

Defensive Tips (December 20, 2021)

Today, I want to present you with several defensive tips, including examples, which you may find helpful.

- You have bid a suit and your partner, who is on lead, does not lead your suit. You might infer that he is:

void
 leading a singleton
 leading the top of a sequence
 holding the ace of your suit and fears that the declarer has the king
 not paying attention to the bidding!

Example 1.	10xxx		
	87xx		
	8		
	Q87x		Trumps = Spades
			Suit Led = Diamonds
			Two Suits left = H and C;
			Hearts outrank clubs.
K9xxx		AQJ8	
Q94		K6	
KJxx		Q109xx	
A		105	
	VOID		
	AJ105		
	A72		
	KJ9xxx		

Bidding:	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>
	(1D)	2C	(2S)	P
	(3S)	P	(4S)	P
	(P)	P		

Contract: 4S in the West

Opening Lead: 8 of diamonds

Partner did not lead a club. You take the ace of diamonds and lead back the seven of diamonds, suit preference for a heart return. Partner trumps the seven of diamonds and leads back a heart to your ace. You play your last diamond for partner to ruff. The contract is set! Note: If partner had led a club (your suit), the declarer makes 5S with ease.

- You do not lead the same against 3NT as you do against 6NT. For example, let's say you hold the following hand.

Example 2. **K10764**
 Q84
 Q76
 83

Bidding A:	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	(1NT)	P	(3NT)	P
	(P)	P		

You have an automatic lead of the 6 of spades, your fourth best.

Bidding B:	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	(1NT)	P	(6NT)	P
	(P)	P		

Now, a spade lead would be terrible. Why? The opponents have about 33 HCP, or a running side suit, to contract for 6NT. You have 7 HCP. Your partner has nothing! The worst lead you can make is “away” from an honor. Lead a club (**recall PASSIVE LEADS from January 11th and February 8th lessons**) in the hopes to make two tricks in the spade suit, if the declarer finesses into you.

- Do not lead a singleton versus a voluntarily bid slam, if you are holding an ace. Partner cannot possibly hold the ace (unless the opponents have misbid). You will only be locating the honors held by your partner. On the other hand, a singleton lead against a small slam when you do not hold an ace has a much better chance of succeeding. With a little luck, partner will have the ace of your singleton suit or the ace of trumps. He can then give you an immediate ruff.
- Whenever you can, make a lead directing double of any artificial bid (Stayman, Jacoby Transfers, cuebids and Blackwood responses, etc.) if you want your partner to lead that suit. To make a Lead Directing Double at a low level (particularly the two level), you need five or six cards in the suit headed by at least two honor cards. To double an artificial bid made at the four level or higher, all you need is strength in the suit, i.e., KQx. **Don't fall asleep if you have the opportunity to make a lead directing double.**

- Against a suit contract, the lead of the A from AKx(x) is a trick one convention only. During the rest of the hand, the king is led from the same holding. The reason being that after trick one a defender is likely to lead the ace without holding the king. He does not want his partner to think that he has the king. You are on lead against a spade contract. You hold the following hand:

Example 3. xx xxx AKxx AKxx

Let's say you decide to lead the diamonds first and begin by leading the ace. You decide to switch to the club suit at trick two (maybe your partner has given you a low card indicating that he doesn't like your lead or perhaps the queen of diamonds appears in the dummy). You should lead the king of clubs, not the ace. If you lead the ace, you are denying the king.

- As a corollary to the above: If you and your partner have decided to lead ace from ace-king, be aware that the **King** should be led at trick one in the following situations:

The suit has been supported by EITHER player.

Your partner has bid the suit and you have not supported.

The contract is at the five level or higher.

*You hold the AK doubleton.

*The lead of the king is a partnership agreement. Some players prefer to lead the ace from A/K doubleton.

Recall from the March 1st lesson that the lead of the king asks you to give your partner count. Many partnerships play that a low card indicates an odd number of cards held in the suit and that a high card indicates an even number of cards. Others play the opposite meaning. Be sure you know which you and your partner play. If you continue with the suit, the **second card played by your partner is giving a suit preference signal.**

See Example 4 below.

Example 4. **KQxx**
 xx
 Kxx
 Jxxx

x **xxx**
AK1063 **952**
xxxx **AQx**
xxx **xxxx**

NOTE: Not enough points to bid Jacoby 2NT.

AJ109x
Qx
xx
AKQx

Bidding:	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
	(1S)	P	(3S)*	P
	(4S)	P	(P)	P

*In this sequence, the North's hand is showing 4+ trumps and a limit raise. Others may use a Bergen Raise of 3D to show the same hand. While others use a bid of 3H to show 4+ spades and a limit raise type hand. The latter two bids must be alerted.

When West leads the king of hearts, his partner plays the 2 to show an odd number of hearts. When West continues with the ace of hearts, East now plays the nine of hearts to show suit preference for a diamond switch.

Down One!!!!!!

Suit Preference: Trumps = spades
Suit led was hearts
Of the two suits left, diamonds outrank clubs

- Always cover an honor with an honor **if it will promote a trick for the defense.**

Example 5. **South** **West** **North** **East**
 (1H) **P** **(2H)** **P**
 (4H) **All Pass**

Your Hand: QJ102 8 K753 Q875

You lead the Q of spades from your honor sequence. Declarer plays low from dummy and your partner plays an encouraging 9 of spades. You continue with the jack of spades and again declarer plays low from dummy. (He knows that you cannot hold the A of spades and is hoping that it may fall from the East hand.) When your partner follows with the 6 of spades on the second round, you play a third round to his A. The declarer follows suit.

The declarer wins East's jack of clubs switch with his ace and draws trumps with the A/K/Q of hearts. Your partner follows suit three times. How will you defend when the declarer next leads the queen of diamonds? Will you play the king, or not? Why?

The complete hand: **K75**
 10742
 AJ9
 642

QJ102	A96
8	953
K753	10864
Q875	J109

843
AKQJ6
Q2
AK3

Beginners are taught to 'always cover an honor with an honor'. It is sometimes quite difficult to decide whether to cover. One guideline which will help is: **Do not cover the first of touching honors.** In this hand, if you think the declarer held the QJ of diamonds, you would not cover until he leads the jack. This is not the case here because you can see the jack of diamonds in the dummy.

Another guideline is: **Cover when there are two honors on your left.** Since both the A/J of diamonds are on your left (in the dummy), you should play your king of diamonds when the queen is led.

But, the most important guideline of all is: **Cover when you have a chance to promote a trick for the defense.** If your partner holds the ten of diamonds, by covering the queen of diamonds with your king, you have promoted partner's ten as a potential winner. The declarer will be unable to get a much needed club pitch on the third diamond.

All of these three guidelines “tell” you to cover. If you cover, the declarer can win only two diamond tricks. He will eventually lose a club to go with the three spade tricks that you scored at the beginning.

NOTE: If you fail to cover, the queen will win the trick. The declarer can subsequently finesse the jack to ditch a club loser on the ace of diamonds.

- When your partner has bid, particularly if he has overcalled, you should seriously consider an opening lead in his suit. (See February 1st lesson.)

Example 6.	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
	P	(2S)	1H	(1S)
	All Pass		P	(4S)

You lead the 10 of hearts against South's 4S game. Your partner plays the queen which declarer wins with the heart ace. What is your plan for the defense when declarer next leads the three of spades from his hand?

The complete hand:	Q1095	
	742	
	K97	
	Q95	
A4		72
106		KQ983
10642		Q83
107642		AJ8
	KJ863	
	AJ5	
	AJ5	
	K3	

Your partner opened 1H. His queen of hearts forced declarer's ace on trick one. You expect your partner to hold the king of hearts. When the 3 of spades is led, you should hop with your ace and lead your 6 of hearts. Partner wins with his king. He leads the three of hearts (suit preference for a club return) for you to ruff. When you return a club, the contract is set.

You can see what a mistake it would have been to play low on the first round of trumps. Dummy's queen would win the trick and declarer would play another round of trumps. Your heart ruff goes out the window. On this deal, it is essential to win the trump ace on the first round so that you have a trump left for the intended ruff.

Suit Preference: Trumps are spades
Suit led is hearts
Of the two suits left, diamonds outrank clubs

- Normally, second hand low is a good rule to follow.

The question you constantly ask yourself when on defense is: Which tricks might our side score to beat the contract?

Example 7.	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	(2C)	P	(2D)*	P
	(3D)	P	(4D)**	P
	(4S)***	P	(5C)****	P
	(5H)*****	P	(6D)	All Pass

2D* = Waiting Bid

3D= 6+ diamond suit

4D** = Minorwood (keycard ask for diamonds)

4S*** = 0 or 3 key cards

5C**** = Query for Queen and outside king

Note: 4NT would be signoff

5H***** = I have the queen of diamonds and the king of hearts

AK
KQ8
KQJ1087
AK

QJ1032	876
A107	J943
53	94
Q107	J642

954
652
A62
9853

Against South's 6D contract, you lead the queen of spades. Your partner has no points on this hand. When you cannot beat the holding in the dummy, you should **give your partner count**. So, East makes the correct play of the 6 of spades to show an odd number in the suit.

Declarer then leads a small diamond to his ace, followed by the two of hearts. How should you defend in the West seat? You can see that declarer has no losers in spades, diamonds or clubs. The only possible chance of beating the contract is to score two heart tricks. Can this be done, if you play the ace of hearts at trick three?

NO! Declarer will follow with the 8 of hearts from the dummy and the remaining K/A will give him two heart tricks and the slam. You must follow the guideline “second hand low!” You play the seven of hearts and dummy wins the trick. Declarer is now stuck in the dummy. Since he has no further entry to his hand, he will at some point have to play hearts from the dummy. Your side scores two heart tricks and sets the slam. It is difficult to duck an ace when you are defending a slam; but, here again second hand low is a good rule to follow. The better contract would have been 3NT on this hand.

Telling/Asking Bids—Part I

The basic “asking bid” is known as a **Western Cuebid (aka California Cuebid)**. It is a three-level cuebid that asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in the opponents' suit. When the opponents have bid one suit, it's easy to bid 3NT with a stopper in the suit and a suitable hand. If you are interested in 3NT; but, lack a stopper, you need a way to ask partner if he has one. The solution is to make a cuebid in the opponents' suit at the three level. This is referred to as a Western Cuebid (aka California Cuebid).

Example 1.	LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	(P)	(P)	(1H)	2D
	(P)	2H	(P)	???

Your Hand: K6 64 AJ87543 AK

Cuebid 3H. If partner has a heart stopper, he will bid 3NT. If NOT, he can bid 4D or 5D. His initial cuebid of 2H shows 3+ diamonds and a limit raise.

Example 2. Same bidding sequence as in Example 1.

Your Hand: A7 AJ10 KQJ764 75

Bid 3NT. Don't worry about not having a club stopper.

Example 3. Same bidding sequence as in Example 1.

Your Hand: J973 96 AQ10952 A

Make a natural 2S bid. Partner will raise with 4 spades, bid 3NT with a heart stopper, or return to diamonds.

Note: Too many players think that most cuebids are Western. This is NOT true. They only occur at the 3 level.

And, now let's look at the “telling bids”. If the opponents have bid two suits and you want to explore for a 3NT contract, a 3-level cuebid shows a stopper in that suit and denies a stopper in the other suit.

If you held stoppers in both suits, you'd bid 3NT. Your cuebid of one of the suits denies a stopper in their other suit. If your partner should hold a stopper there, he should bid 3NT. If not, he makes the most intelligent bid he can.

Example 4:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
(1H)	P	(1S)	2C
(P)	3C	(P)	???

Your Hand: A109 87 K3 AKJ642

Cuebid 3S to show spade stopper. If partner has hearts stopped, he should bid 3NT. Otherwise, he bids 4C or 5C.

Example 5. **Same bidding sequence as in Example 4.**

Your Hand: AQ AQ 82 K987643

Bid 3NT. You have stoppers in both of their suits.

NOTE: **With one suit bid, you ASK; with two suits bid, you TELL.**

Assignment:

K106
J94
975
AQ54

972
KQ752
K3
1086

Bidding:	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
	(1NT)	P	(3NT)	All Pass

West leads the queen of diamonds and a low card is played from the dummy. You are East. What do you expect partner's diamond holding to be? Which card will you play on the first trick? What is your plan for defending this contract?

Next Week: Major Suit Game Tries and New Minor Forcing
Telling/Asking Bids—Part II

