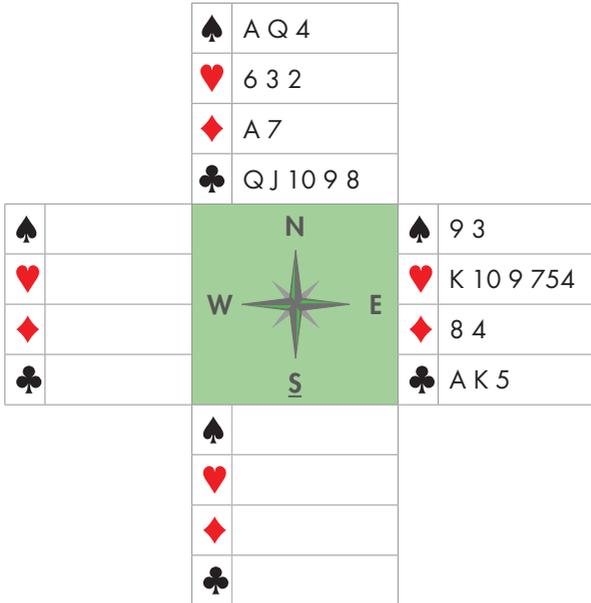
Partner has 5 to 7 hcp and probably holds the ace of diamonds. In order to develop three club tricks we must also find him with ♣Q10x. Keeping in mind the minimum values we expect from our partner, we do not really need him to have the ten as well as the queen. If we switch to the jack of clubs, partner, in with the diamond ace, will draw South's ten with the queen and play the third club through dummy's nine.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 17

The immediate conclusion



VUL: E - W
 LEAD: ♥Q

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

The hcp distribution

$$10 \text{ (our points)} + 13 \text{ (dummy)} + 11-12 \text{ (declarer)} = 34-35$$

After partner leads the queen of hearts, he has 3 to 4 hcp remaining. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 17

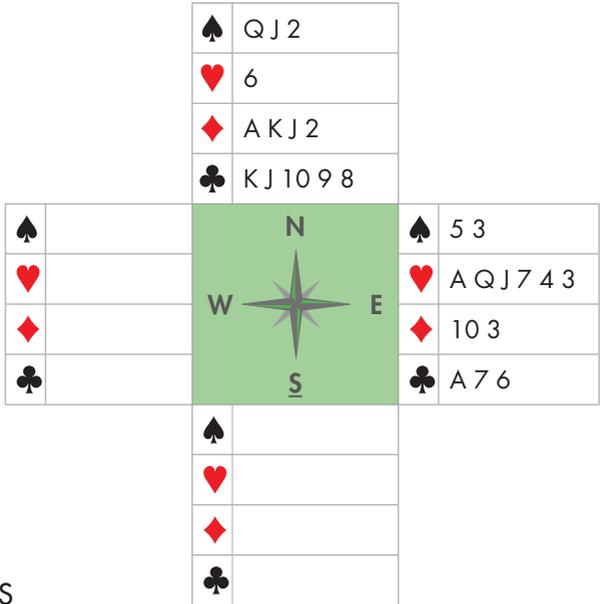
The suit distribution: From the bidding, we can assume that South holds ♥AJx. The contract cannot be made without the club tricks. The immediate conclusion: We must overtake partner's singleton queen with the king; otherwise, declarer will duck. Note that overtaking does not change the number of South's heart stoppers, but it puts us in a winning position in the race for the heart and club winners.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 18

Maintaining communication with partner



VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♥8

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

The hcp distribution

11 (our points) + 15 (dummy) + 8-10 (declarer) = 34-36

Partner leads the heart eight (2nd/4th). Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 18

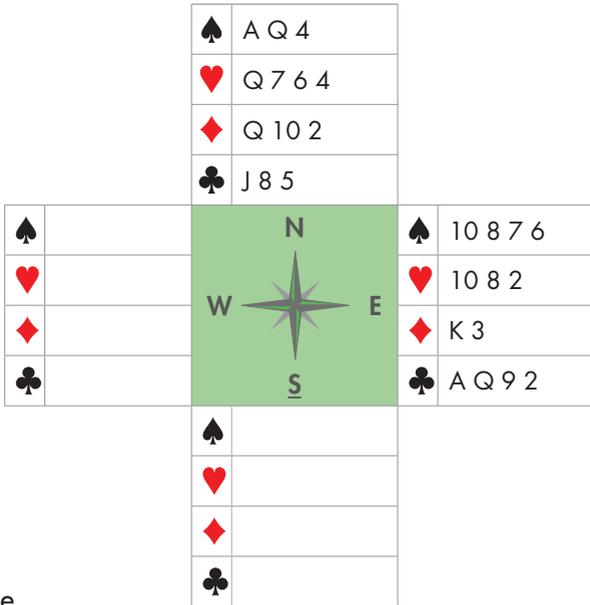
Defensive tricks: Our two aces. We must also assume that partner has the ace or king of spades. Still, this will only give us three tricks. Partner does not have a singleton club either, for with the expected trump control he would have led it. The only chance is to find partner with a doubleton in clubs. On the basis of this analysis, we should win the heart ace, and switch to a low club in order to retain an entry when partner gets in with the trump honor.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 19

Finding the only card that sets the contract



VUL: None

LEAD: ♦4

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

The hcp distribution

9 (our points) + 11 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 35-37

After the diamond four lead, declarer plays low from the dummy and our king takes the trick. What do we do next?

SOLUTION 19

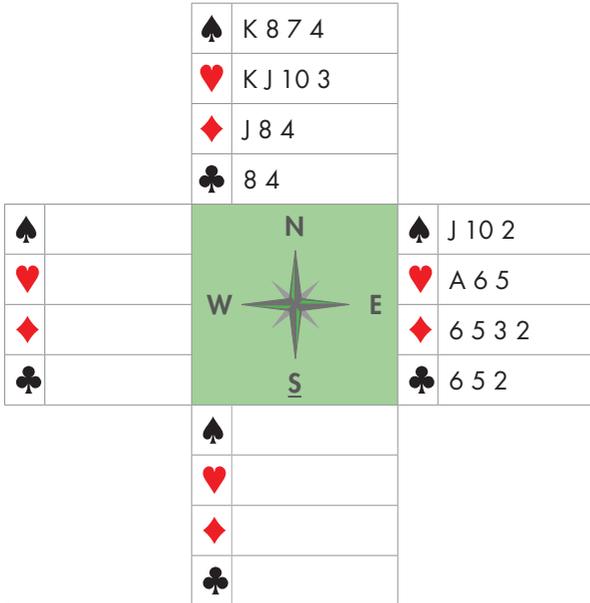
The hcp count tells the whole story. Partner's ace of diamonds is surely his only honor. Declarer cannot have a doubleton king of clubs, since his bidding showed four diamonds without a four-card major. Our last hope is to find partner with ♣10xx. Declarer can take no more than seven tricks in the major suits. Although the switch to the club queen will give him the eighth trick, partner will then rise with his diamond ace and play a club through dummy's jack.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 20

Counting up to 13



VUL: None
LEAD: ♣A

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

The hcp distribution

5 (our points) + 8 (dummy) + 14-18 (declarer) = 27-31

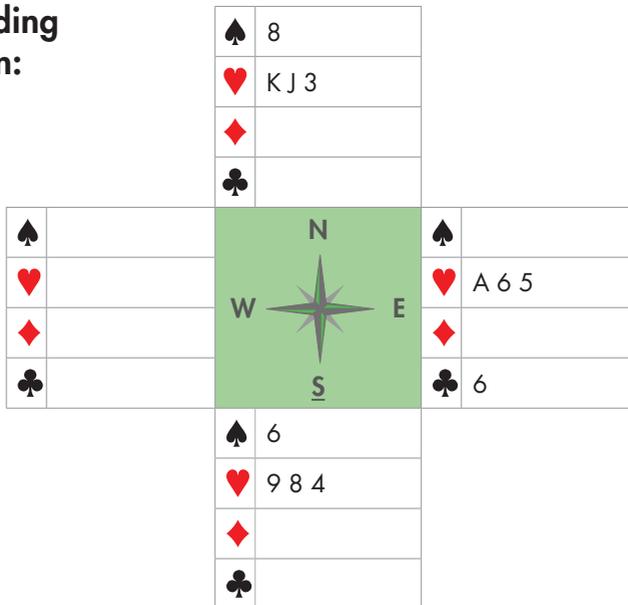
Let us look at the first nine tricks played:

DEVELOPING HABITS

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

DEVELOPING HABITS

The ending position:



SOLUTION 20

Declarer has shown four spades, four diamonds and two clubs. He is left with three hearts and a trump. It will do no harm to play a club now, since a ruff and discard will not help declarer.

Full hand

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

CHAPTER 3

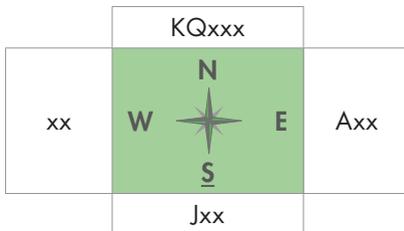
TECHNIQUES

At this point we should be aware of defenders' obligations and we will now turn our attention to some of the defensive techniques. They are not only for defenders – declarer considers them as well – but it is usually more difficult for the defending side to recognize the necessity of using them at a particular moment.

The most common techniques are ducking, rising and unblocking.

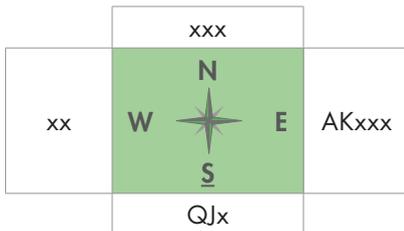
Ducking is refraining from winning a trick which can be won. It may serve several purposes; however, most often it is to:

1. Disrupt opponents' communication.



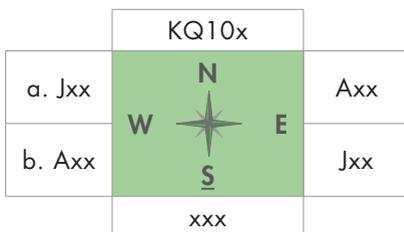
In a notrump contract, holding up the ace twice breaks communication in this suit; and, if there are no other entries to North's hand, it reduces declarer's tricks from four to two.

2. Retain one's own communication.



Again, in a notrump contract, the first defender leads small from doubleton. By ducking, his partner retains communication and leaves an access to score four tricks later.

3. Conceal the location of the honors.



South exits low from his hand, and the following scenarios may develop:

In a) East should duck dummy's king. Declarer may assume that (b) is the actual layout and returns to hand to continue with low to the queen.

Equally, if b) is the case, West should hold up twice, hoping that declarer will play according to scenario (a).

The following hand, where declarer is playing 3NT, is an interesting illustration of the usefulness of ducking:

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

West leads a small heart to dummy's four and East's jack. Declarer wins with the ace, crosses to the dummy in diamonds, and takes the failing club finesse. West continues with hearts, finally defeating the contract two down.

South could have done better by ducking the heart jack. The defense would have been helpless.

But then again, East could have done better as well; ducking the first heart trick and the contract will be down by two as well.

Rising is playing one's highest card after any lead.

The general rule requires playing a low card in this position, but there are numerous exceptions, such as covering an honor card with an honor card, rising up with the ace when suspecting a singleton in the closed hand, or playing a high honor whenever we need to gain tempo. The latter case is illustrated by the following deal:

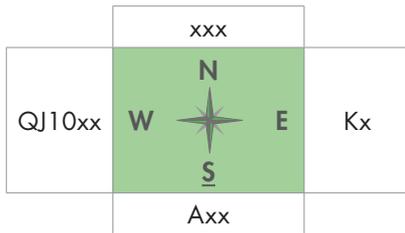
		♠ 5 4 3	
		♥ K Q 8 6	
		♦ A Q 4 2	
		♣ Q 5	
♠ 7 2		N W  E S	♠ K J 10 9 8 6
♥ 10 7 5 3 2			♥ J 9
♦ 8 7			♦ K 9 5
♣ A 8 7 3			♣ K 4
		♠ A Q	
		♥ A 4	
		♦ J 10 6 3	
		♣ J 10 9 6 2	

During the auction, East enters the bidding with spades; South's final contract is 3NT. Declarer wins the spade lead and plays a club. Failing to rise with the ace and playing a spade allows the contract to be made.

Unblocking is getting rid of a high card in order to maintain communication with partner.

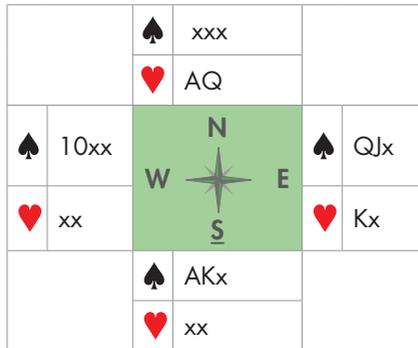
It may serve a number of purposes, mainly:

1. To facilitate cashing a long suit in the opposite hand.



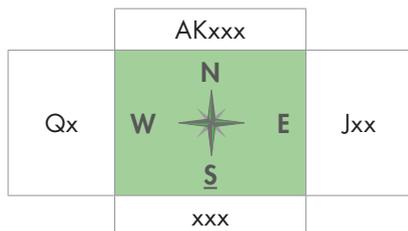
To the lead of the queen, East should unblock the king; otherwise, South will duck twice, and as many as two entries will be necessary to develop and use West's winners.

2. To avoid a throw-in.



In a five-card ending, South cashes the ace and king of spades. East should follow with the queen and jack so that his partner can win the third spade with the ten. Thus, East avoids the necessity to lead away from his king of heart to the ace and queen in the dummy.

3. To complicate declarer's attempt of putting the secure defender on lead.



South must not let East in. So, he exits low with the intention of ducking when West produces the queen. West should discard the queen on a side suit only if an opportunity arises.

4. To create an entry for partner waiting with winning tricks.

There are two variations of this theme: **Deschappelles Coup** and **Emperor's Coup**.

Deschappelles Coup is the lead of an unsupported honor to create an entry to partner's hand; it is often confused with the **Merrimac Coup** — the lead of an unsupported honor to remove an entry in an opponent's hand.

An Emperor's Coup is a rare defensive coup in which a defender discards a high card (often an ace) to create an entry to partner's hand.

EXAMPLE 1

An elementary hold-up

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

N
Q J 9 6

W
E

S
Q 6 4

A J 4

VUL: None

LEAD: ♦J

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

Declarer wins the jack of diamonds lead with the ace, and plays a club to dummy's king. What should we do?

SOLUTION 1

This is rather elementary; we duck, playing low. If declarer has only two clubs in hand, this move will prevent him from cashing dummy's prospective winners.

Full hand

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

Certainly, declarer could have done better. He should have played a small club towards the nine in the first club trick. Even then, a hold-up might still work: South, fearing that the club distribution might be AJxx – x, may repeat the finesse; this time playing towards the ten.

EXAMPLE 2

Choosing the right card

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

VUL: All
LEAD: ♠7

W	N	E	S
			1 ♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	4NT
Pass	5 ♦	Pass	6 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details

2NT shows a game forcing bid with support

Partner's spade seven lead is 3rd/5th. When the dummy is laid down, we are positively surprised to find that our trump king is favorably located. Is there a possibility of employing any of our techniques?

SOLUTION 2

It is not the sort of situation that would justify leading away from the ace – we can practically exclude such a scenario. Since it is possible to lead away from an honor by playing the seven of spades, let us present the jack in order to find out which honor our partner holds.

Full hand

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

If we had played the king of spades in the first trick, we would have been faced with a difficult problem after winning with the trump king; we would not be certain where the second trick would come from: would it be the spade queen or the club ace?

EXAMPLE 3

Active defense

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

VUL: None

LEAD: ♠10

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

The hcp distribution

7 (our points) + 14 (dummy) + 12-14 (declarer) = 33-35

Declarer takes the spade ten lead with the jack, crosses to the king of diamonds, and leads a low club. What is our plan?

SOLUTION 3

Partner holds 5 to 7 hcp. What does he hold in spades? As the auction reveals, South has three spades at most. Therefore, partner's possible holdings are Q109xx, A109xx, K109xx.

In the former two cases, our decision is irrelevant. In the latter, we must immediately take the ace of clubs and return a spade through declarer.

Full hand

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

As you can see, after ducking the first club, setting the contract is no longer possible. The problem would get tougher if defenders' club honors were switched.

EXAMPLE 4

Simply counting declarer's tricks

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

VUL: All

LEAD: ♠Q

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

Bidding details

2NT is invitational with heart support.

South takes the queen of spades lead with the ace, cashes the ace and king of trumps, and leads a low diamond from the dummy. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 4

The defense is simple, we just have to count declarer's tricks: The ace of spades, six hearts, and the ace and queen of clubs, which add up to nine. The diamond ace would give South his tenth trick. The conclusion: we ought to rise with the king of diamonds, especially that declarer's playing sequence suggests that he holds the jack. If it is singleton, failure to put up the king will prove fatal, as our king will later fall prey to a ruffing finesse.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 5

Disrupting declarer's communication

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

VUL: None

LEAD: ♦J

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

Bidding details

2♦ is waiting
 2NT shows 22-23 hcp
 3♦ is a transfer to hearts

We lead the diamond jack, South wins with the ace in hand and plays a heart. What do we do now?

SOLUTION 5

Whatever the hcp distribution reveals in this case, we should focus on a very important piece of information obtained from South's bidding – he has a doubleton in hearts; therefore, we must play the queen. Following low will give declarer at least one extra trick (or many more, if partner is not alert enough to duck).

Full hand

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

Playing the queen of hearts will give us two tricks in the suit, since declarer will have to rely on his only remaining chance: both king and queen in our hand. Therefore, he will duck and repeat the finesse later.

EXAMPLE 6

It was easy to foresee...

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

VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♥A

W	N	E	S
			1 ♠
X	XX	Pass	Pass
2 ♣	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

The hcp distribution

14 (our points) + 14 (dummy) + 11-12 (declarer) = 39-40

After the ace of hearts lead, the nine is played from the dummy, partner plays the four and declarer plays the two. We play the king next, the ten is played from the dummy, our partner follows with the five, and declarer with the three. What are the prospects?

SOLUTION 6

Partner can only have 0 to 1 hcp, but we will not be able to set the contract on our own.

The suit distribution: South has five spades and three hearts. If his minor distribution are two diamonds and three clubs, he will eliminate diamonds with a ruff, cross to the dummy and exit with a club, playing low from hand. We will be endplayed, forced to give declarer a ruff and discard or lead to his club ten-ace. Thus, we have to assume that declarer has three diamonds and the ace and queen of clubs second. To avoid an endplay, we have to be ready to unblock by playing the queen and jack of diamonds in the first two diamond tricks. Finding our partner with the ten is our only hope.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 7

Going against the routine to preserve communication

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

VUL: All

LEAD: ♠9

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

Partner's nine of spades is covered by dummy's honor. What do we do?

SOLUTION 7

Decisive reasoning can be drawn from the auction. Bearing in mind that with five spades, even 5-5 in majors, South would have bid them; partner's card can by no means be a singleton. If the opening lead is from a doubleton, winning the ace will break the only link between our hands. We must therefore duck so that our partner, after getting in with trumps, could reach us for the ruff.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 8

Preserving communication with partner to avoid an endplay

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

VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♥Q

W	N	E	S
			1 ♠
X	2NT	Pass	4 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details

2NT is invitational with support

The hcp distribution

15 (our points) + 9 (dummy) + 12-13 (declarer) = 36-37

We lead the queen of hearts, low from the dummy, while partner overtakes with the king and switches to the eight of clubs. South wins with the ace and exits with a diamond. Partner has already shown his 3 hcp; how shall we defend?

SOLUTION 8

Defensive tricks: One in each suit. However, there is a certain danger. South accepted the game invitation with 13 hcp only. This suggests distributional extras, probably six spades. From partner's club eight switch (2nd/4th), we can deduce that declarer holds ♣AKJ; and, from South's hold-up of the opening lead, we understand that he has more than one card in the suit. If his shape is 6-2-2-3, he will eliminate hearts with a ruff, cash the diamond king and endplay us with the king of trumps; he would force us to concede the tenth trick. Remember, after the double, the position of the spade king is pretty clear.

To sabotage this operation, we must play the jack of diamonds, hoping that partner holds the ten; otherwise, we will be endplayed.

Full hand

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

SOLUTION 9

Partner has the queen of spades at most; he probably holds it, judging from the lead of a small spot.

Defensive tricks: One spade, one diamond and one heart.

Declarer's tricks: Five clubs, one spade and at least four trumps, including a ruff.

The conclusion: We have to reach our partner to get a diamond return before declarer cashes his clubs. The only way is through the queen of spades; therefore, we should play the jack. If it turns out that declarer has both the king and the queen, we only give the declarer one overtrick. If, on the other hand, our calculations prove false and our partner holds the king, this would only mean that we have made a safety play.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 10

Going against the routine to get an extra trick

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

VUL: None

LEAD: ♥10

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

Naturally, we lead a heart. Partner cashes two tricks with the queen and ace of hearts respectively, and continues with the king, dropping declarer's jack. What card do we play?

SOLUTION 10

Let us count the defensive tricks. We already have two tricks and an opportunity to get a third one if we ruff with the queen of spades, but we should resist this temptation. The two tricks necessary to set the contract can only be in the trump suit.

Of course, if partner has (♠J108), he should have played a low heart in the third trick. If he has the ace of spades, our play is irrelevant. If, however, he holds the king and we ruff with the queen, the king will be successfully finessed against. On the other hand, ducking the queen will force declarer to ruff in the dummy, making it no longer possible to avoid two trump losers.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 11

Going against the routine to disrupt communication

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

VUL: None

LEAD: ♥7

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

Partner leads the seven of hearts (2nd/4th), and we follow low. South takes with the ace and plays the jack of spades; three from partner, two from the dummy. Let us start planning the defense.

SOLUTION 11

While defending, it is much better to think a trick too early than a trick too late. If declarer's strange handling of the trump suit (failure to cash one of the top honors) does not alert us and we win with the queen of spades, we cannot compensate for this no matter how sincere our efforts are.

The key to the hand is to count the tricks before winning with the queen, and only from a quite limited perspective. Taking the queen earns one trick, but sacrifices two; declarer will cross to the dummy with the nine of spades, take a ruffing finesse against our heart king and will reach the dummy again with the ace of spades to use his two heart winners. We can win one trick by ducking, which in itself is rather sufficient, given that we are uncertain as to what is the optimum switch. The hcp count allocates 6 to 8 points with partner, which we must assume will suffice to set the contract.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 12

Going against the routine to complicate declarer's plans

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

VUL: N - S
LEAD: ♦A

W	N	E	S
			1 ♥
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	4 ♣	Pass	4NT
Pass	5 ♠	Pass	6 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details

2♠ is game forcing with 6♠
4♣ is a cue bid, agreeing on hearts
5♠ shows 2 aces + Q♥

Our ace of diamonds is followed by partner's ten and South's jack. The next diamond trick is taken by declarer's queen. The declarer then crosses to the dummy in spades, plays the heart queen, and, when it holds, another heart to the ten in his hand. He continues with another spade to the dummy, discards the diamond king on the third spade, ruffs a diamond in hand and exits with a low club. What is declarer trying to accomplish?

SOLUTION 12

Declarer is attempting to execute a **Trump Coup**: Our partner holds the heart king, guarded by three spots, which could not be successfully finessed against. Declarer is trying to shorten his trump holding in hand to make it equal to our partner's holding; eventually, in a two-card ending, declarer will exit with a plain-suit card from the dummy towards his ace and jack of hearts, while partner has king and one in hearts.

In order to succeed, declarer needs two more entries to the dummy: one to shorten himself once more, the other one to play from the dummy, executing the coup. What is his shape?

Six hearts, two spades, three diamonds, which leaves room for two clubs. The conclusion: he underplayed his king to get in with the jack; by playing the queen of clubs, we will destroy his second entry.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 13

Using suit preference to draw the plan of defense

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

VUL: E - W

LEAD: ♦A

W	N	E	S
			Pass
1 ♠	X	2 ♠	3 ♥
3 ♠	4 ♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Bidding details

2♠ is a weak raise

The hcp distribution

16 (our points) + 15 (dummy) + 6-9 (declarer) = 37-40

Rarely do we have such an obvious opening lead. We cash two diamonds, but declarer ruffs the third one, and plays a club (partner plays the diamond three, five and ten). Let us think things over!

SOLUTION 13

Defensive tricks: One spade (provided that South is not holding a singleton ace), two diamonds, and one club.

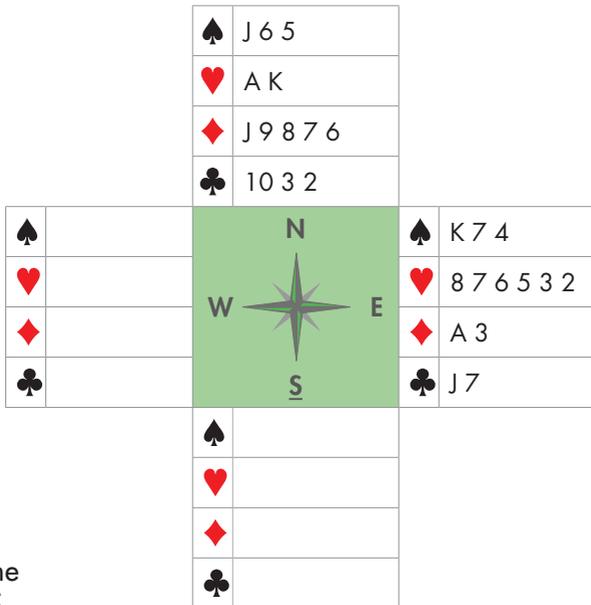
If we follow low to the first club, declarer will win, draw trumps, ruff the last diamond and exit with a club, forcing us to fatally underplay the king of spades. Therefore, we must assume that partner has the club queen, and immediately unblock our king.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 14

Using suit preference to locate partner's entry and drawing a non-obvious conclusion



VUL: None
LEAD: ♣5

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

Bidding details
1NT shows 15-17 hcp

The hcp distribution

8 (our points) + 9 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 32-34

After partner's five of clubs lead, we cover dummy's ten with the jack, which takes the trick. Naturally, we continue with clubs, to South's queen and partner's ace. In the third trick, partner plays the club four. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 14

It is rather clear that declarer ducked with ♣KQx to destroy our communication. Evidently, he succeeded. Looking at the hcp distribution, we can see that partner has 6 to 8 hcp, including the ace of clubs. To realistically hope to set the contract, we must find partner with an entry in diamonds, preferably the king. Perhaps the queen would suffice, too. What if declarer has ♦Kxxx? He will play a small diamond from the dummy to the king and concede the second diamond trick to our ace, thereby proving that his club maneuver is absolutely correct. To obstruct such a line of play, we have to discard the diamond ace on the third club.

Full hand

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

This defense was executed by Jean Besse, in a match between Switzerland and Japan at the World Championship, in Biarritz, in 1982 (He was awarded for the most brilliant technical play of the Championship). This kind of play, creating entry to partner's hand by unblocking, is an example of the **Emperor's Coup**.

EXAMPLE 15

The only chance

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

VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♣J

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

Bidding details

2NT is a good hand with
14+hcp

The hcp distribution

14 (our points) + 11 (dummy) + 14-15 (declarer) = 39-40

Declarer wins our jack of clubs lead with the king in hand, crosses to the diamond ace, and leads the spade jack. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 15

Before we plan anything, we should duck this trick instantly. Only then can we verify the correctness of our decision.

Winning with the spade queen and returning a club would not be effective. Declarer, forced to rely on the diamond finesse, would no doubt win it. Ducking comes with no guarantee, either, but if declarer tries another spade finesse, we are to continue with the ace and another club. With no immediate entry to his hand, declarer will have no choice but to let us in.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 16

Combining Smith echo with suit preference

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

VUL: None

LEAD: ♠5

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

The hcp distribution

9 (our points) + 8 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 32-34

After our spade five lead, partner plays the jack captured by South's ace. Declarer crosses to the ace of diamonds (partner plays the seven) and leads the club ten; five from our partner, nine from the declarer. What is our plan?

SOLUTION 16

Partner has 6 to 8 hcp, including the queen and jack of spades. Or does he? After all, we all know this kind of deceptive play by declarer: winning with a higher card than necessary to encourage the continuation of the opening lead. If South does indeed resort to such a trick with ♠AQx, the spade continuation will let the declarer make his contract, while the heart switch would defeat it (provided partner has his maximum in the form of ♠J and ♥AQ).

On the other hand, if we do have four spade tricks and fail to cash them, partner will not complain since we always choose polite partners. Can the two major-suits chances be combined?

This puzzle was solved by Polish champion Andrzej Wilkosz at a tournament in Switzerland. He cashed the king of spades! If partner does have the queen, he will unblock it to the king. If the queen of spades does not appear, we should then switch to the heart king.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 17

Too early to relax

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

VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♣A

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

The hcp distribution

6 (our points) + 10 (dummy) = 16

Partner gets off to a good start by playing the ace, king and two of clubs. We ruff, but declarer overruffs with the ten and proceeds to cash three spades: The ace, queen and eight of spades. He then crosses to the heart king and cashes the king of trumps. Plan the defense.

SOLUTION 17

Partner and declarer should have 12 hcp each. South has already presented six points in spades. He has the ace of hearts, too, or else partner would have played it to force dummy's last trump with a club, thereby securing a huge penalty. It leaves declarer with 2 hcp in diamonds. Let us count his tricks: Five spades and three hearts. We can relax since the contract will be two down.

For the sake of developing good habits, however, let us think of our discard to the spade king (we have already parted with three diamonds); we certainly should not discard a heart (there is no reason to give a trick away), should we then discard the ten of diamonds? However, if partner holds the diamond king, the value of our (♦J10) is equal to the ace. So yes, let us play the ace of diamonds. It may even save us if partner opened light (if he has the queen instead of the king of diamonds): when a diamond is led from the dummy and we still have (♦AJ), declarer will get two diamond tricks. Unblocking the ace will allow partner to take the second diamond trick and use his club winners.

Full hand

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

SOLUTION 18

After winning with the ace of diamonds, declarer leads a small heart from the dummy. We must wake up and rise with the queen! It can do us no harm, and will often help set the contract.

Following with the heart two solves all of declarer's problems. On the other hand, playing the queen and preferably switching to trumps, leaves him helpless.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 19

Being prepared for the crucial moment

		♠	K J 9	
		♥	9 8 5	
		♦	A K 5 3	
		♣	J 9 4	
♠				♠
♥				♥
♦				♦
♣				♣

VUL: All
LEAD: ♥2

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

Bidding details

1NT shows 15-17 hcp

The hcp distribution

11 (our points) + 12 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 38-40

Tricks:

- 1) ♥2 ♥5 ♥K ♥7
- 2) ♥J ♥3 ♥4 ♥8
- 3) ♥6 ♥A ♥10 ♥9
- 4) ♠2 ♠3 ♠J ♠5
- 5) ♦3 ?

SOLUTION 19

Partner has 2 hcp – the queen of hearts.
 We need to be prepared for when this moment comes. We should have already counted up to 40; therefore, we must duck the diamond three without the slightest hesitation. We hope declarer has the nine in addition to the jack and mishandles the suit.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 20

Holding up to gain a trick

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

VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♥10

W	N	E	S
		1 ♥	2 ♥
3 ♥	Pass	Pass	4 ♠
X	Pass	Pass	Pass

Bidding details

2♥ shows 5+♠, 5+ minor

Declarer showed a strong hand with six spades and five in a minor suit. This information is sufficient to prepare an effective defense plan.

SOLUTION 20

Upon winning with the heart ace, a trump switch seems natural. But the problem does not end here.

Declarer's second suit is obviously diamonds. Upon trying to establish this suit, we should not fear losing the trick of the diamond ace. By ducking twice, we may encourage declarer to finesse against the jack, thereby gaining an extra trick.

Full hand

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

CHAPTER 4

SECURITY AND COOPERATION

In this chapter, which sounds like a perfect headline for any daily newspaper, we wish to address issues often neglected in bridge, even by experienced defenders.

What is a "safe" lead? Do we lead from an attacking combination, such as a suit headed by AK, KQJ or QJ10? Of course, these are usually good choices for a lead to any contract, but we will not always be dealt these easy holdings and therefore we will sometimes have to select a more passive lead. Passive leads include a lead from a suit without any honors especially one in which we do not expect partner to hold any honor either, or a lead from length (such as fourth best). Even though underleading an honor is "standard" to a notrump contract, it can be risky against a suit contract. Length, however, gives us a margin of safety — the longer your suit, the less likely it is that declarer needs to develop his own tricks. A trump lead may also be a good passive lead in some cases.

It is almost certain that any declarer will always opt for safely securing his contract whenever possible, sometimes even sacrificing overtricks in order not to endanger the contract. We are still trying, often sacrificing overtricks, to guard against some extraordinary distribution of the suits or the honors, which might endanger the contract.

The same should apply on the other side of the table.

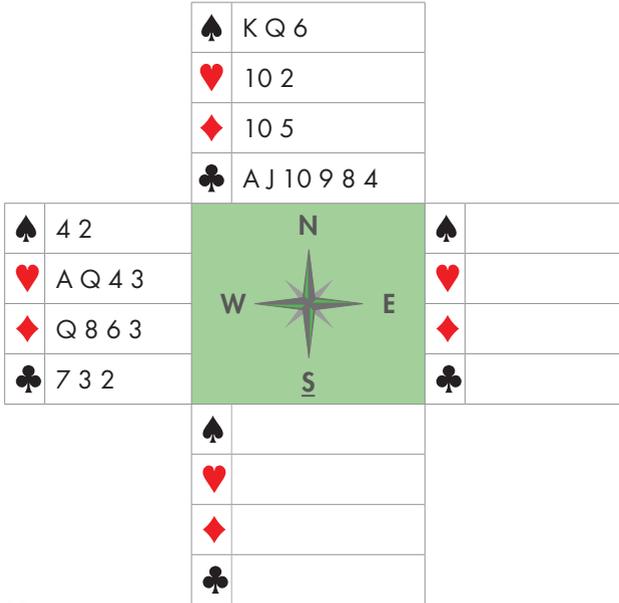
When defeating the contract seems to be certain, we should guard ourselves against declarer's unexpected assets, his extraordinary plays and, last but not least, our partner's mistakes.

Rarely do both defenders equally have a clear picture of the hand (more often, I dare say, none of them has a clue what is going on). If we know more about the hand than our partner and if the fate of the contract depends on his decision, we must use every opportunity to help guide him. It will be much more beneficial than blaming partner afterwards for failing to find an obvious play.

Mutual help between defenders will significantly reduce the number of errors committed.

EXAMPLE 1

Safe defense



VUL: None

LEAD: ♦3

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

The hcp distribution

$$8 \text{ (our points)} + 10 \text{ (dummy)} + 15\text{-}17 \text{ (declarer)} = 33\text{-}35$$

After our diamond three lead and low from dummy, partner takes the trick with the diamond ace (diamond two from South), and continues with the nine of diamonds (diamond seven from South). Partner has 5 to 7 hcp, including four points in diamonds. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 1

The suit distribution: South has \spadesuit KJ72.

If partner holds the heart king, we could cash three top heart tricks. But then declarer would have three spades, the king of diamonds and six clubs, – ten in total – and would not duck the second diamond. Therefore, based on declarer’s play, we may assume that partner has either the club king or the spade ace. In both cases, our partner will get to his hand before declarer can collect nine tricks. So, what will he do when he does get in?

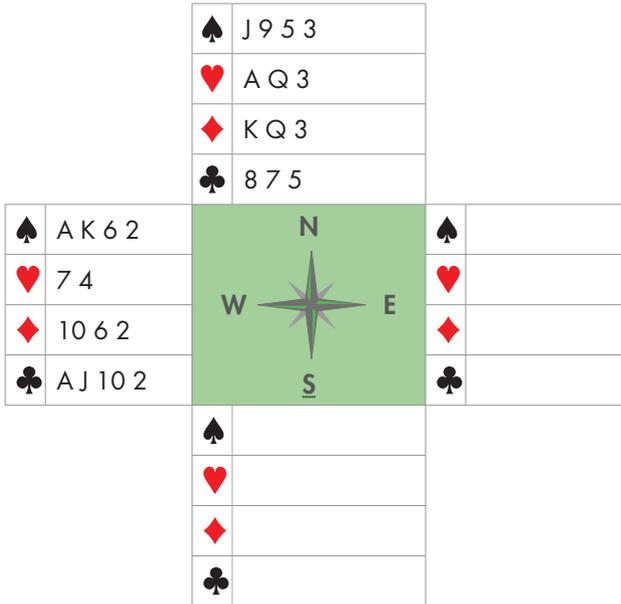
The worst thing he can do is return diamonds, counting on our \spadesuit KQ83 to provide the setting trick. To protect our partner from this fatal mistake, we should play the third diamond immediately, simply depriving declarer from the card that might let him make his contract.

Full hand

		\spadesuit K Q 6	
		\heartsuit 10 2	
		\diamondsuit 10 5	
		\clubsuit A J 10 9 8 4	
\spadesuit 4 2		\spadesuit 9 8 7 5 3	
\heartsuit A Q 4 3		\heartsuit 8 6 5	
\diamondsuit Q 8 6 3		\diamondsuit A 9 4	
\clubsuit 7 3 2		\clubsuit K 6	
		\spadesuit A J 10	
		\heartsuit K J 9 7	
		\diamondsuit K J 7 2	
		\clubsuit Q 5	

EXAMPLE 2

An assault on communication



VUL: N - S
 LEAD: ♠A

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

The hcp distribution

12 (our points) + 12 (dummy) + 12-14 (declarer) = 36-38

Our spade ace lead is followed by the three, seven and eight. Partner has 2 to 4 hcp, including the spade queen. How should we proceed?

SOLUTION 2

The suit distribution: South has five hearts and four diamonds (if he has more in either suit, our defense is unimportant), and a singleton spade; hence, three clubs. If he has ♣KQx, we should not bother since the contract is cold. The only chance to set the contract is to find partner with the club queen. Having reached this conclusion, we should just sit back and wait for our club tricks, right? Wrong! If we continue with spades, declarer will ruff, cross to a diamond honor, ruff another spade, return to the dummy via trumps and ruff the last spade. Finally, he will cash the heart king, cross to the dummy with the other diamond honor, draw the last trump and take the two remaining diamond winners. All in all, he will get three spade ruffs in hand, three top hearts and four diamonds. The key mistake is the spade continuation in the second trick. Left alone, the declarer will lack entries to the dummy to execute the whole operation.

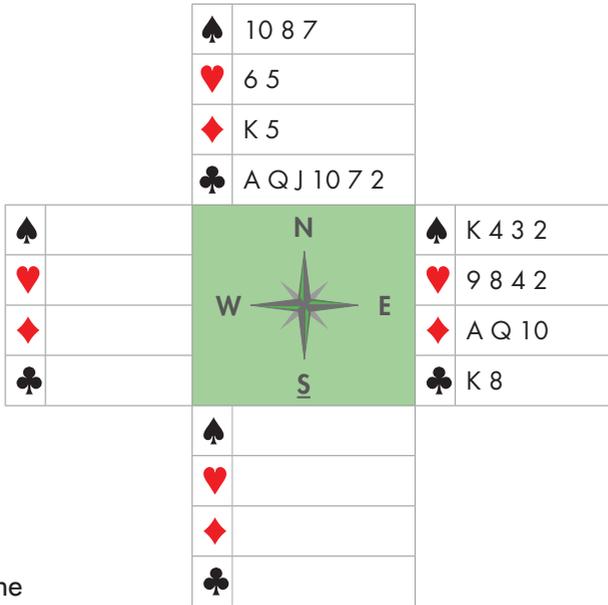
Conclusion? After cashing the spade ace, we should switch to trumps to prevent the dummy reversal play by declarer.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 3

Safety takes priority



VUL: None
LEAD: ♠Q

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

Bidding details
1NT shows 13-15 hcp, balanced

The hcp distribution

$$12 \text{ (our points)} + 10 \text{ (dummy)} + 13-15 \text{ (declarer)} = 35-37$$

Partner’s spade queen lead holds (we follow with the four). Our partner continues with the spade six to our king and South’s ace. Declarer plays the club nine, ducking in the dummy (three from West). Our partner has 3 to 5 hcp; three of them in spades. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 3

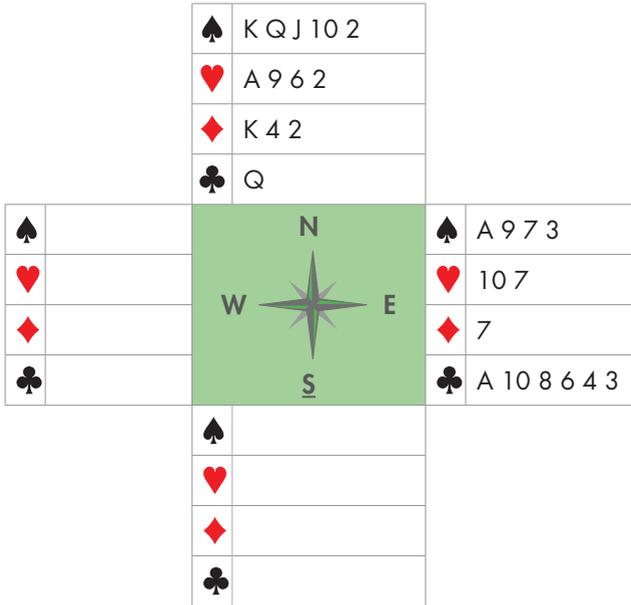
The suit distribution: This is something we should have thought of by now, preferably during the first trick, because it was necessary to duck the club, without the slightest hesitation. The solution lies in partner's play in the second trick; had he initially led from ♠QJx, he would have continued with the jack. However, since he continued low, the opening lead must have been from ♠QJxx, but ducking would not only be useless, yet also dangerous; so we must win the king and count defenders' tricks: Three spades, two diamonds and one club; two down. If we carelessly return a spade, our partner will face a dilemma of switching to diamonds or hearts after cashing two spades. If he guesses well, the contract will be two down; but, if he misguesses, declarer will successfully make his contract. So, we must curb our greed and cash the diamond ace first. A bird in hand is...

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 4

Clarifying the situation in order to get a ruff



VUL: All
LEAD: ♣5

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

Bidding details
4♣ is a splinter

Partner's lead of the five of clubs is 2nd/4th. We capture dummy's queen, while South drops the king. Let us plan further.

SOLUTION 4

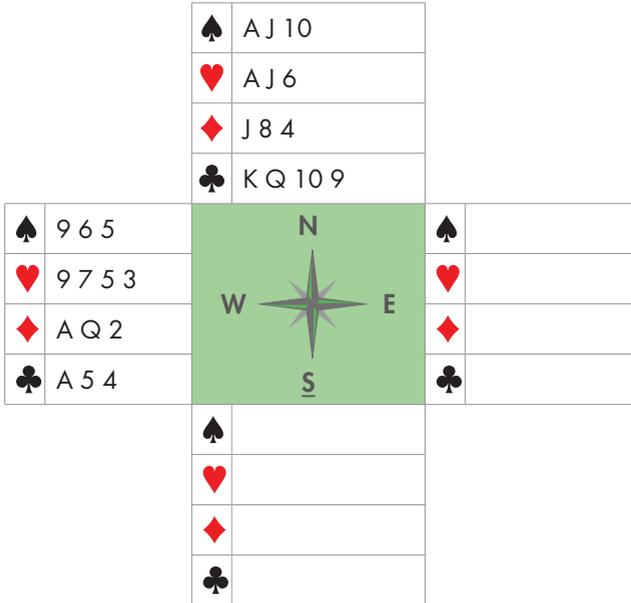
In practice, we should simply count the defensive tricks. In addition to the two black aces, we must rely on partner holding the diamond ace; let us try it then – switch to the diamond seven and get the ruff. But if partner has either \heartsuit AJ10 or \heartsuit AJ9, he might duck, hoping that we will regain the lead and play another diamond through declarer. In order to dismiss such an illusion of another entry, we should cash the spade ace before playing diamonds. Partner will hopefully not treat it as a preparation for a spade ruff (unlikely, if we analyze the bidding).

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 5

Safety play: choosing the right card to protect partner from misguessing



VUL: None
 LEAD: ♣A

W	N	E	S
	1NT	Pass	4 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

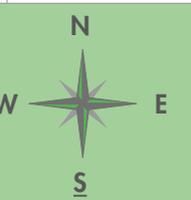
Bidding details
 South prefers to declare the game from his hand

Unsure what to lead, we decide to take a glance at the dummy with the club ace. Partner follows with the two. What next?

SOLUTION 5

One thing is clear, we have to cash three diamond tricks; therefore, we need to switch to diamonds right away.

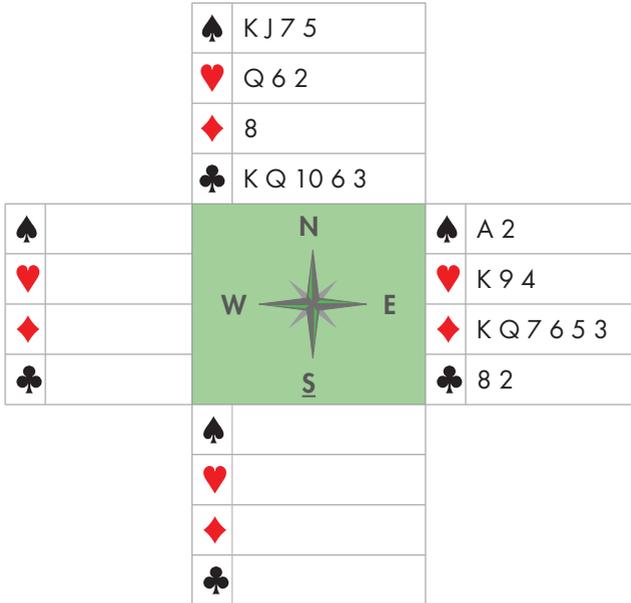
Full hand

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

- Nice theory, but reality bites! At the table, if we play:
- a) The ♦A and ♦2 – partner would immediately try to provide us with a club ruff;
 - b) The ♦2 – partner, a bit surprised at winning with the king, would switch to a club;
 - c) The ♦A and ♦Q – partner would agonize for minutes about the possibility of us having ♦AQ second; he might or might not guess. Through elimination we have found the correct play in the second trick: the ♦Q will not leave any room for partner to misguess.

EXAMPLE 6

Leading partner down the right track



VUL: E - W
 LEAD: ♦10

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

After the lead, declarer captures our queen with the ace and exits with the trump queen. We win with the ace and start planning.

SOLUTION 6

Once again, it will just be enough to count the defensive tricks. To set the contract, we must get three heart tricks and the club ace. Since partner's hearts may be AJ8 rather than AJ10, it will be necessary to start the suit from partner's side of the table by playing the jack. Well, why don't we simply lead a club in order to give him the opportunity?

It is next to certain that partner, upon winning the club ace, will return with a high club to indicate a heart entry for the next club ruff. It is not exactly the defense we will brag about later.

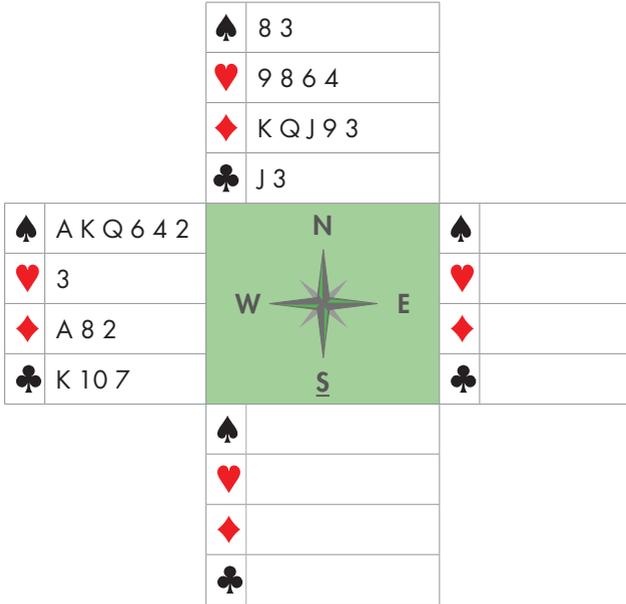
If, instead, we exit passively with a trump, partner, in with the club ace, will have no choice but to attack hearts.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 7

Safety play: counting up to 13



VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♠A

W	N	E	S
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦	4 ♥
4 ♠	5 ♥	5 ♠	6 ♥
X	Pass	Pass	Pass

Bidding details
1 ♣ is Polish club (12-14 hcp balanced or strong)
1 ♦ is negative (0-6 hcp)
4 ♠ is strong with 5+♠

We lead the ace of spades, but declarer ruffs and cashes two top hearts; partner follows with the heart two and jack. Declarer then plays the diamond five. How shall we defend?

SOLUTION 7

You may wonder where the problem is. At the World Championships in Rio, in a match between Venezuela and Brazil, the Venezuelan defender rose with the ace and switched to clubs. At the other table, the Brazilian defender also rose with the ace, but before the next trick he counted up to thirteen: South has a void in spades and six hearts, hence seven cards in the minors. Even though declarer has just set up four diamond winners in the dummy, he will not be able to discard the six remaining cards. Be as it may, if partner has the club ace, we could only cash two tricks, but, if partner does not have the ace or queen of clubs...

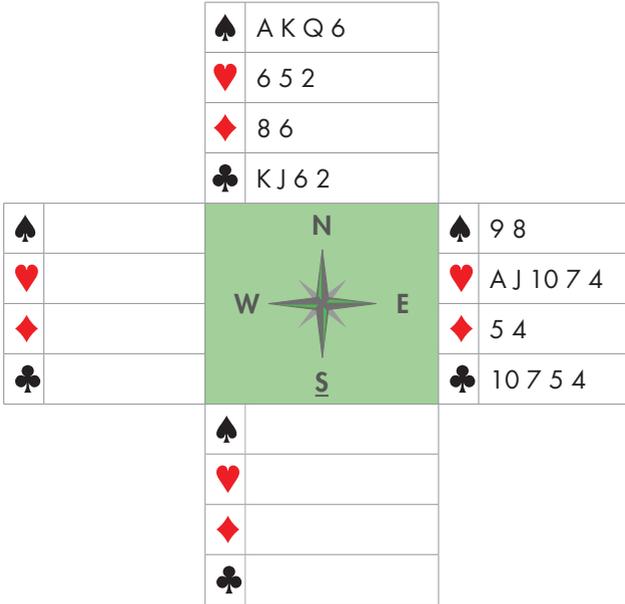
Refraining from the club switch is a fine example of a passive defense. Anyways, partner should play the heart jack, followed by the two in order to deny any club values.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 8

Clearing the way for partner



VUL: E -W
 LEAD: ♥3

W	N	E	S
	1 ♣	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	3 ♦
Pass	3 ♥	Pass	5 ♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details

1♣ shows 2+♣
 2♦ is natural and game forcing
 3♥ is asking for a heart stopper

Partner leads the three of hearts (3rd/5th); we win with the ace, while declarer follows with the heart nine. What should our next moves be?

SOLUTION 8

Defensive tricks: The ace of hearts. Assuming declarer's trumps are solid, we need the club ace and another heart trick to defeat the contract. Partner underled an honor-third – hopefully the king. What do we do?

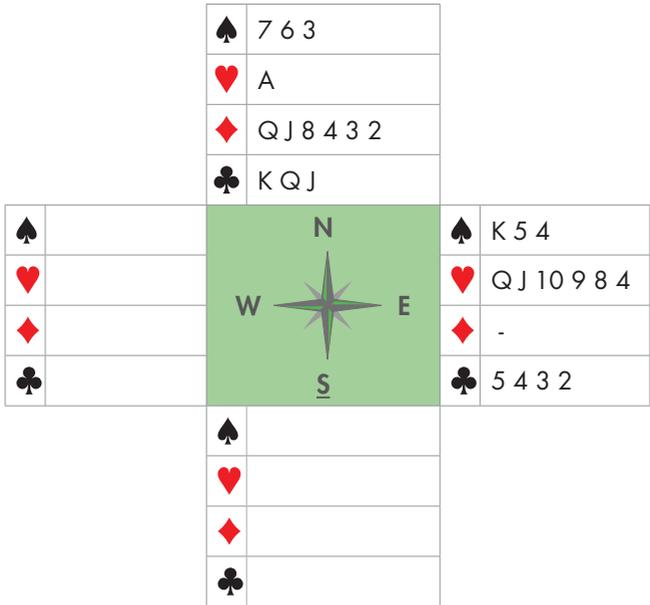
Returning the heart jack would be a serious mistake. Partner would face an unpleasant dilemma: was South's original holding ♥Q9 with a singleton club (in which case it is necessary to cash the club ace), or was it ♥Q9x with a club void? Trusting our analysis, partner should assume that there are three heart tricks to cash. If he continues this suit, we would be the only ones to blame for letting the contract make; therefore, the correct play is a small heart.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 9

A lesson for everyone



VUL: N - S
 LEAD: ♥6

W	N	E	S
	1 ♦	2 ♥	X
3 ♥	X*	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details
 X* shows 3 cards in ♠ and a good hand

The hcp distribution

6 (our points) + 13 (dummy) + 12-15 (declarer) = 31-34

After an auction where everybody proved active, the lead of the heart six is 2nd/4th; declarer plays the ace of hearts and we play the heart queen to show our sequence. Declarer then plays a small diamond from the dummy. What do we do now?

SOLUTION 9

The distribution of partner's hand should now be clear. Partner has three spades, three hearts, four diamonds and three clubs. Partner must have $\spadesuit A109x$ in order to cause some problems for declarer. At first glance, it looks like the best way is just to discard the club five - showing some values in spades. A careful defender should pitch the heart ten, since the fourth club can be useful.

Full hand

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

Knowing all four hands, we can imagine different scenarios for the declarer and the defenders.

a) After winning with the ace of diamonds and getting a strong suit preference from partner, West can decide to cash three spades since our partner knows that playing a heart would be suicidal (it would give an extra entry for the declarer to play a diamond from his hand and exit with a club). After cashing three spades, the seven-card ending would look like this:

		♠			
		♥			
		♦	Q J 8 4 3		
		♣	K Q		
♠		<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> N S </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> W E </div>		♠	
♥	7 2			♥	J 9 8 4
♦	10 9 6			♦	
♣	9 7			♣	5 4 3
		♠	Q		
		♥	K 5		
		♦	7 5		
		♣	A 10		

Now declarer can cash two clubs, the queen of spades and the king of hearts, but will still be missing one entry to finesse the ten and nine of diamonds; therefore, the contract will be set.

b) After winning with the ace of diamonds, West plays a club. Declarer wins in the dummy and plays a spade, then a club and again a spade; West wins with the ace of spades. The ending would look like this:

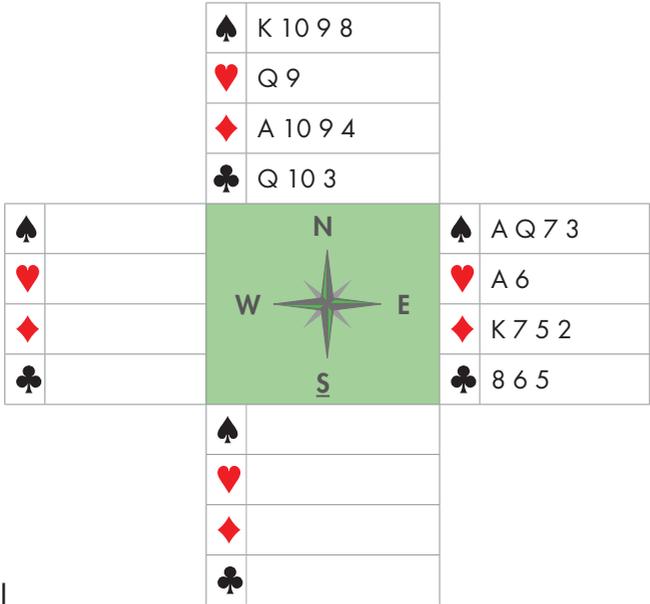
		♠	7		
		♥			
		♦	Q J 8 4 3		
		♣	K		
♠	J			♠	K
♥	7 2			♥	J 9 8 4
♦	10 9 6			♦	
♣	9			♣	5 4
		♠	Q 9		
		♥	K 5		
		♦	7 5		
		♣	A		

Now West continues to play clubs for the third time. South has to play a diamond from his hand and West has to play the nine or ten of diamonds. Declarer plays the seven of spades from the dummy, hoping that whoever wins the spade does not have the fourth club. It is very fortunate that we did not discard a club in the second trick. Of course if declarer had played a spade earlier, we could cash three spades and exit with a club, coming back to the ending from example a).

Even professional players have problems finding the killing defense. But this example is a perfect lesson for all players not to discard a card that might be useful later on.

EXAMPLE 10

Getting partner on the right track



VUL: All
LEAD: ♥7

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

The hcp distribution

13 (our points) + 11 (dummy) + 12-14 (declarer) = 36-38

Partner leads the seven of hearts, dummy plays the nine; we take with the ace and pause to consider our options. Partner has 2 to 4 hcp. Can we presume anything about the location of these modest assets?

SOLUTION 10

Let us examine the distribution of the heart suit. Partner's opening lead looks like fourth-best, which means it must have come from one of the following combinations: K1087x, KJ87x, KJ107x, J1087x. The last two are unlikely, given that they include sequences where the usual lead is an honor. It is highly probable that partner holds the king of hearts.

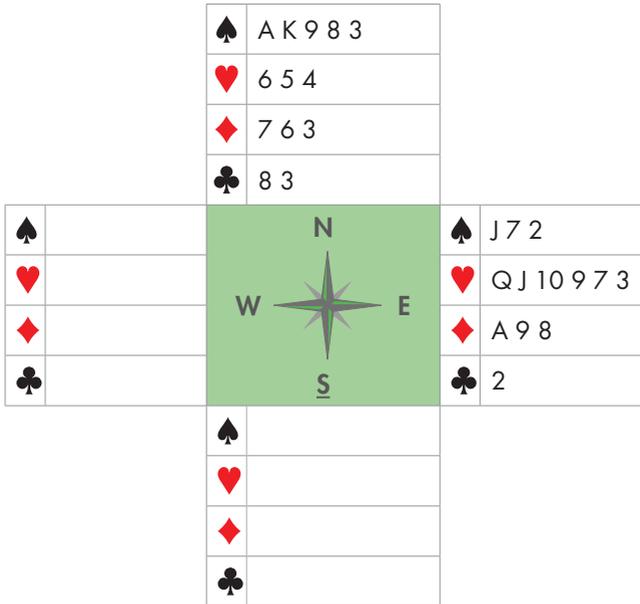
Defensive tricks: Two spades, two hearts and a diamond; this should be enough, but we must proceed with extreme care. The heart return would be risky; partner, unaware of the 4-2 division in the closed hands, might duck to preserve communication and later collect three heart tricks. For this reason, we should exit passively, for instance, with the eight of clubs. When we take the diamond king trick, we will then play a heart, leaving partner without any doubt as to the necessity of winning with the king.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 11

Against the routine: think, then act



VUL: None
 LEAD: ♥2

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

Bidding details
 South has 5-5 in the minors, 16-18 hcp and a first-round stopper in hearts.

Partner leads the two of hearts. Declarer wins with the ace and cashes the ace and king of clubs. We ruff and...?

SOLUTION 11

It would be convenient to play the ace of diamonds and another diamond to prevent any ruffs in the dummy; It is also crucial to never neglect making a defensive plan; but at this point, it is too late already. We should have planned it before the third trick was played.

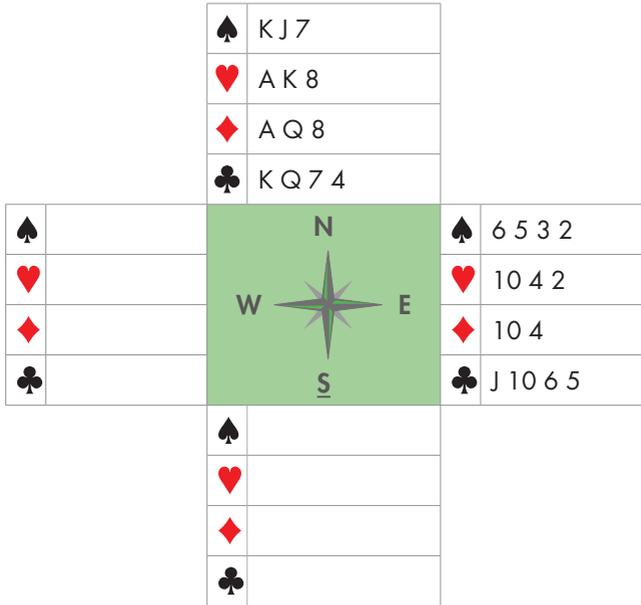
Declarer's tricks: Four trumps in hand, the ace and king of spades, the ace of hearts and the ace of clubs; eight in all. Although by ruffing the club king we have prevented the ninth trick that declarer hoped for, we still cannot prevent one club ruff. This, significantly, will constitute an entry to two spade winners, previously set up by a ruff in hand. Ducking the club king would have solved all our problems. Well, almost all. When declarer switches to the trump honor after winning with the club king, we should win with the ace and exit with a spade. Allowing declarer to draw all the trumps would have given him an opportunity to make the contract by ducking one spade. It is true that partner can prevent this by playing the queen in the first spade trick, but why put him through such a tough test?

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 12

Assisting partner with a suit preference signal



VUL: N - S
 LEAD: ♠10

W	N	E	S
			1NT
Pass	7NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Bidding details
 1NT shows 15-17 hcp

The hcp distribution

1 (our points) + 22 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 38-40

Partner can only have a maximum of two jacks after his spade ten lead; what is our plan?

SOLUTION 12

What do we hope partner can contribute?

The suit distribution: If South has four spades or hearts, the contract cannot be defeated. The only shape worth considering is South holding four diamonds.

If partner has ♠1098 ♥J975 ♦J975 ♣98, then, after following three times to spades and twice to clubs, he will be forced to part with a red suit card, leaving one of his jacks unguarded.

Can we assist partner in making the right decision?

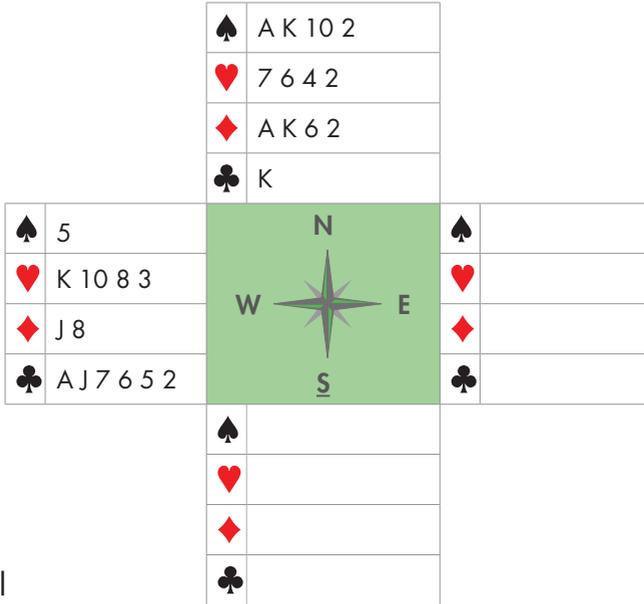
Of course we can! We should play spades from high to low, following with the jack to the third club trick – in other words, concentrate all our efforts on convincing partner that we control the heart suit. If he understands our signals, we will deserve the credit for setting the contract; if on the other hand he does not, then he does not deserve to be our partner!

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 13

Counting up to 13 to find a safe defense



VUL: All
LEAD: ♠5

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

Bidding details
2NT shows game forcing with support
3♠ shows 6+♠
5♦ shows one ace

The hcp distribution
 9 (our points) + 17 (dummy)
 + 12-14 (declarer) = 38-40

We lead the five of spades. Declarer draws trumps twice, plays the diamond queen and another diamond to the king, cashes the ace of diamonds (following from hand) and plays the fourth diamond. Partner covers, but declarer ruffs and exits with the queen of clubs. We win with the ace of clubs and start to plan the defense.

SOLUTION 13

Partner’s heart holding may range from small spots to the queen.

The suit distribution: Declarer’s shape looks like 6-3-3-1.

If we switch to a heart and find our partner with the queen, we will set the contract by two; even if declarer holds the queen, he will not escape the heart loser. The heart exit seems, therefore, obvious enough. Obvious as it may be, it is certainly not a safe choice. We have formed our picture of declarer’s hand on the basis of his club queen lead; but, the rules of the game do not forbid leading the queen if it is accompanied by other cards. The safe exit in our position is the jack of clubs. If South indeed has three hearts, this will give him a ruff and discard, but our heart king will be the setting trick. However, if South has two hearts, the heart exit would let him make his contract.

Full Hand

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

SOLUTION 14

This is an example where it is only a matter of counting the defensive tricks. We have the trump king, one heart (from the opening lead, we know that partner holds no more than four hearts) and one diamond, which will be enough to set the contract. Our partner, however, is unaware of that because he does not know the number of hearts in our hand (if we had six cards in hearts, it would be necessary for him to cash two diamonds). Therefore, we must overtake partner's queen with the ace and cash the heart trick. Neglecting to do so would place the blame entirely on us for letting the contract make.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 15

Destroying declarer's communication

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

VUL: E - W

LEAD: ♠Q

W	N	E	S
			2 ♣
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	6 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details

2♣ is game forcing
 3♦ shows the ace of diamonds;
 further bidding is natural.

We win partner's queen of spades lead with the ace, dropping South's king. What now?

SOLUTION 15

This is a typical situation where many defenders fail to find the correct play because they did not correctly plan the defense.

We can play the king of diamonds in order to examine the diamond suit, or we might switch to clubs. We may also simply continue with spades; continuing with spades seems like a perfectly safe exit. Unfortunately, none of these plays are safe. To be exact, they are considered dangerous plays; specifically, all of the above possibilities will allow the contract to make.

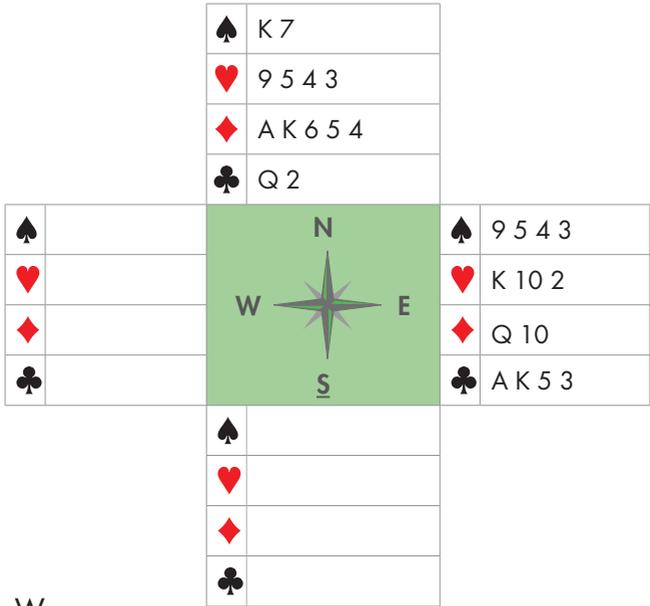
What does declarer's hand look like? Seven to eight hearts and probably ♣AK or ♣AKx. If he has a diamond loser, he cannot possibly get rid of it, but what if he has a singleton diamond and a club loser instead? Declarer would then be able to establish the fifth diamond. He needs four entries to the dummy. Does he have them? Yes: the diamond ace, a ruff, two heart entries to ruff two more diamonds, and the third heart to reach the diamond winner. Can we prevent this scenario? Certainly, by switching to a trump in the second trick, we will force declarer to prematurely use one of his entries.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 16

Thoughtful cooperation



VUL: E - W
 LEAD: ♣J

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

The hcp distribution

12 (our points) + 12 (dummy) + 6-10 (declarer) = 30-34

Tricks:

- 1) ♣J ♣Q ♣K ♣4
- 2) ♠3 ♠6 ♠8 ♠K
- 3) ♦4 ♦Q ♦2 ♦3
- 4) ?

SOLUTION 16

The suit distribution: declarer has 5+♠ and 3♦.

Partner has 6 to 10 hcp. Passive defense will not do. Since the location of the jack of diamonds, crucial for determining the line of defense, is unknown, we should hand over the control to partner, supplying him with the necessary information. Having won the diamond queen, we should play the club three, showing exactly four clubs. Now partner, without the diamond jack, must start cashing hearts. If, on the other hand he does have the diamond jack, he may try a more sophisticated defense: by playing clubs for the third time, he will put declarer in the dummy without a quick return to hand.

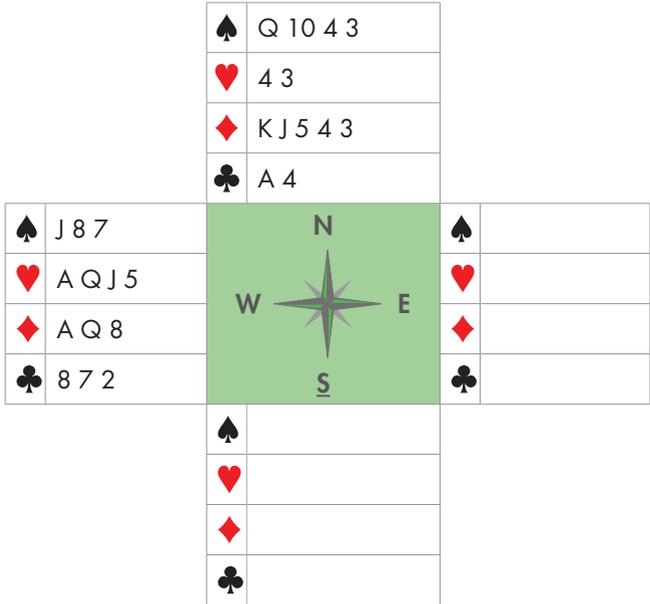
Helplessly, declarer will lead hearts. We will rise with the king and play the diamond ten, which will later provide us with a diamond ruff. A textbook example of excellent cooperation between defenders.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 17

Thoughtful cooperation: preventing a throw-in



VUL: E - W
 LEAD: ♣7

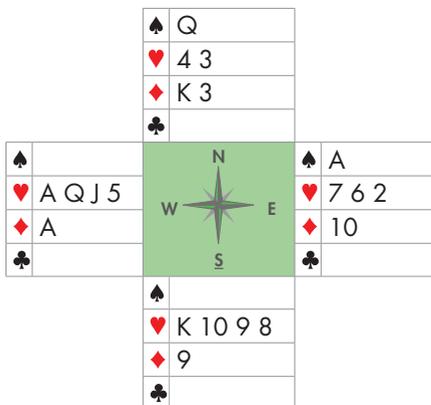
W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♥	3♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details
1NT shows 12-14 hcp
2♥ is transfer to spades

Declarer wins the club lead in hand and switches to the spade nine. It is unimaginable that partner can have anything other than the top two spades. A technically correct play is to cover the nine with the jack; but, in this case, we should look at the situation in a broader context. What will happen next?

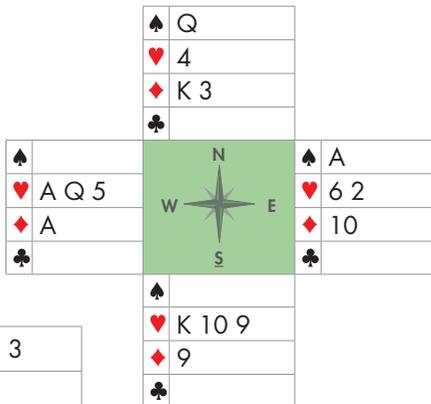
SOLUTION 17

Declarer will duck the jack.
 We will return to clubs, but South will ruff a spade, play a diamond to the jack and ruff another spade, reaching this five-card ending position:



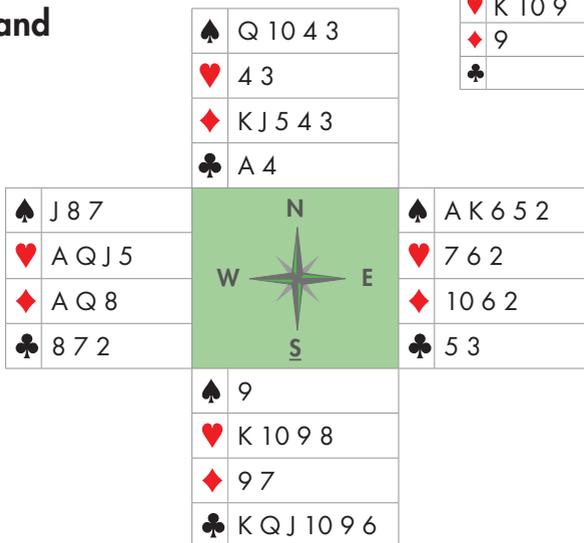
After getting in with the diamond ace, we are helpless.

It would suffice to duck the spade nine. Partner would win and play a heart through. The ending would be a little bit different this time:



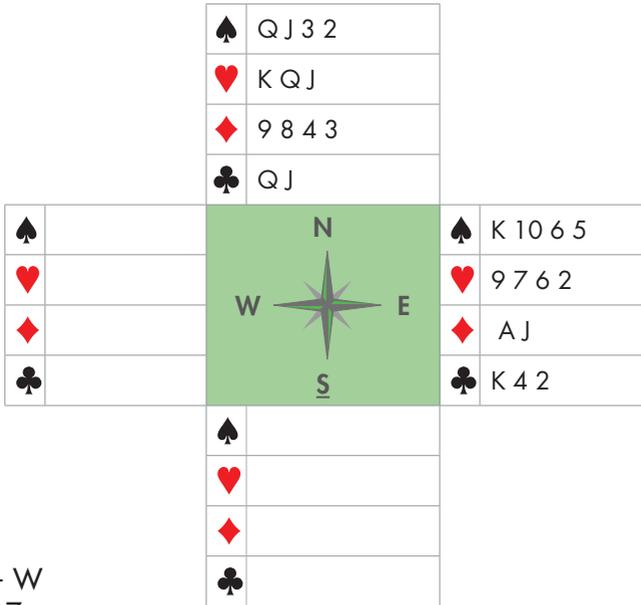
After getting in with the diamond ace, we can safely exit with a small heart.

Full hand



EXAMPLE 18

Fine illustration of safety and cooperation



VUL: E - W
LEAD: ♦7

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

Bidding details
 2♦ is artificial, forcing one round
 2NT shows 6+♣, both red
 stoppers, denies three cards in
 spades

The hcp distribution

11 (our points) + 12 (dummy) + 11-16 (declarer) = 34-39

Partner leads the seven of diamonds (2nd/4th); we play the ace and declarer plays the queen. Partner has 1 to 6 hcp. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 18

The only chance to defeat the contract is to find partner with the ace of clubs. Based on this assumption, declarer should hold the remaining honors: the ♠A, ♥A and ♦KQ. Do not be deceived by appearances, the problem at hand is not simple. A diamond continuation is unproductive – we will only score two diamonds and two clubs. The spade suit is more promising; therefore, we should play a spade. When declarer wins in the dummy and starts establishing clubs, we are to put up the king and continue spades, to set up two tricks in the suit. What does this example have to do with safety and cooperation? We have to take precautions against the unfavorable location of the nine of spades. If declarer has this card, it will hold the first spade trick, thereby dispelling our illusions of two tricks in the suit. Therefore, we must play the ten of spades!!!

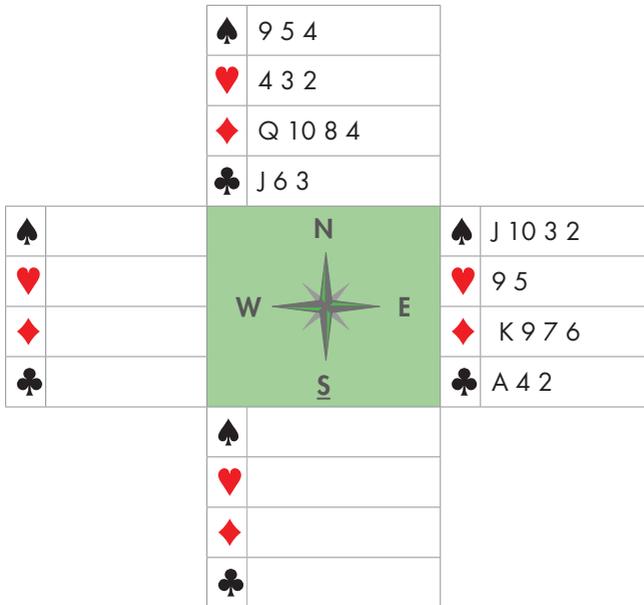
If declarer plays the ace, we get in with clubs and set up a diamond trick. If, instead, he decides to let it run to the jack, we set the contract with spades. Nice, but where is the cooperation? Note that partner must not block the suit: he should get rid of the spade seven and eight in the first two rounds of spades.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 19

Think of a passive defense, even if you cannot predict how the hand will unfold



VUL: N - S
LEAD: ♣K

W	N	E	S
			2 ♣
X	Pass	3 ♣	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Bidding details
 2♣ is game forcing
 X shows clubs

Partner leads the king of clubs and dummy follows low. What do we do at this point?

SOLUTION 19

This is an example of the consequences of a passive defense. If we let the king of clubs hold, partner will continue playing clubs. Declarer will ruff and cash the ace of spades; he will pause to the falling queen and will play the ace of hearts, paying close attention to our partner's card. Declarer will cash one more heart and will exit with the spade eight. We win and play the third club hopelessly; at this point, nothing can save us from an endplay.

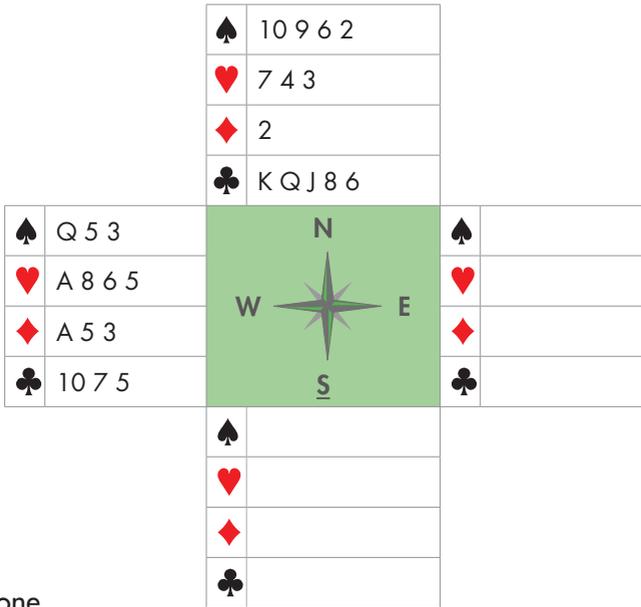
Therefore, we must overtake the king of clubs with the ace and switch to hearts, even if we are uncertain of the consequences. The difference in tempo will prove crucial. After getting in with trumps, we play the second club, and declarer will be helpless.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 20

Thoughtful cooperation; how to protect 1 IMP



VUL: None

LEAD: ♥5

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT

Bidding details
1NT shows 15-17 hcp

The hcp distribution

10 (our points) + 6 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 31-33

We lead the five of hearts; the first seven tricks are played in the following order:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1) ♥5 ♥3 ♥Q ♥K | 5) ♣J ♦7 ♠7 ♦5 |
| 2) ♣A ♣7 ♣6 ♣4 | 6) ♣8 ♦4 ♦9 ♠3 |
| 3) ♣9 ♣10 ♣K ♣3 | 7) ♦2 ♦6 ♦Q ♦A |
| 4) ♣Q ♣2 ♦8 ♣5 | 8) ? |

SOLUTION 20

Partner has 7 to 9 hcp including the heart queen.

Partner's discards: ♣4, ♣3, ♣2, ♦7, ♦4.

Partner's discards draws our attention primarily to spades. It is most likely that partner holds the ace and king of spades.

Full hand

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

We play the queen and another spade to partner's king, reaching the following four-card ending:

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

Now partner cashes the spade ace and declarer discards a diamond. What about us?

- If we had the nine of hearts, we would discard the last diamond and, after partner's heart switch, we would take all the remaining tricks;
- Without the nine of hearts, we have to discard a heart, which should persuade partner to endplay South in diamonds.

Does this defense analysis cover all of the hand details?
 Let us consider another heart suit distribution.

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

In this layout, we should play the five of clubs first and then discard the three of diamonds, suggesting that we hold something in spades. After winning with the ace of diamonds, we should play a low spade, keeping our queen of spades as an entry to the fourth heart if declarer decides to play the jack of hearts to our partner's ten. If East does not have the nine of hearts, he should continue with our two spade tricks and endplay declarer in diamonds. How would our partner know that we do not hold the nine of hearts? If we had the nine of hearts, we would not need any communication in spades; therefore, we would have played the queen of spades instead of a low spade.

Is this analysis correct? Yes, it is, but this book tells the story of a working horse and not a race horse champion...

CHAPTER 5

THINK LIKE A FISH

Just as defenders watch declarer's plays closely in order to draw important conclusions, declarer pays attention to defenders' actions as well. Therefore, **defenders must not only interpret defensive conceptions, but must also apply some destructive strategies in order to present a distorted picture of the hand to declarer**, thereby misleading them as to the distribution of the honors and the suits, as well as to defenders' plans.

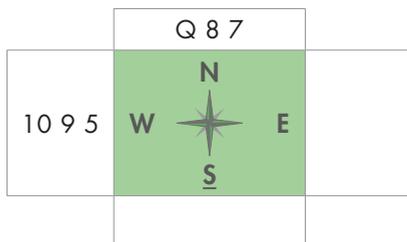
This is accomplished by routine, almost technical plays, used, for example, to deceive declarer as to the break of the trump suit and the location of the honors, or by tactical plays, aimed at presenting a false picture of the whole hand or of the defenders' intentions.

Such psychological plays must serve a purpose; extraordinary maneuvers made for no definite reason may result in unexpected losses, and may even compromise partner's trust in the reliability of our actions. Furthermore, we should be certain that misleading our partner with a false play will have no serious consequences; otherwise, what is the use of setting up a trap for declarer only for partner to fall into?

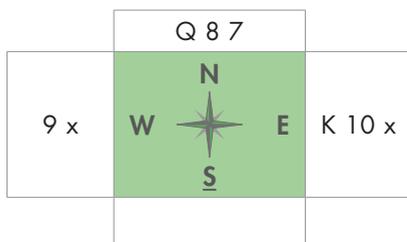
Apart from false plays, this chapter contains examples where all we do is withhold information from declarer – we do not cheat him, we just conceal the truth.

Finally, a word of explanation about the title of the chapter; it comes from an oriental proverb: **"If you want to catch a fish – think like a fish"**. It is the most important directive for a defender intending to lead declarer astray.

Our review of psychological plays starts with false carding. The first such play is attributed to the famous American Ely Culbertson (1891-1955) who, after winning a side suit ace against a slam, assumed that defeating the contract will only be possible if partner holds the trump king. The trump suit, from his side was:

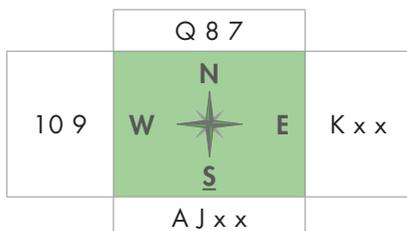


It was also known that South held five cards. Predicting that declarer, lacking the king, ten and nine will play low to the jack and then cash the ace, Culbertson played the nine, suggesting the following layout:

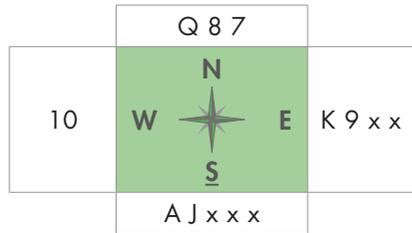


As expected, declarer covered with the queen, won partner's king with the ace, crossed to the dummy in a side suit and unsuccessfully finessed against the ten of trumps. Many similar plays have since been discovered. Let us discuss some of them.

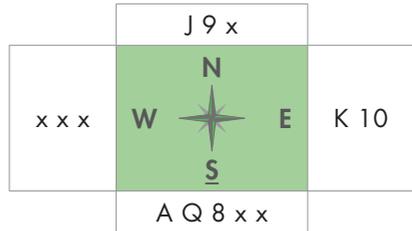
In the above layout, false-carding can be made not only actively by leading the nine, but also passively, by following with the nine or ten when declarer finesses with the jack in the first round of the suit. Hopefully, declarer will assume the following layout:



Where, the winning move is crossing to the dummy and leading the queen. Especially that this is also the way to avoid two losers when the actual break of the suit turns out to be:

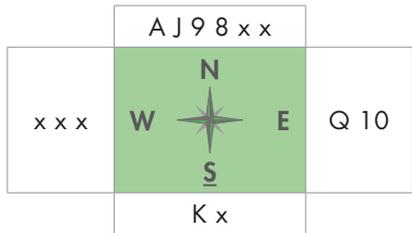


Another layout worth considering where declarer is missing the king is:

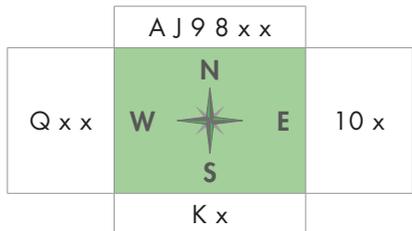


Here, East should put up the king when low is led from the dummy. This will suggest to declarer the idea of finessing against West's 10xxx. The same play is recommended with Q10, with similar consequences. Following with the queen from Q10 when the king is led in a situation

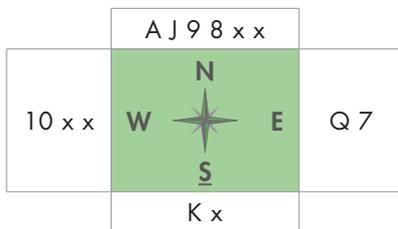
like this:



makes it quite likely that we will take another trick with the ten. It is now apparent that in:



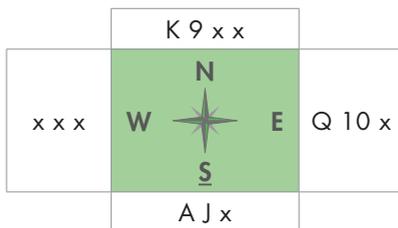
the ten should be dropped to the king. At this point, you will certainly find the best play here:



When declarer cashes the king and continues with a small card, West should play the ten.

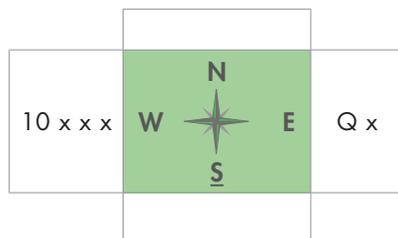
In conclusion, we should always get rid of the card that has been revealed in the course of the play.

In the following layout, South leads low from the dummy and finesses the jack. Now, when he cashes the ace, East should play the queen,

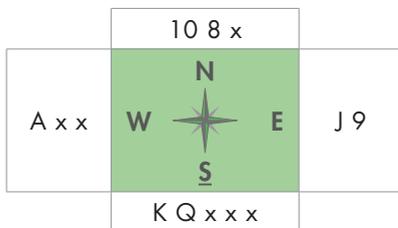


suggesting this layout:

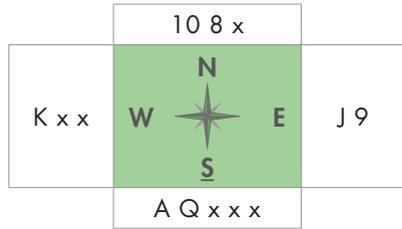
where, four tricks are available by finessing the nine.



In the following two examples:

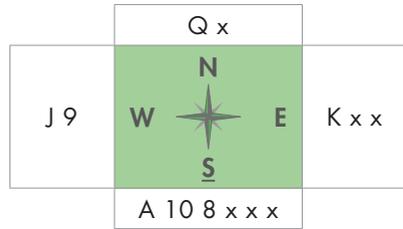


and

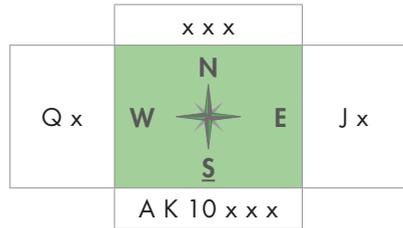


When the suit is led from the dummy, playing the nine effectively prevents defense from getting two tricks. On the other hand, playing the jack makes it possible.

Here, too, the jack should be played in the first trick when South starts from his hand towards the queen.

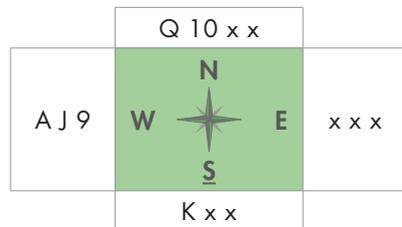


The jack should also be played on a spot from the dummy in the following situation:



Although, in order to succeed with this play, we must carry it out without the slightest hesitation.

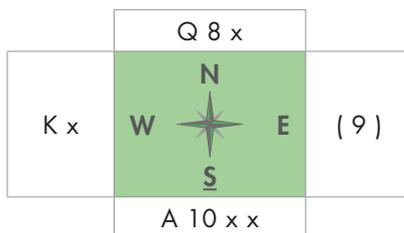
Let us, in turn, examine some of the jack-nine dilemmas.



THINK LIKE A FISH

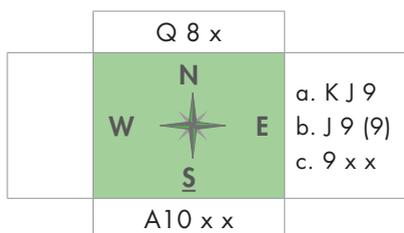
When declarer underleads his king, the chances of taking two tricks by defense look slim. But... If we suspect declarer may face entry problems, we should put up the jack. He may assume we started with AJ second and play low from both hands in the next trick.

When declarer leads low from the dummy in:



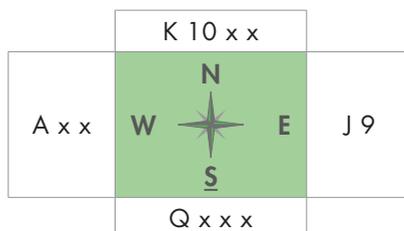
and the nine appears from East, South will certainly cover with the ten. And correctly so, since any of the two missing honors (or both) on his right makes it a winning move.

We should use this normal play to our advantage:



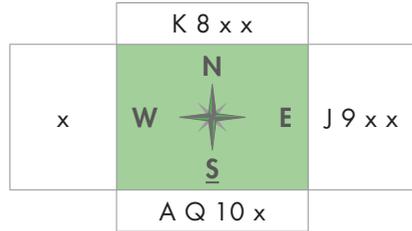
in cases a) and b) we should play the jack, hoping, quite realistically, that declarer will lead small to the eight in the second trick; and in c), we should play the nine, in order to ensure that partner gets two tricks.

We can protect partner's tricks in another way, too:



When declarer plays small from the dummy, partner plays the nine and South covers with the queen; we must duck. Winning with the ace would make declarer think that East simply had no choice but to follow with the nine; therefore will not finesse partner for the jack. If we swap the jack for the spot, East must remain alert. He should play the nine in the first trick. Meanwhile, West should take South's queen with the ace, leaving declarer uncertain as to how to proceed.

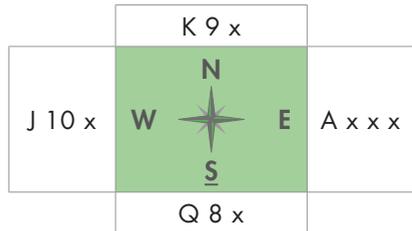
Sometimes we have to protect our jack without partner's assistance.



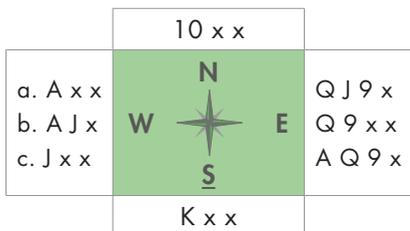
In the above layout, our jack is in jeopardy. Normally, South cashes the ace and continues with a small card to the king, finishing off with the now certain finesse. Anticipating this play, we ought to follow with the nine to South's ace. We will kill two birds with one stone: suggest a shortness and make the finesse from the other direction possible.

So far we have concentrated on cards followed with, rather than led by, defenders. A few examples to make up for that:

To avoid blowing a trick while opening such a suit, West should lead the ten, suggesting 10x(x) or AJx(x).

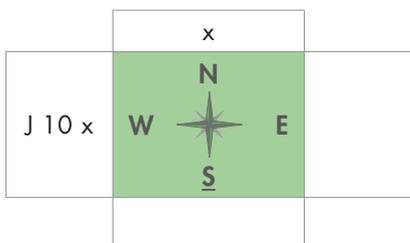


When South holds such a hand:



Declarer will never cover the queen with the king. Therefore, in case a), East should lead the jack to maneuver South into playing the king. On the other hand, in b) and c), East should lead the queen and, when it holds, continue with a small card, tricking declarer into assuming that he holds the jack and, therefore, ducking to the ten.

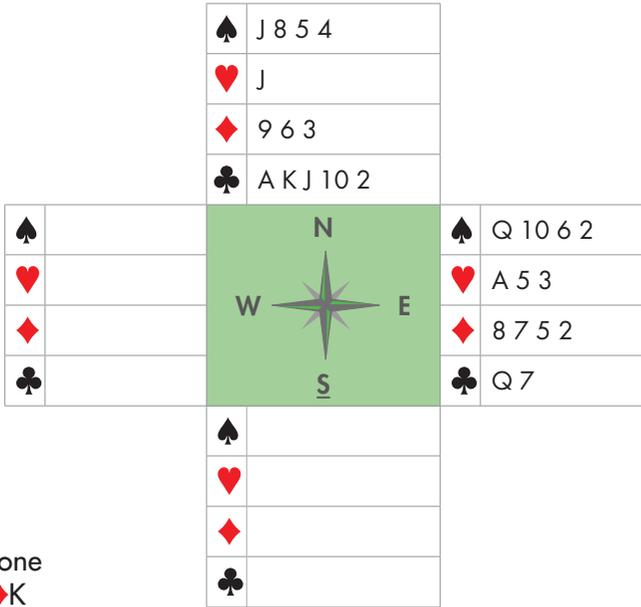
There are many more such plays, but, unlike the one presented above, they occur only occasionally. In the following layout:



Declarer, known to hold a significant length in the trump suit, leads the singleton trump from the dummy. Partner follows low and South wins the king. Obviously, we should drop the jack or the ten. If partner has Ax and South KQ9xxxx, then this is the only way to create a losing option for declarer – namely, leading the queen in the second trick.

EXAMPLE 1

Putting declarer on the wrong track by concealing important information



VUL: None
LEAD: ♦K

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

Bidding details
1NT shows 15-17 hcp

The hcp distribution

8 (our points) + 10 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 33-35

Partner leads the king of diamonds and we play the diamond two, which is discouraging. When it holds, partner continues with the queen and the jack. This is plenty for declarer; he finally takes with the ace, crosses to the ace of clubs and leads the heart jack. Plan the defense.

SOLUTION 1

Partner has used up all his assets in the first three tricks.

Declarer's tricks: Two spades, two to three hearts, one diamond, four to five clubs.

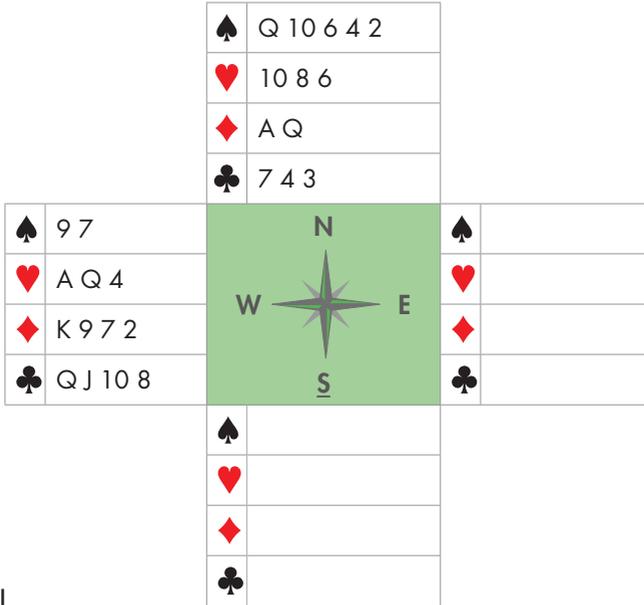
Defensive tricks: One heart, three diamonds and possibly one club. There is no reason to hold up the heart ace. There is a significant reason, however, to refrain from cashing the diamond winner. Declarer is not necessarily aware of the whereabouts of the thirteenth diamond. If we cash it immediately, our fate will depend on declarer guessing the clubs. If, on the other hand, we resist this natural reaction, South may think that the proper play is to finesse the club queen towards the safe defender. It will now be entirely correct to cash the diamond winner...

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 2

Misleading declarer into forfeiting the winning play



VUL: All
LEAD: ♣Q

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

Bidding details
2NT is invitational with ♠ support
3♥ is natural

Partner signals with the nine to our club queen, which is encouraging. Declarer takes with the ace, cashes the spade king and continues with a spade to the queen (partner discards the two of clubs). The heart ten is then played from dummy; partner follows with the two and declarer with the nine. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 2

The plan should be based on recognizing South's shape as 5-4-2-2, with ♥KJ97.

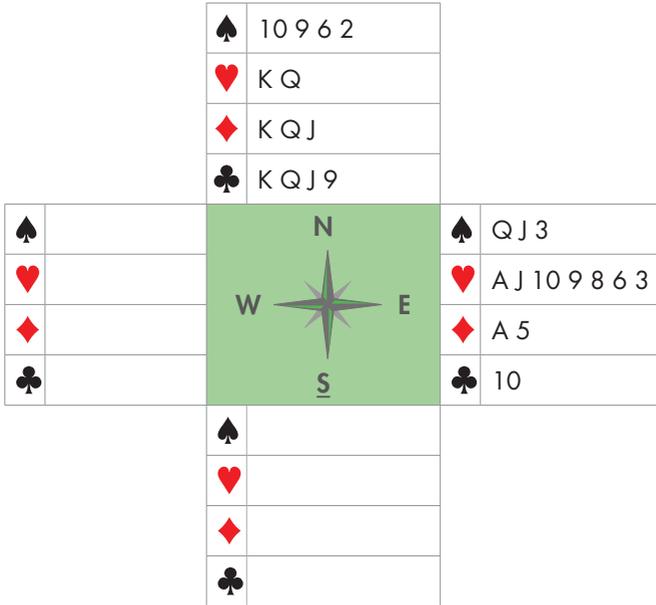
In theory, the contract is cold. In practice, if we win the heart trick with the ace (without any hesitation) and switch to the diamond nine, our chances to set the contract are significant. It takes an extremely experienced and alert declarer to take the diamond finesse – most would be lured into finding the heart queen onside and getting rid of the diamond loser on the fourth heart. This book does not tackle the topic of match points play; but stay assured that such defense would be killing in any pairs tournament as well.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 3

Leading declarer astray



VUL: E - W

LEAD: ♥7

W	N	E	S
	1 ♣	3 ♥	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Bidding details
1 ♣ shows 16+ hcp, any distribution
3 ♠ is natural, 5+♠, forcing

The hcp distribution

12 (our points) + 17 (dummy) + 9-11 (declarer) = 38-40

Partner leads the seven of hearts; we win with the ace and prepare the defense.

SOLUTION 3

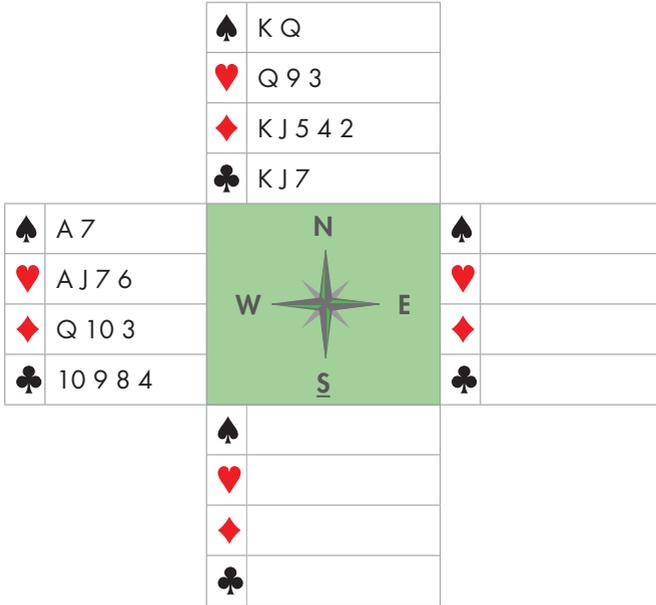
Let us count the defensive tricks first. Our two aces and the highly probable trump trick add up to three. The setting trick may come from partner's club ace, a spade honor, or if his opening lead is a singleton. Since all queens and jacks are within our sight, we know partner has no points; therefore, we should consider the third case – a singleton heart. The only problem of the hand is simply which heart to lead in order for partner to ruff. If we led the heart jack, partner might interpret it as indicating diamond values and, consequently, switch to diamonds. In with the ace of diamonds, we should switch to the ten of clubs, since playing another heart would reveal that partner does not have a spade higher than the ten; however, it would have been too late. Declarer would surely be able to draw proper conclusions from our lame defense and finesse against our queen-jack. To avoid this, we must lead the heart three for partner to ruff. The club switch is safe. Having analyzed South's hand, we know that, since he has eight cards in the majors and five in the minors, he will be unable to discard all his diamonds on the clubs.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 4

It is not over until it is over...



VUL: None
LEAD: ♣10

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

Bidding details
 2♦ is inverted minor
 2NT shows 12-14 hcp, balanced

The hcp distribution

$$11 \text{ (our points)} + 15 \text{ (dummy)} + 12-14 \text{ (declarer)} = 38-40$$

Declarer wins our ten of clubs lead with the jack in the dummy, cashes two top diamonds and concedes the third diamond to our queen. Partner discards the spade ten and a club. How should we continue?

SOLUTION 4

It is clear that partner has the spade jack at most. Therefore, the situation is hopeless, is it not? The only realistic chance we can have to set the contract is to find partner with ♥10xx. If we now lead the heart jack, declarer will win in hand, but will still be one trick short of the contract. Upon getting in with the spade ace, we continue with a small heart. Declarer, with no particular reason to suspect that we led from anything other than the ♥J10xx, will call for dummy's nine. This way, we will win three heart tricks, in addition to a spade and a diamond trick, and we will have successfully defeated the contract.

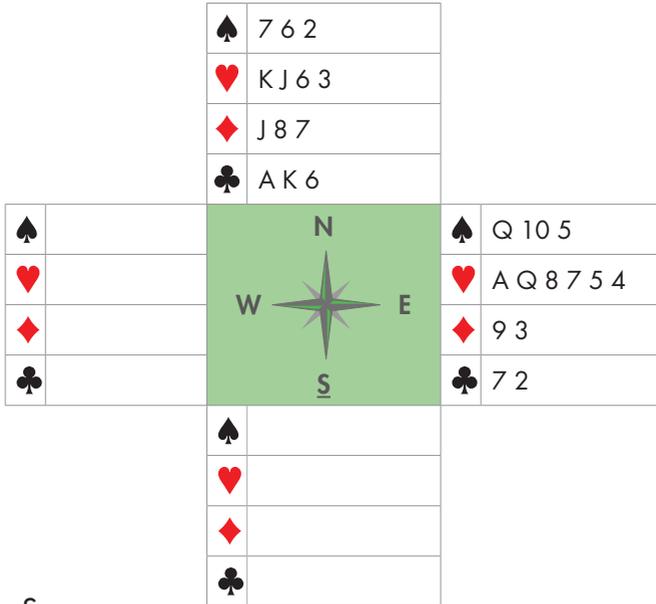
Full hand

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

Such defense was executed, years ago, by Jerzy Michatek in a junior team match between Poland and Czechoslovakia (1974).

EXAMPLE 5

Making declarer take a guess



VUL: N - S
 LEAD: ♥10

W	N	E	S
	1 ♣	1 ♥	2 ♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3 ♣
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	4 ♣
Pass	5 ♦	Pass	6 ♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Partner leads the ten of hearts and we cover dummy's jack with the queen, but declarer ruffs and plays the ace, king and ten of diamonds, overtaking in the dummy. Partner follows all along. What should we play? Also, what should our further defense look like?

SOLUTION 5

As to what is stated in the chapter on deception, we should probably discard the heart ace, or perhaps the spade queen!

Unfortunately, neither of these plays would lead to any good result. The problem is not about this trick, really. South's distribution is probably 3-0-5-5.

Given the auction, we cannot realistically hope for a club trick. Let us, therefore, focus on the spade suit. If declarer has ♠AKx, the contract cannot be defeated. With ♠AJx or ♠KJx, the contract is doomed. The only interesting case is declarer holding ♠AJ9. Declarer will lead a spade from the dummy and, when we simply follow suit, will make the correct play by finessing the nine. To prevent this, we should put up the queen on dummy's small spade, suggesting the possession of both missing honors. Let the declarer guess!

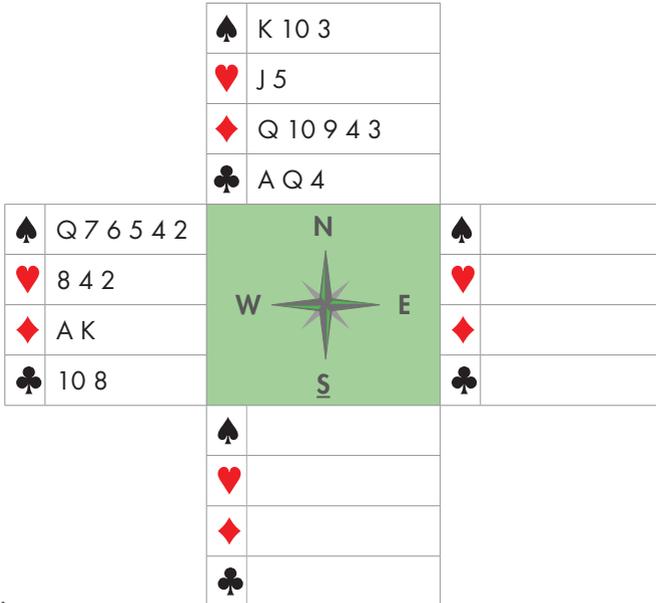
Full hand

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

This hand is one of the problems that could easily fit into another chapter; after all, rising is one of the basic defensive techniques.

EXAMPLE 6

No chance? Well, not quite



VUL: All
LEAD: ♠5

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

Bidding details
1NT shows 15-17 hcp

The hcp distribution

9 (our points) + 12 (dummy) + 15-17 (declarer) = 36-38

We lead the five of spades, three from dummy and nine from partner; declarer wins with the ace and switches to diamonds. Partner has 2 to 4 hcp. Let us plan an effective defense.

SOLUTION 6

The suit distribution: the layout of the spade suit has been revealed – partner has ♠J9 and South ♠A8. If we return a low spade now, declarer will duck in the dummy and partner, in with the jack, will have to engage in a hopeless struggle with the declarer. This is not the way to defeat the contract.

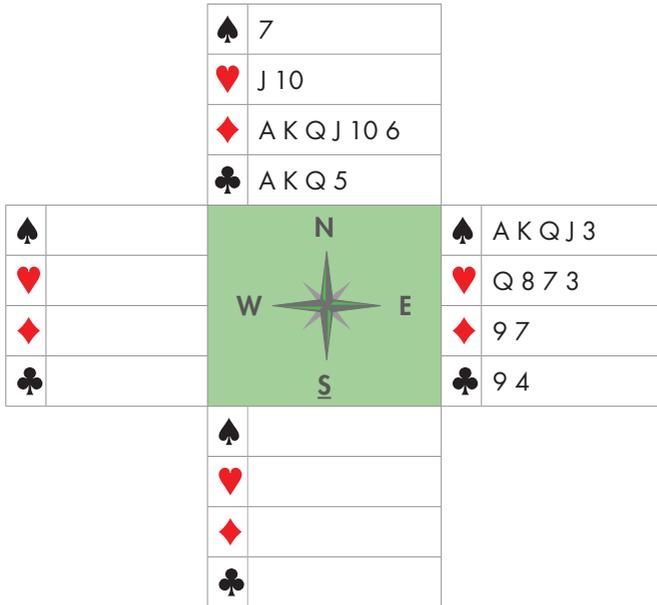
Let us return to the spade suit. If we lead the queen now, declarer should duck to block the suit, hoping that the other diamond honor will be with the short spades. From here on, it gets rather easy.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 7

Concealing the location of the honors



VUL: All
LEAD: ♠2

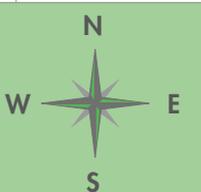
W	N	E	S
		1 ♠	Pass
2 ♠	X	Pass	3 ♣
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	5 ♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Partner leads the two of spades (3rd/5th) and we win the trick. Must we plan the defense again?

SOLUTION 7

It depends on the card we win the opening lead with. If we take with the jack, we will be relieved from any further mental effort since the full deal is:

Full hand

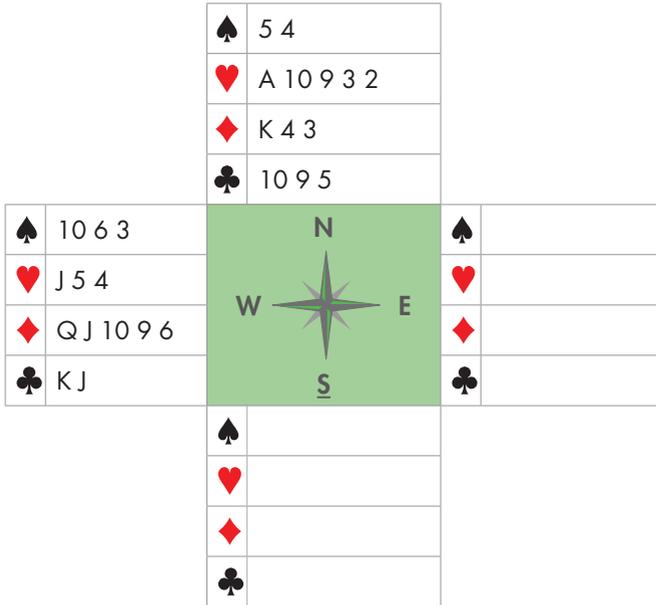
		♠ 7	
		♥ J 10	
		♦ A K Q J 10 6	
		♣ A K Q 5	
♠ 10 8 2		♠ A K Q J 3	
♥ A 9 5 4 2		♥ Q 8 7 3	
♦ 5 4 3 2		♦ 9 7	
♣ 7		♣ 9 4	
		♠ 9 6 5 4	
		♥ K 6	
		♦ 8	
		♣ J 10 8 6 3 2	

Naturally, we will switch to a heart and will be disappointed when declarer makes a comfortable guess and plays low. From the first trick, he will infer that we have 10 hcp in spades. Defenders' remaining 6 hcp consist of the ace and queen of hearts. It will be clear that we do not hold the ace of hearts since West cannot possibly bid with only 2 hcp. Winning the first trick with the jack is as good as showing our hand to declarer.

On the other hand, if we win with the ace, declarer will assume our partner underled the king. This means, in turn, that West cannot have the heart ace; otherwise, we would not have an opening bid.

EXAMPLE 8

Leading the declarer astray



VUL: None
 LEAD: ♦Q

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

Our queen of diamonds takes the trick, so does the jack. South ruffs the third diamond, cashes three top spades (partner follows) and leads the heart queen. Partner wins with the king and switches to a small club; declarer wins with the ace. What is our plan?

SOLUTION 8

No time to think! South has five spade tricks, a club and, after successfully finessing against the jack, four hearts. Therefore, let us play the king of clubs to the ace, not minding the consequences. At worst, we are only giving up one overtrick.

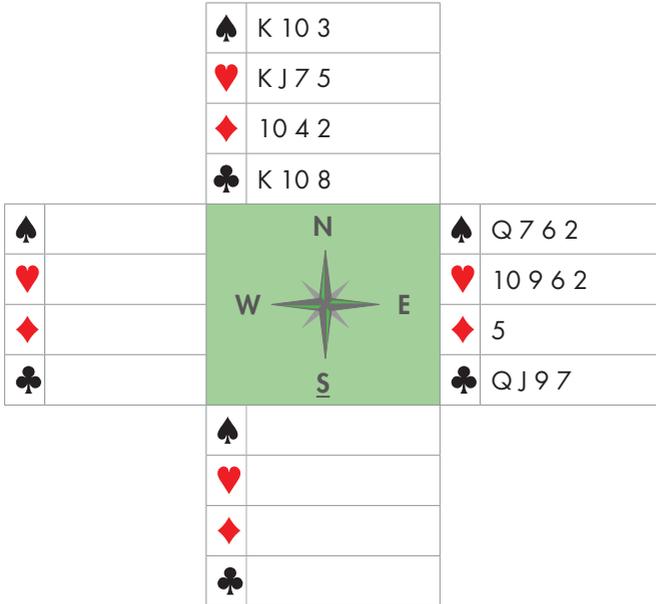
Full hand

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

Provided we play the king without any hesitation, declarer will no doubt prefer the "sure" club finesse to the uncertain one in hearts.

EXAMPLE 9

Letting the declarer misguess



VUL: E - W
 LEAD: ♣2

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

The hcp distribution

$$5 \text{ (our points)} + 10 \text{ (dummy)} + 12-14 \text{ (declarer)} = 27-29$$

Partner leads the two of clubs. Partner has 11 to 13 hcp. Let us plan our defense, while declarer considers his own options.

SOLUTION 9

Hopefully he has more than the minimum of this range, including some diamond honors.

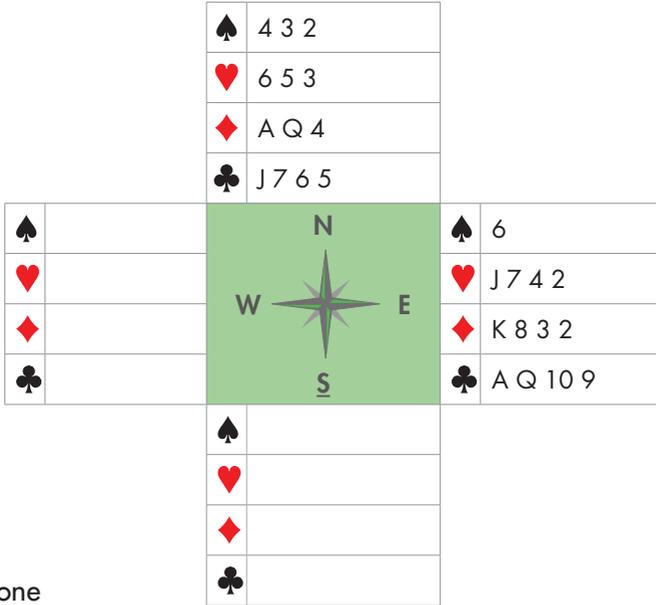
The problem really boils down to the first trick. When declarer calls for dummy's eight, we should take it with the jack, not the nine. Misleading partner about our club spots will be of no consequence at all, while winning with the nine would leave declarer no choice but to rise with the king when partner underleads his club ace again. After winning with the jack of clubs, we switch to a diamond (or spade), and when partner subsequently exits with the five of clubs, South may very well misjudge.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 10

Communication breakdown



VUL: None

LEAD: ♣4

W	N	E	S
			2 ♣
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♥
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5 ♦	Pass	6 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details
2♣ is game forcing
2♦ is waiting
5♦ shows one ace

Partner leads the four of clubs (2nd/4th); we win with the ace, dropping declarer's king. What happens next?

SOLUTION 10

Judging by the auction, South has six spades and five hearts, presumably with all the honors, since he felt strong enough to bid a slam even though his partner showed a weak support and only one ace.

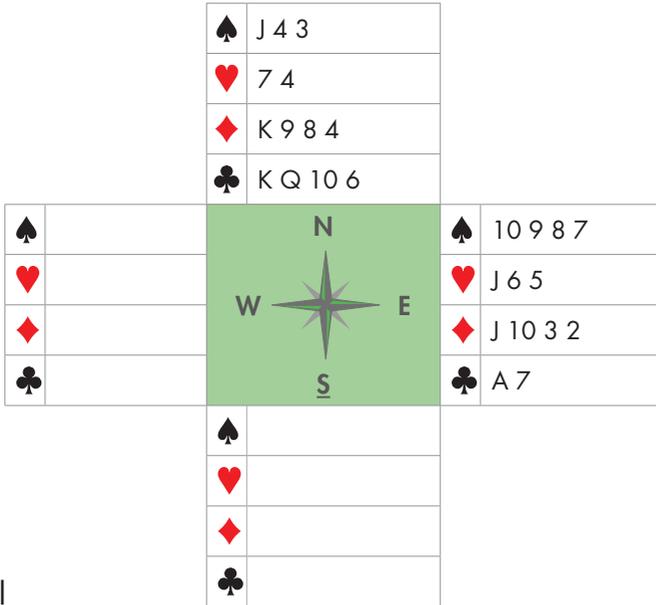
It is a question of foreseeing declarer's play: declarer will draw trumps, cash two top hearts and upon discovering the bad break, will cross to the dummy with the diamond ace and take the heart finesse, thereby collecting twelve tricks. We should try to prevent this by switching to diamonds in the second trick. Now, when the heart break is revealed, South will lack the entry in order to use this information to his advantage.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 11

Misleading partner towards the better continuation



VUL: All
LEAD: ♥A

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

The hcp distribution

$$6 \text{ (our points)} + 9 \text{ (dummy)} + 15-17 \text{ (declarer)} = 30-32$$

Partner leads the ace of hearts. How many tricks shall we get? Partner has nothing significant apart from the heart honors.

SOLUTION 11

Defensive tricks: Two hearts and the ace of clubs. If partner has the spade queen as well, we take the setting trick in trumps; but is this queen really necessary?

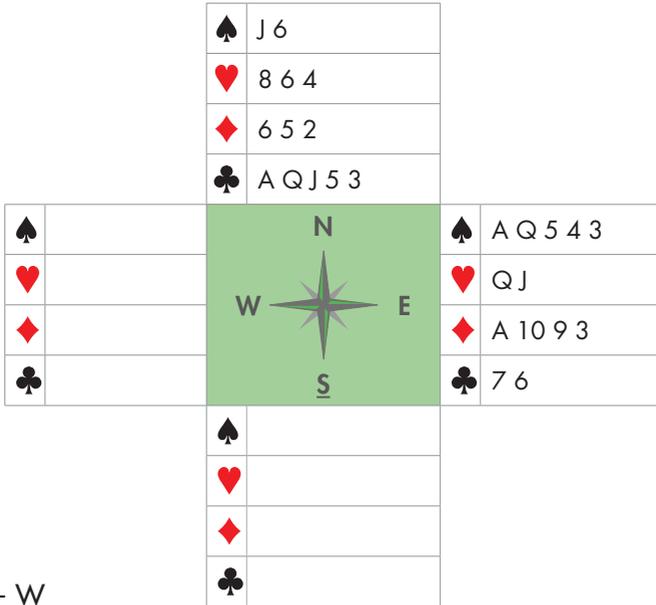
If we follow partner's heart ace with the heart six, partner will continue with the king of hearts and another heart, hoping to find us with the spade queen to overruff dummy's jack. The jack will surely be played from the dummy – declarer will not risk conceding an overruff with a spot; by following to the third heart, we will surprise both our partner and declarer, except that declarer will probably fail to appreciate it.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 12

Attacking declarer's communication



VUL: E - W

LEAD: ♠8

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	x
3 ♠	4 ♣	Pass	4 ♦
Pass	5 ♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Bidding details
 South has 5+♦ and 17+ hcp

The hcp distribution

13 (our points) + 8 (dummy) + 17-19 (declarer) = 38-40

Partner leads the eight of spades (2nd/4th); declarer plays low from the dummy and we take with the ace, while South contributes the ten. Let us plan the defense.

SOLUTION 12

The suit distribution: declarer has a doubleton in spades (K10). If he has only five diamonds, the contract would be defeated, but if he has six cards in diamonds, he will play the diamond king; realizing the awful break, declarer will cross to the dummy twice in clubs to play through our diamond sequence, no matter what we do in the first trump trick. The conclusion: We must switch to clubs immediately so that declarer learns a little too late of the unfortunate break.

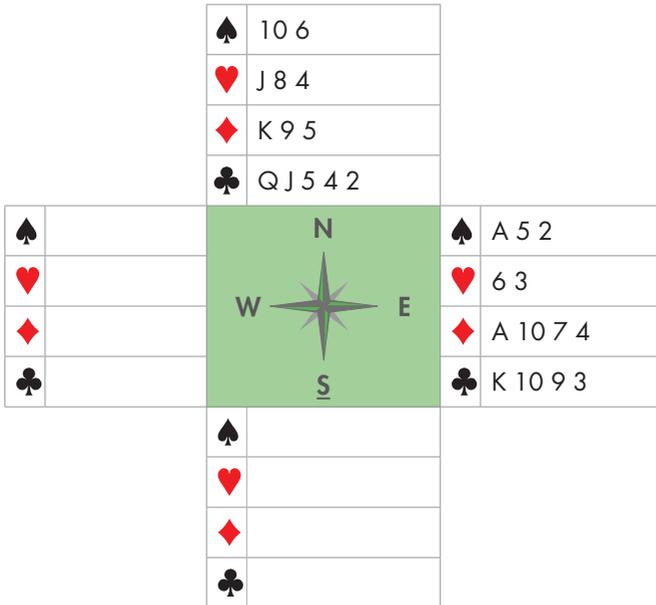
Full hand

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

This is an example of a camouflage play: delaying the process of reading the hand by declarer; since we can set the contract on our own, we do not need to consider any other possibility...

EXAMPLE 13

Leading declarer on the wrong track: distorting the picture



VUL: N - S
 LEAD: ♦Q

W	N	E	S
			1 ♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	4 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Partner's diamond queen holds; he continues with the two and we capture dummy's king. Let us plan an effective defense.

SOLUTION 13

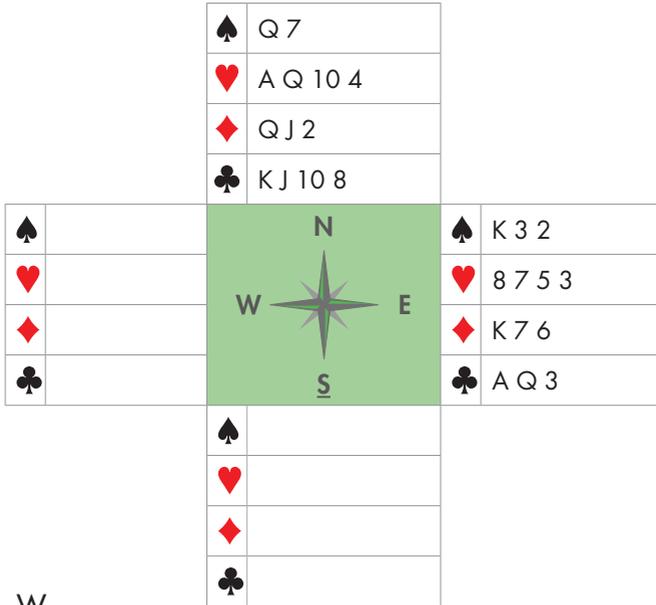
The bidding suggests a major two-suiter in South's hand. He has already shown two diamonds. If he has a loser in clubs or trumps or lacks the spade king, the contract will fall under its own weight. The only situation that requires some effort from us is when partner holds the queen of spades. Declarer will need to guess the spades; we can make it more difficult for him by playing the king of clubs. Even if we hit South's singleton ace, we will only give him three discards on clubs – not enough to get rid of all five spades from his hand. If, however, he is void in clubs, he will assume we led the king from ♣AK. This, together with the diamond ace we have shown so far, reduces the probability of us holding the spade ace.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 14

Leading declarer astray



VUL: E - W
 LEAD: ♠J

W	N	E	S
			1 ♦
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

The hcp distribution

12 (our points) + 15 (dummy) + 12-13 (declarer) = 39-40

Partner's spade jack was covered with the queen, but our king wins the trick. Partner has sacrificed all his assets in the opening lead. Now is a good opportunity to think things through.

SOLUTION 14

If partner holds six cards in spades, the fate of the contract will depend on the location of the diamond ten; if South holds it or if partner has a doubleton diamonds including the ten, declarer will get at least four diamond tricks (provided he handles the suit correctly), four hearts and a spade. If, on the other hand, partner holds $\spadesuit 10xx$, the contract cannot be made, unless we wrongly cover the first diamond honor with our king. Chances to set the contract are slim if partner holds only five cards in spades. Declarer will duck the first two spades, win the third and finesse the clubs. We will get two tricks each in the black suits. South, with only eight sure tricks (a spade trick, four heart tricks, the diamond ace and two club tricks) will be forced to rely on the diamond finesse. What can be done? We should win the first club trick with the ace and switch to a low diamond. Now declarer counts three club tricks, therefore holding up the diamond ace would make no sense. The setting trick will be won with the king of diamonds being **onside!**

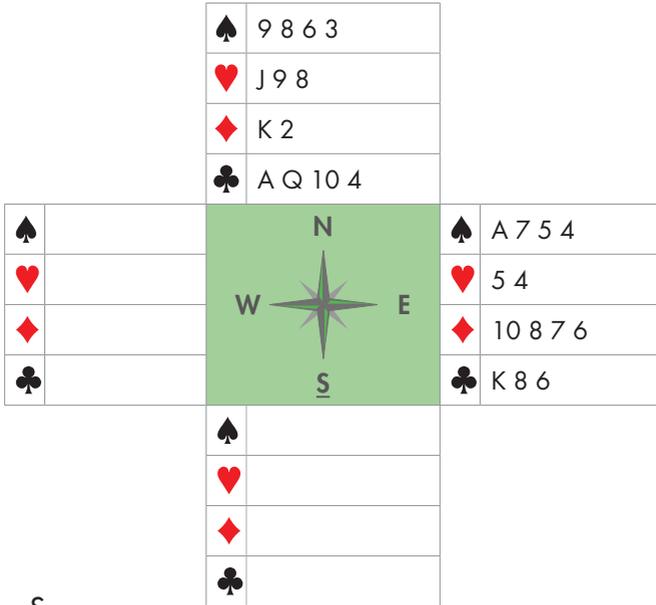
Full hand

		\spadesuit Q 7	
		\heartsuit A Q 10 4	
		\diamondsuit Q J 2	
		\clubsuit K J 10 8	
\spadesuit J 10 9 5 4		\spadesuit K 3 2	
\heartsuit 6 2		\heartsuit 8 7 5 3	
\diamondsuit 10 5 4		\diamondsuit K 7 6	
\clubsuit 7 6 2		\clubsuit A Q 3	
		\spadesuit A 8 6	
		\heartsuit K J 9	
		\diamondsuit A 9 8 3	
		\clubsuit 9 5 4	

Most importantly, we have to analyze all this just after the opening lead. If we show the slightest hesitation, declarer might become justifiably suspicious.

EXAMPLE 15

No chance? Not really!



VUL: N - S
 LEAD: ♣5

W	N	E	S
			1 ♥
1 ♠	2NT	4 ♠	5 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Bidding details
 2NT is invitational with ♥

The hcp distribution

7 (our points) + 10 (dummy) + 12-14 (declarer) = 29-31

Partner leads the five of clubs (3rd/5th). Partner has 9 to 11 hcp, including at least five cards in spades. What is our plan?

SOLUTION 15

We cannot expect partner to have two tricks, but believe that no situation is completely hopeless. After quite a long hesitation, declarer decides to play a small club from the dummy. We should immediately duck even if we are uncertain what to do. We must hope that partner had noticed declarer's dilemma as well. After partner wins with the ace of hearts, he should switch back to clubs.

Declarer, might picture the club suit as follows:

W E
 ♣K853 ♣6

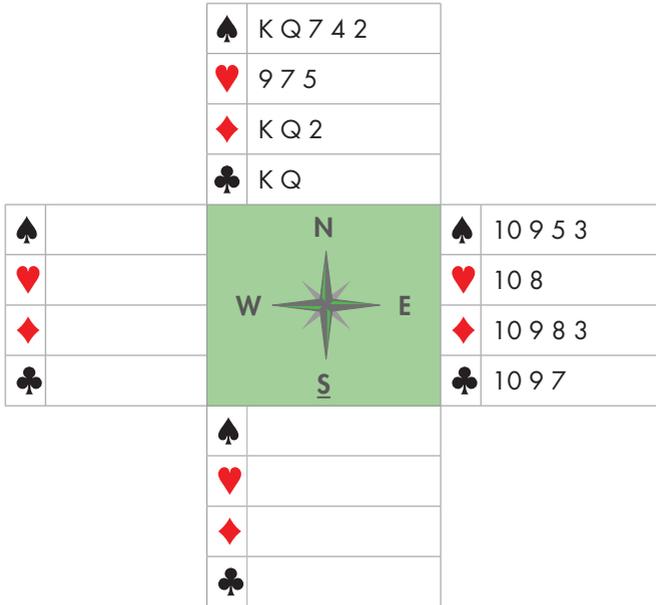
This way, the third trick will suddenly appear out of the blue.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 16

Do not give up



VUL: All
LEAD: ♦5

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	4 ♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Declarer takes the lead with the king of diamonds and switches to a heart. What is our plan?

SOLUTION 16

Can we have any impact on the result with such a weak hand? Well, certainly. On dummy's heart spot – we should play the ten and leave the rest to declarer's imagination.

Full hand

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

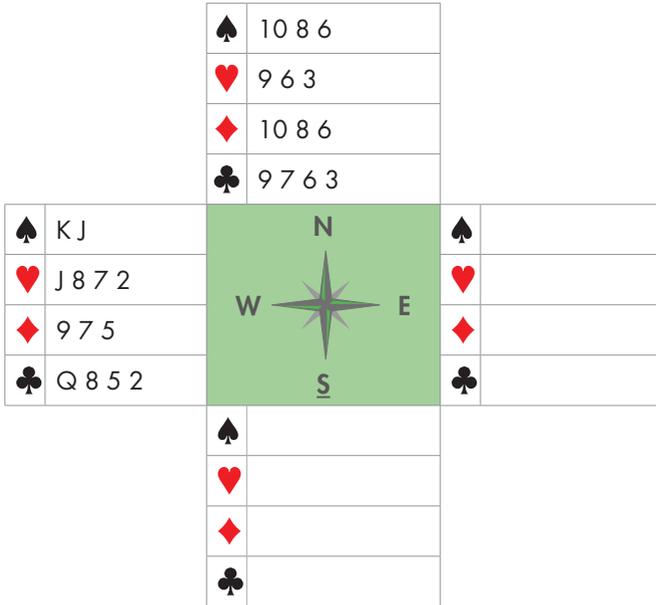
Declarer might assume the following layout:

Now, it is necessary to finesse the heart eight. We must hope that partner sees through our deception and not rise with his heart queen after declarer plays a small heart from his hand.

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

EXAMPLE 17

Providing declarer with a false sense of security



VUL: All
LEAD: ♣2

W	N	E	S
			2 ♣
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	6 ♦
Pass	6 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Bidding details
2♣ is game forcing
2♦ is waiting
4♠ shows a negative hand with support

After our club two lead, declarer plays low from dummy; partner plays the club king and declarer wins with the ace of clubs and plays the spade ace. What is our plan?

SOLUTION 17

Declarer lost his mind in the bidding, but the contract is cold if we routinely follow with the jack of spades. We can try to mislead him; what would happen if we played the spade king instead?

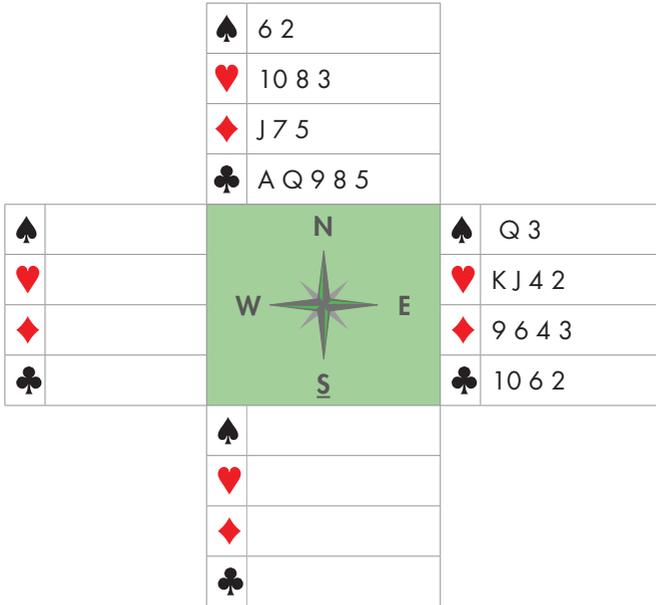
Declarer will almost be sure that he has a safe finesse against the spade jack. He will play a small diamond to the ten, preparing communication for a later finesse in spades. Partner will win with the diamond queen. Declarer will then play another diamond from his hand and try to “safely” finesse the spade jack. We will now win with the jack of spades and give our partner a diamond ruff. Down two! Nicely done.

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 18

Leading declarer astray



VUL: All
 LEAD: ♠A

W	N	E	S
2 ♠	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

After the ace of spades lead, partner continues with the king of spades and a small spade. Declarer ruffs with the heart ten; what is our plan?

SOLUTION 18

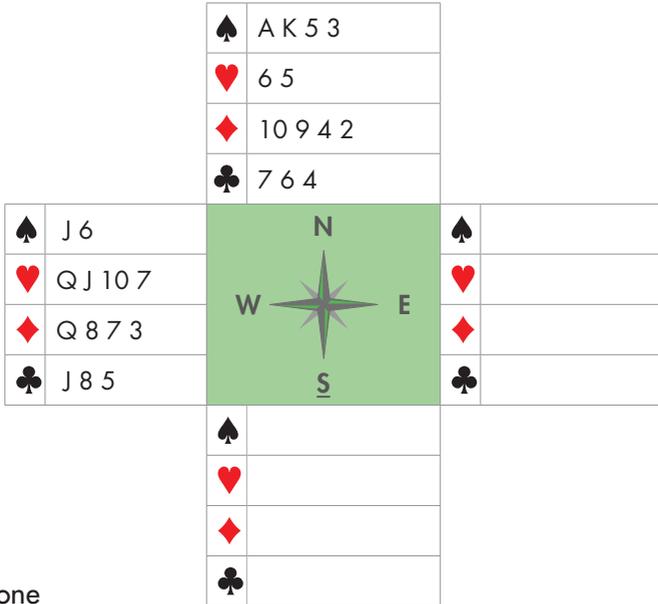
We should overruff with the king in order to conceal the jack!

Full hand

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

EXAMPLE 19

Leading declarer down the garden path



VUL: None

LEAD: ♦3

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

Bidding details

2♣ is Gazzilli, natural or strong
 2♥ shows 2+♥, weak up to 8 hcp

The hcp distribution

7 (our points) + 7 (dummy) + 18-21 (declarer) = 32-35

We lead the diamond three, low from the dummy; partner plays the diamond five and declarer wins with the ace. What is our plan?

SOLUTION 19

Declarer's tricks: Two to three spades, four to five hearts, two diamonds; therefore, he needs one or two club tricks.

Since there are only two entries to the dummy, let us play against the communication.

When declarer cashes the heart ace, we should follow with the queen. Let us force declarer to use his imagination! If hearts were indeed 4-1, the safe play would be to cross to the dummy in spades and lead trumps towards the eight.

This maneuver will deprive declarer of one of the entries necessary to play through partner's ace of clubs twice.

Full hand

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

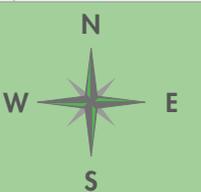
SOLUTION 20

The only thing we can influence here is the play of the trump suit. When declarer plays the ace of hearts, we should smoothly play the nine. This creates the possibility of Jxxx in the West's hand.

False-carding is common in bridge; few declarers realize, however, how to protect themselves from this maneuver.

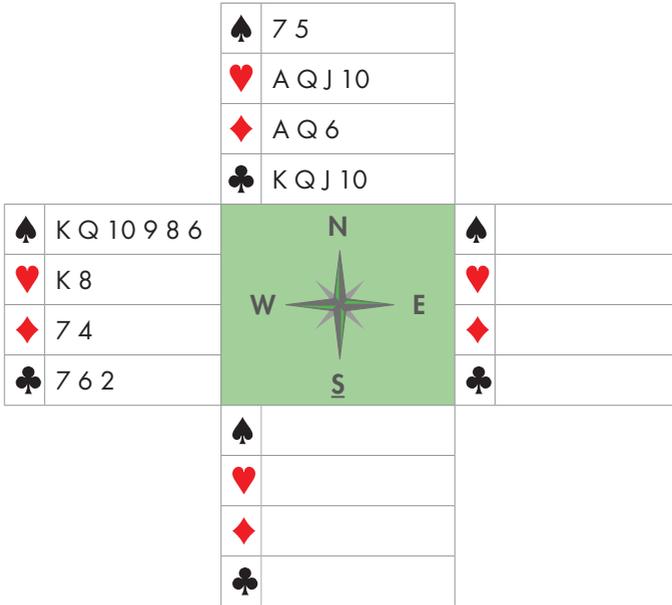
Declarer should have won the opening lead in the dummy and switched to a heart. Now playing the nine of hearts is practically impossible; if partner has a stiff ten, we would have let declarer make a contract, which was impossible to make.

Full hand

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

RECAP

NO SITUATION IS HOPELESS!



VUL: N - S

LEAD: ♠K

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

To our spade king, partner follows with the two (discouraging) and declarer ducks. How do we proceed?

SOLUTION

It is hopeless. To set the contract, we need to find partner with the ace of clubs. However, If he does have that card, he cannot, judging from the hcp count, hold any other significant honor. The only solution would be to secretly exchange our king of hearts with partner's ace of clubs. In this case, we would switch to a heart and partner, getting in with the king, would play spades through declarer. Then, all we have to do is to wait patiently with the ace of clubs. Unfortunately, this is not the case. For even if we were expert enough to secretly swap the honors, an average declarer could easily defeat this plan by renouncing the heart finesse. He would simply rise with the ace and play a club. Now we would need to swap the honors back again to prevail.

Wait... back again? So, let us skip the whole illegal operation we have just plotted and lead the heart eight in the second trick! The ace from the dummy will be followed by a club and the contract would inevitably be defeated.

Full hand

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

The solution to this problem makes one think of a motto that all defenders in the world should always keep in mind:

NO SITUATION IS HOPELESS!





A student of one of the greatest players in the history of bridge, Krzysztof Martens, May Sakr is a Lebanese/American bridge player, who is very passionate about the game of bridge, which combines skill, patience, concentration, energy and perseverance. In her short bridge career, she has won more than thirty-two international bridge trophies. Her most memorable accomplishments include the gold medal in the prestigious Patton of Monaco tournament in 2015; the bronze medal in the European Championship in Montecatini in 2017; and second-place in the USA National Mixed Team event in Toronto in 2017.