

Test Your Defense by Eddie Kantar

The majority of good defensive plays require a basic understanding of DECLARER play. Knowing why declarer is doing such and such, helps you decide why you should be doing such and such. Also, counting their points, distribution and, above all, their tricks cannot be overemphasized. And let's not forget watching their leads! Good luck.

#1 Gotcha!

Declarer: East
Vul: Both

North (dummy)
S. AQ1085
H. 8
D. 1075
C. AKJ4

East (you)
S. 42
H. AJ109752
D. KJ9
C. 2

East	South	West	North
3H	Pass	4H	Dbl.
Pass	4S	All Pass	

Opening lead: H3 You win the ace and then?

Solution

West hand: S. 76 H. Q63 D. A862 C. 7653
Declarer's hand: S. KJ93 H. K4 D. Q43 C. Q1098

Better stick that DJ on the table... right now! Given this dummy, you really need three diamond tricks to defeat the contract and if partner has the ace, and if you lead specifically the jack, you will get them. What can declarer do? If declarer plays low, you can continue with the king and a diamond. If declarer plays the queen, partner wins and returns a diamond through dummy's ten which you are hovering over with the K9. Curtains for declarer. Notice that if you don't shift to a diamond, one of dummy's diamonds goes off on declarer's HK.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Leading the J from a KJ9 (or AJ9) combination when the dummy to the right has the ten is called a "surrounding play". It can't lose a trick but it can gain when partner has the ace (or king) and declarer the queen.

#2 Magic

Dealer: South
Vul: Neither

North (dummy)
S. A743
H. KQ62
D. Q7
C. 987

East (you)
S. 65
H. J8
D. J943
C. KQJ102

South	West	North	East
1NT(1)	Pass	2C	Dbl.
2S	Pass	4S	All Pass

(1) 15-17

Opening lead: CA

You signal with the king to show solidity and partner continues with the C3 to your ten. When you play the CQ, declarer follows and partner discards the two of diamonds. What now?

Solution

West hand: S. Q92 H. 9753 D. 10862 C. A3

Declarer's hand: S. KJ108 H. A104 D. AK5 C. 654

Play a 4th club! Give declarer a ruff and a sluff! Why? You can see 19 points between your hand and dummy and declarer must have at least 15 for 34. The most partner can have is 6HCP and he has already turned up with the CA. Your best bet is to play him for the Q9x of spades and return a 4th club. If he has that holding, there is no way declarer can prevent partner from taking a spade trick even if he looks into his hand! . What can declarer do? If he discards, partner ruffs with the S9 driving out the ace and promoting the SQ to the setting trick. If declarer ruffs with the ten, jack, or king, partner discards and the Q9x of trump is now a natural trump trick.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

When there are no possible tricks coming from the side suits, consider giving declarer a ruff and a sluff which might promote a trump trick for partner.

Get in the habit of adding declarer's HCP to dummy's HCP. Subtract the total from 40 to find out what you and partner are working with. When things look desperate (strong looking dummy), assign declarer the least he can have for his bid and start working from there.

#3 The Killer!

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: Both

North (dummy)

S. Q108

H. 93

D. AKJ52

C. Q43

S. 63

H. AKQ102

D. Q93

C. AJ10

South	West	North	East
1S	Pass	2D	2H
Pass	Pass	4S	All Pass

Opening lead: H4

You win the opening lead with the queen, declarer playing the seven and continue with the HA, declarer playing the jack and partner the six. Now what?

Solution

The West hand: S. 752 H. 654 D. 876 C. 8762

The South hand: AKJ94 H. J87 D. 104 C. K95

Declarer is marked with the AKJ of spades and the CK for the opening bid, so you need two club tricks, However, if declarer has a doubleton diamond he can set up the suit with a ruff and using dummy's third spade as the entry to the established diamonds, However, you have a counter, Force dummy to trump so declarer cannot draw trump ending in dummy, Lead a third heart.

By the way, declarer has another heart. If that jack were a true card, partner would have started with the 8654 and should play the five the second time (present count).

THE BOTTOM LINE

When you lead low from three or four small in partner's unsupported suit, play the lowest remaining card the second time if you started with four and the higher remaining card if you started with three (present count).

One way to kill a long side suit in dummy that has be set up with a ruff, the only side suit entry being in the trump suit, is to force dummy to trump leaving one defender with more trump than dummy.

#4 Combinations

Dealer: West
Vulnerable: N-S

North (dummy)
S. AJ74
H. 65
D. Q93
C. KQJ10

East (you)
S. 98
H. AJ73
D. J75
C. A873

West	North	East	South
Pass	1C	Pass	1S
Dbl,	2S	3H	3S
All Pass			

Opening lead: HK

West continues with the H2 and you are on lead at trick three? What now?

Solution

West hand: S. 52 H. KQ102 D. A1062 C. 542
South hand: S. KQ1063 H. 1084 D. K84 C. 96

Switch to the DJ. You can see that the clubs are soon to be set up and declarer will discard diamonds on clubs, so clearly it must be right to switch to a diamond, but why the jack?

If declarer has the ace and partner the king, it doesn't matter which diamond you lead. If partner has the DA and declarer the K10, it also doesn't matter which diamond you lead. In both cases you are only going to get one trick.

The critical holding in declarer's hand is K8x. In that case it is necessary to switch to the jack and hope declarer thinks you have the J10. If he does, he will play low and dummy's queen will win. When you get in with the CA and play a second diamond. Partner now has the A10 hovering over declarer's king and you will get two diamonds to beat this contract one trick.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

There are times when you have to make non-standard leads from certain card combinations. These leads almost always take place later in the hand and are hard classify. It helps to be familiar with card combinations.

#5 You Never Know

Dealer: South
Vul: Both

North (dummy)
S. AKQ
H. 843
D. 85
C. A9764

East (you)
S. J1092
H. A10
D. Q4
C. QJ1082

South	West	North	East
1D	Pass	2C	Pass
2D	Pass	2S	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: H5

You play the HA and return the H10. Declarer plays the 7 and then the queen. Partner wins the queen and returns the H9. What do you discard?

Solution

West hand: S. 8753 H. K9652 D. J73 C. 5

South hand: S. 64 H. QJ7 D. AK10962 C. K3

The DQ! Partner's heart return is supposed to show where his outside entry lies and partner has returned his highest heart. Obviously, the entry can't be in spades, and if had a slow entry in clubs he would have returned a low heart, so if it is anywhere, it must be in diamonds.

If partner has the Ace or King of diamonds declarer has no chance, but if partner has Jxx. you must unload your queen to make sure partner has a diamond entry.

If you discard a black card, declarer can enter dummy with a spade and lead a diamond. If you play the queen, declarer will allow it to hold. If you play low, declarer will win the king, cross to another spade and lead a second diamond. This time when you play the queen, perforce, declarer will duck in both cases setting up the suit without letting partner in to cash his hearts, you have to use your imagination on this one.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Responder's second bid suit (2S) is often made on a three-card suit hoping partner can bid notrump with a stopper in the unbid suit.

At times you have to unblock from honor doubleton to promote an entry in partner's hand. You may have to do this even though the suit has been bid and rebid to your left! Courage. If it's the only hope to defeat the contract, do it!

#6 European Seniors Championships 2002

LOOKING AHEAD, WAY AHEAD

Dlr: South

Vul: Both

North (dummy)

S. Q

H. A

D. A7532

C. AQJ1032

West (you)

S. J64

H. 9654

D. KQ

C. K874

South	West	North	East
1S	Pass	2C	Pass
2S	Pass	3D	Pass
3NT	Pass	4C	Pass
5C	Pass	5S	Pass
6S	All Pass (Phew!)		

You lead the DK to dummy's ace and partner's jack. Declarer clears the SQ and the HA from dummy, partner playing the H2, count. Declarer exits from with a diamond, partner playing the 8 to your Q. On the two diamond plays declarer has played small diamonds. What now?

Solution

South hand: S. AK9872 H. KQ7 D. 64 C. 95

East hand: S. 1053 H. J10832 D. J1098 C. 6

The idea is to prevent South from reaching his hand to draw trump. The only winning exit from your hand at this point is the CK! After winning the ace, if declarer tries to enter his via the C9, partner ruffs,

If declarer tries to get back to his hand by ruffing a diamond, you overtrump. You've got the poor guy coming and going, providing you make the "key play."

#7 Solid Preempt

Dlr: West

Vul: Both

North (dummy)
S. AKQ95
H. AKJ9
D. 76
C. Q2

West (you)

S. J2
H. 8
D. 1054
C. AKJ9863

West	North	East	South
3C (1)	Dbl,	Pass	5D
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) As preempts go, this is a maximum.

Opening lead: CK (King from AK at the five level or higher)

Your partner greets your opening lead with the 10 so you continue with the ace and both follow. It's still your turn. What do you lead at trick three?

Solution

East hand: S. 10876 H. Q105432 D. J C. 105
South hand: S. 43 H. 76 D. AKQ9832 C. 74

You really don't have a choice. Given the bidding South must have six or seven great diamonds and has turned up with two clubs. Even if he has five major suit cards, dummy has them all covered. Your only chance is to find partner with a diamond honor even a singleton jack, queen, or king will do the trick. Partner "uppercuts" declarer and your ten of diamonds turns out to be the setting trick.

#8 Three Quickies

Dlr: South

Vul: Both

IMPs

North (Dummy)
S. K4
H. 965
D. AK842
C. K86

West (you)

S. 1083
H. AKJ82
D. 10
C. QJ95

South	West	North	East
1S	2H	3D	Pass
3S	Pass	4S	All Pass

Opening lead: HA

Partner plays the three and declarer the four. You continue with the HK and this time partner plays the queen and declarer the seven. Flushed with success you play the HJ and partner discards the C2, Now what?

Solution

Play a 4th heart and hope partner has either the jack or queen of spades. If he does, the uppercut will promote your S10 to the setting trick. It's hard to see where the setting trick is to come from otherwise. Yes, it is possible to construct a hand where it would be wrong to play a 4th heart, but it requires declarer to have only five spades and no DQ. Something like: AQJxx xxx Jx Axx. If this is the case, apologize and get on with the next hand.

The East hand S. Q H. Q3 D. J9765 C. 107432
The South hand: S. AJ97652 H. 1074 D. Q3 C. A

THE BOTTOM LINE

1. If you and partner lead the ace from ace-king vs suit contracts, there are exceptions. The king is led if the opponents are playing at the five level or higher. The king is led if the suit has been supported or if you are leading a suit partner has bid. In each of these cases it is likely that you would want to lead the ace without the king.

In addition, the ace from ace-king is a trick one convention only. After trick one the king is led from the ace-king.

2. When partner leads the ace (ace from ace-king) and third hand has Qx, third hand plays low unless the jack is in the dummy. The play of the queen when the jack is not in dummy shows the QJ (x) or a singleton. It is not used to show a doubleton!

3. When there are no tricks coming from the side suits, or it is highly unlikely that a trick is coming from a side suit, ruff and a sluff with trump promotion in mind is the way to go.

#9 Looking Ahead

Dir: North

Vul: E-W

North (dummy)

S. J4

H. J975

D. AQ108

C. KQ9

East (you)

S. A963

H. KQ6

D. 2

C. 87654

North	East	South	West
1D	Pass	1H	Pass
2H	Pass	4H	All Pass

Opening lead: SK Plan your defense.

Solution

West hand: S. KQ1082 H. 2 D. 97643 C. J3

South hand: S. 75 H. A10843 D. KJ5 C. A102

Take charge! Overtake partner's opening lead and switch to your singleton diamond. Assuming dummy wins and a heart is led, split your honors. Then you get in with your other heart honor lead a spade to partner's queen and get your diamond ruff.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

The defender who can "see" what the winning defense is, takes charge.

The best play with this heart combination for one loser is to take two finesses.

#10 Looking for Three

Dlr: South
Vul: Both

North
S. 76
H. AK852
D. 954
C. KQ2

East (you)
S. AKJ854
H. J
D. 32
C. 10864

South	West	North	East
1D	Pass	1H	1S
3D	Pass	5D	All Pass

Opening lead: SQ Plan your defense.

Solution

West hand: S. Q H. 1097643 D. 106 C. J973
South hand: S. 10932H. Q D. AKQJ87 C. A5

Better overtake the spade and play a second and third spade hoping partner can overtrump dummy. Given South's strong bidding it is the only realistic chance to defeat the contract.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A jump rebid (opener's sequence) generally shows a strong 6 card suit with 15-16 HCP.

When partner leads an honor card (the SQ) and you can see the next lower honor, assume the lead is from a singleton or a doubleton.

Do not signal encouragement if you can afford to overtake partner's lead.

Bonus: Visualizing

Dlr: South
Vul: Neither

North
S. K97
H. 865
D. Q109
C. AK107

East (you)
S. AQ5
H. Q4
D. 653
C. QJ965

South	West	North	East
1H	Pass	2C	Pass
2D	Pass	2H	Pass
3D	Pass	4H	All Pass

Opening lead: S3 (4th best leads) Dummy plays low. Plan your defense.

With declarer marked with a likely 5-5 in the reds, it is important to cash two spade tricks early. Declarer must have at least two spades and if declarer has two spades and one club and you don't cash the second spade, you can kiss that trick goodbye. But now what?

Solution

If declarer has a diamond loser, it's not going anywhere and if declarer has the AK of diamonds, your only chance is to engineer two tricks in the trump suit where only one may have existed. If declarer has the AJ10xx or the KJ10xx of hearts, you are entitled to one trump trick--or are you? You can actually get two if partner has the A9x or the K9x of hearts. You must lead a third spade voiding yourself in that suit. Now when declarer leads a heart to the jack, partner

wins and plays a fourth spade allowing you to uppercut declarer with the HQ. After declarer overtrumps with the ace, partner's nine is the setting trick.

The West hand: S. 108432 H. K92 D. J7 C. 843

The South hand: S. J6 H. AJ1073 D. AK842 C. 2

THE BOTTOM LINE

When there are no apparent tricks coming from the side suits, look to the trump suit. Possibilities are trying to give partner an overruff or trying to engineer an uppercut as with this hand. The idea is to void yourself in a side suit so that when partner gets in with an anticipated entry (AH or KH), you will be able to s uppercut declarer with your remaining relatively high trump when partner leads your void suit. It's called looking ahead. Looking for extra tricks in the trump suit was the theme of most of these hands.

http://www.kantarbridge.com/test_your_defense.htm