

BRIDGE TECHNIQUE SERIES

# PLANNING IN DEFENSE



*David Bird • Marc Smith*

## **Master Point Press on the Internet**

*[www.masterpointpress.com](http://www.masterpointpress.com)*

Our main site, with information about our books and software, reviews and more.

*[www.masteringbridge.com](http://www.masteringbridge.com)*

Our site for bridge teachers and students – free downloadable support material for our books, helpful articles, forums and more.

*[www.ebooksbridge.com](http://www.ebooksbridge.com)*

Purchase downloadable electronic versions of MPP books.

*[www.bridgeblogging.com](http://www.bridgeblogging.com)*

Read and comment on regular articles from MPP authors and other bridge notables.



Copyright © 2001 David Bird & Marc Smith

All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

**Master Point Press**

331 Douglas Ave  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
M5M 1H2  
(416) 781-0351  
Internet: [www.masterpointpress.com](http://www.masterpointpress.com)  
[www.masteringbridge.com](http://www.masteringbridge.com)  
[www.ebooksbridge.com](http://www.ebooksbridge.com)  
[www.bridgeblogging.com](http://www.bridgeblogging.com)  
Email: [info@masterpointpress.com](mailto:info@masterpointpress.com)

**Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Bird, David, 1946-  
Planning in defense

(Bridge technique; 11)  
ISBN 978-1-55494-011-0

1. Contract bridge — Defensive play. I. Smith, Marc, 1960-.II. Title.  
III. Series: Bird, David, 1946-Bridge technique; 11

GV1282.42.B573 2001    795.41'53              C00-933104-2

*Cover design and Interior:* Olena S. Sullivan  
*Editor:* Ray Lee

---

# CONTENTS

---

<b>Chapter 1 Signals and Discards</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Signaling in defense</i>	5
<i>Discarding</i>	6
<b>Chapter 2 Opening Leads</b>	<b>7</b>
THE OPENING LEAD AGAINST NOTRUMP	7
<i>Which suit should I lead?</i>	7
<i>Which card should I lead?</i>	8
THE OPENING LEAD AGAINST A TRUMP CONTRACT	10
<i>Leading an unbid side suit</i>	11
<i>Leading a short suit</i>	12
<i>Leading a trump</i>	12
<i>Leading against suit slams</i>	13
<i>Leading against notrump slams</i>	14
<b>Chapter 3 Basic Defense at Notrump</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Maintaining communications</i>	21
<i>Clearing the suit you have led</i>	24
<i>Clearing the suit partner has led</i>	25
<i>Reading the opening lead</i>	26
<i>Reading partner's return</i>	28
<i>Avoiding a blockage</i>	29
<i>When to break the 'rules'</i>	30
<b>Chapter 4 Defense against Suit Contracts</b>	<b>36</b>
<i>Playing the right card in the third seat</i>	36
<i>Playing the right card in second seat</i>	41
<i>Thinking clearly in defense</i>	43
<i>General guidance on discarding</i>	45
<i>Playing a forcing defense</i>	47
<i>Key points</i>	49
<b>Chapter 5 Counting</b>	<b>53</b>
<i>Counting distribution</i>	53
<i>Counting points</i>	56
<i>Counting declarer's tricks</i>	57

---

# **Bridge Technique Series**

---

Entry Management

Tricks with Trumps

Safety Plays

Eliminations and Throw-Ins

Deceptive Card Play

Planning in Suit Contracts

Planning the Play in Notrump

Defensive Signaling

Squeezes Made Simple

Planning in Defense

Reading the Cards

Tricks with Finesses



# Signals and Discards

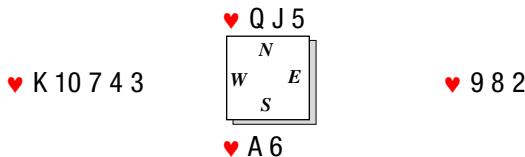
---

When you start playing with a new partner, it is important to agree what type of signals and discards you will use. Otherwise you will have little chance of defending to maximum effect. In the same way, when you set out to write a book on defense, it is a good idea to state at the outset which types of signals and discards will be assumed. Let's do it!

## *Signaling in defense*

In our earlier book in this series, *Signaling in Defense*, we recommended that an opening lead of the ace or queen should ask partner to give an attitude signal (high to encourage, low to discourage). A lead of the king should request a count signal (high to show an even number of cards in the suit, low to show an odd number). In all other situations, we recommended that the defenders should signal their count. Why was that?

Apart from the fact that it enables the defenders to build a quick picture of the whole deal, there are many single suit situations where a count signal can help. Suppose you are West, defending 3NT, and you lead a fourth-best heart here:



Dummy's queen wins the first round and declarer attacks some other suit, allowing you to regain the lead. Should you play another heart now? If South's ace is bare, that will work well. If the ace is still guarded, a heart continuation will give away a trick. The only way you can read the position is for your partner to signal his length on the first round. Here he would play the two, advertising a three-card holding. As this leaves declarer with only two hearts, you would continue the suit. If instead East had started with ♥9-2, he would signal with the nine on the first round. Warned that declarer held three cards in hearts, you would try a different suit when you gained the lead.

## ***Discarding***

What is the best discard system to play? Some players like Lavinthal or McKenney discards — where you throw a high card to suggest a switch to the higher of the other two suits, a low card to suggest a switch to the lower suit. We are not great admirers of this method. Those who use it often take each discard as a command to switch somewhere, even when the defender making the discard has no great wish for any particular play. ‘You did ask for a club,’ is the usual wail as yet another contract is let through!

When you try to help partner, with a signal or a discard, you should aim to describe your hand rather than to tell him what to do. How, indeed, can you know what is the best line of defense when you can see only your own cards and not partner's? It is better to describe your own hand, then leave it to partner to work out what is best.

We recommend a simple system of discarding — ‘keep winners, throw losers!’ In general, you will throw from a suit in which you have no interest. A high card will show an even number of cards in the suit, a low card an odd number.

Perhaps your reaction is: ‘I can't be bothered with all these count signals and discards. I play bridge for enjoyment.’ That's fine by us. It's your choice! But you will never be able to defend with consistent accuracy. Too many times you will have to guess what to do and that is something that top players hate.

# Opening Leads

---

‘It all depends on the lead you get.’ How often have you heard someone say that? The defenders have relatively few chances to affect the outcome of a contract, particularly a high-level one, and it is vital to make the most telling strike at Trick 1. We will look first at the opening lead against notrump, then move to the more varied options available when leading against a suit contract.

## THE OPENING LEAD AGAINST NOTRUMP

The best attack against a notrump contract is usually the suit that is most strongly held by the defenders. If you have a good suit of your own, and it has not been bid by the opponents, you need look no further. Otherwise you may have to judge from the opponents’ bidding whether partner may have a good suit for you to attack

### *Which suit should I lead?*

Suppose the bidding has been an unhelpful 1NT-3NT and you have to find a lead from this hand:

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

You would lead a spade rather than a diamond. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, spades is a major suit; if the dummy held four spades, he might well have bid Stayman. The second reason is that you have the jack of spades backing up the king. Leading from an honor gives away about half a trick, on average. The chance of giving away a trick is reduced when you have a second card, such as the jack or ten, backing the top honor.

---

# INTERMEDIATE

The **Bridge Technique Series** is designed to take the reader through the most important aspects of card-play technique at bridge. Each book of the series focuses on a different topic, and wherever possible, the tactics and strategy are considered from the point of view of both declarer and defenders.

## PLANNING IN DEFENSE

This book covers the fundamental strategies available to defenders. Starting with the opening lead and going on through each stage of the entire play of a hand including counting, signaling and discarding. *Planning in Defense* helps defenders answer the basic questions, 'What should I be doing now, and why?' — the questions that most defenders find so difficult to answer.



**DAVID BIRD** has written more than forty previous books, including the popular 'St Titus Abbey' collections. (*Saints and Sinners*, 2000, with Tim Bourke is the seventh in the series). He writes two newspaper columns in the UK, and his work appears regularly in numerous bridge magazines in the UK and the US.



**MARC SMITH**'s previous instructional books include *Countdown to Winning Bridge* (1999, with Tim Bourke) and *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know* (1999 American Bridge Teachers Association Book of the Year, with Barbara Seagram) and *25 Ways to Compete in the Bidding* (2000, with Barbara Seagram).



MASTER POINT PRESS