



3rd September, 2008

DECLARE & DEFEND

Some hands from today's Wednesday Game and from the Archives, to test your card-playing skills.

Declare ...

This week's Board 27 gave us an interesting double dummy problem. Looking at all 4 hands, can you (as South) make 10 tricks playing in 4♥?

	♠ A98 ♥ T543 ♦ T732 ♣ Q8	
♠ KQ543 ♥ 9 ♦ K98 ♣ KT94	<i>Dummy</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Declarer</i>	♠ J76 ♥ J87 ♦ J64 ♣ 7652
	♠ T2 ♥ AKQ62 ♦ AQ5 ♣ AJ3	

South	West	North	East
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

4♥ by South is the obvious contract and the K♠ is the obvious lead. This is a most unlucky hand, with both minor suit Kings offside. Furthermore, if trumps had been 2-2 it might have been easier to organize an end-play against West. As it is, with normal play, 4♥ is destined to go down one. How about some abnormal play?

There are 8 top tricks, and a 9th to be had in Clubs. Where's the 10th? Not from a Club ruff, the third round of that suit will be a winner in Declarer's hand. An end-play against West is still the only hope, and step one is to duck the Spade, win the

second round, and then to ruff a third round. Now, there's a glimmer of hope, if we could only draw trumps, and lose a couple of Diamonds, without letting in East for a Club lead through Declarer. If we could do that, when West wins the 3rd round of Diamonds, he will be end-played into either (a) leading a Club, giving us access to Dummy's 13th Diamond, or (b) conceding a ruff and sluff which is equally fatal to the defense. That's fine but there are a couple of problems to overcome. Firstly, *how* can West be forced to win *both* Diamonds. Secondly, there is the issue of trump control (if trumps are drawn and West then persists with Spades both times that he gets in with Diamonds).

At first we doubted that 4♥ was makeable, but Deep Finesse (whom we trust implicitly), insisted that it's really possible. We are too embarrassed to say how long it took us, but we finally figured out how 10 tricks can be made:

K♠ opening lead is allowed to win
Spade continuation won by Dummy's Ace
Spade ruff
Cash just *one* high trump
 Lead Q♦ (yes, really!) losing to West's King
Nine, Ten, Jack, Ace of Diamonds
 Diamond to West's Eight

This bizarre sequence of plays has end-played West. Here is the position:

	<i>Dummy</i>	
	♠	
	♥ T54	
	♦ 7	
	♣ Q8	
<i>West</i>		<i>East</i>
♠ 54		♠
♥		♥ J8
♦		♦
♣ KT94		♣ 7652
	<i>Declarer</i>	
	♠	
	♥ KQ6	
	♦	
	♣ AJ3	

If West leads a Club, there are two Club tricks for Declarer, and Dummy also gets a Club ruff. If West leads a Spade, Dummy pitches a Club as Declarer ruffs, then A♣ and a Club ruff. Dummy leads that 13th Diamond, causing East untold misery.

Now it's time to take a survey. Hands up all you Declarers who found that line of play at the table!

... Defend

Here are some suit preference examples, a couple from the Archives and one from today's game.

19th March, 2008
Board 22

	♠ K973 ♥ T ♦ AQT ♣ AKT98	
♠ AT ♥ AQ874 ♦ KJ ♣ J763	Dummy West East Declarer	♠ 85 ♥ K532 ♦ 975432 ♣ 5
	♠ QJ642 ♥ J96 ♦ 86 ♣ Q42	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♥	Dbl	3♥	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Against 4♠, West leads the A♥. Using standard carding methods, we normally give attitude to Partner's opening lead. But, with Dummy coming down with a singleton in that suit our attitude to Hearts is no longer important. So, in this situation it is common to give suit preference instead. The relevant two suits are Diamonds and Clubs (i.e. not the trump suit and not the led suit), and East plays a high one for the higher-ranking Diamonds and a low one for the Clubs. With extra length, as here, East can play a middling one with no preference. Yes, on this occasion East will play the Heart Two, a clear signal for a Club shift. East's hope for a Club ruff bears fruit when West obligingly shifts to a Club, then flies with the Ace on the first round of trumps, and gives East his ruff. Nicely done, that is the only defense that will hold Declarer to 10 tricks.

Here's one from today's Board 32:

North	♠ K53 ♥ Q874 ♦ A94 ♣ J96
Declarer Dummy	
South	
♠ A98 ♥ J5 ♦ K87 ♣ KQ872	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♠	3♥	4♠
5♥	All Pass		

Partner leads the Q♠, and from the bidding will know that *Declarer* has a singleton Spade. Another suit preference situation? It could be, so if N-S are in sync South can play her lowest Spade to ask for a Club shift. This turns out to be necessary as Declarer has a red two-suiter (and the A♣) and will get Dummy's Clubs away on any other defense.

Finally, it's back to the Archives:

16th, April, 2008
Board 31

	♠ K762 ♥ KQ9872 ♦ 43 ♣ 7	
♠ J93 ♥ JT3 ♦ AKJT8 ♣ 53	North Declarer Dummy South	♠ QT85 ♥ 4 ♦ Q953 ♣ AK86
	♠ A4 ♥ A65 ♦ 76 ♣ QJT942	

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	1♥	2♥
Dbl	3♦	3♥	4♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The only way for N-S to beat 4♦ will be for South to get a Spade ruff. Will this happen? Let's say that North starts out with the K♥, as would just about everybody. When Dummy goes down with a Heart singleton it's another suit preference situation. Should South play her highest spot card, the mighty Six, to indicate the desire for a Spade shift? No, of course not! The signal might not be that clear, and if North misreads it she may decide that the winning defense is to go passive. No worries! South can see the situation clearly enough and she should take charge. So, she overtakes the first trick, cashes the A♠, then a Spade to North's King, and a ruff. Nicely done, Ms South! But, if she had feebly signaled with suit preference on the first trick, and if North had gone wrong at Trick Two, then South would have had nobody to blame but herself. Suit preference is merely a useful tool, not a cure-all, there's no need to throw common-sense out of the window!