

NVBA I/N Teaching

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Planning the Defense at a NT Contract

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Last week we covered Opening Leads vs a NT contract. A famous Bridge player and teacher once said "There are no blind opening leads, just deaf opening leaders." At any rate, the defense began with the Opening Lead. This card should tell the Opening Leader's partner (always East in the newspaper columns) something about the Opening Leader's hand, and specifically about the suit lead -- if it is "fourth best," the "Rule of Eleven" applies. If not, figure out why not. If you lead fifth best, what rule applies?

Dummy (North in the bridge column) now lays out the Dummy. East (we will use the "Bridge Column convention") now knows 27 of the 52 cards, and has hints from the auction and the lead about the remaining 25 cards, and the distribution of the High Card Points among the unseen hands. Drawing on all the information, East takes the next step in the defense.

What's the Objective?

At Matchpoints, the objective is the best possible result. At IMPs, the objective is to defeat the contract.

Where are the cards?

What does the Opening Lead tell you about that suit?

What does the auction tell you about the distribution in the other suits?

Where are the High Card Points (HCPs)?

You can see your own hand and the Dummy.

The Auction tells you something about the other two hands.

The Opening Lead may give additional information about that suit.

Planning the Defense

How many tricks do you need to take? *This may be different at IMPs than at Matchpoints!*

How many do you see?

From where will the remaining tricks come?

Where are Declarer's tricks? *(you know which finesses, if necessary, will win)*

Does Declarer have enough tricks? If not, where and how will (s)he look for more?

How can you foil declarer's attempts to find these tricks?

So much for theory and abstract knowledge. Time now to look at specific hands and put the knowledge to the test.

When Declarer is known to have enough tricks in three suits to make the contract, shift to the fourth suit unless it is CLEARLY wrong.

Thanks to Eddie Kantar for this hand

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

♠ Q 10
♥ K 4
♦ A J 10 7 6 5
♣ A K 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K J 4 2
♥ Q J 10 7 3
♦ K 4
♣ 9 6

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♦	1♥	1NT
Pass	3NT	All pass	
3NT by South			
<i>Trick</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>
1. W	♥8	4	10
2. S	♦Q	2	5
			<u>A</u>
			<u>K</u>

Now what? You can see that Declarer has 9 tricks: 5 ♦s, 2 ♥s, and at least 2 ♣. Switch to a low ♠, it is your ONLY chance.

Declarer's hand: ♠ 976, ♥ A965, ♦ Q3, ♣ Q875.

Just as the hold-up, unblocking, and ducking are useful to Declarer, they can also be useful to the Defenders. Defenders hold up to cut off communication between the Declarer and the Dummy.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

Hand from Louis H Watson

♠ 7 6
♥ 9 5 2
♦ 10 9 6
♣ K Q J 9 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K J 2
♥ K 6 3
♦ J 8 3 2
♣ A 8 2

3NT by South				
<i>Trick</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>4th</i>
1. W	♠5	6	K	<u>A</u>
2. S	<u>♣10</u>	7	5	2
3. S	♣4	6	<u>9</u>	8

As West has shown an even number of ♣, Declarer must have a third ♣ so you hold up your ♣ A until the third round the suit, cutting Declarer off from the final two ♣ tricks. Later in the play, Declarer will have to discard Dummy's winning ♣s on tricks in other suits.

		N			
Q J 10 8 2	W		E	S	A 5

If West leads the ♥ Q, East MUST play the ♥ A to unblock the suit.

Defender ducking is usually to either leave an entry card in Partner's hand, or to establish a tenace position over Declarer's hand.

North Deals
None Vul

Hand from Louis H Watson

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

♠ A K Q
♥ Q J 4
♦ Q J 10 2
♣ A 5 3

3 NT by South

<i>Trick</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>4th</i>
1. W	♥ 6	5	<u>A</u>	4
2. E	♥ 10	<u>J</u>	3	9

East's ♥ 10 at Trick 2 shows less than four ♥s in the East hand (else East returns the fourth-best ♥), and locates the ♥ J and ♥ Q in the South hand. West MUST duck Trick 2, to establish the k K-8 as a tenace over Declarer's remaining ♥ Q, and so East can return her final ♥ to collect the final three ♥ tricks for the defense. If West takes the ♥ K at Trick 2 and clears the suit, then he will never regain the lead to cash the final two ♥ tricks. Declarer can duck any ♣ honor lead from East, and take the ♣ A only on the third round of the suit or an earlier low ♣ lead from East.