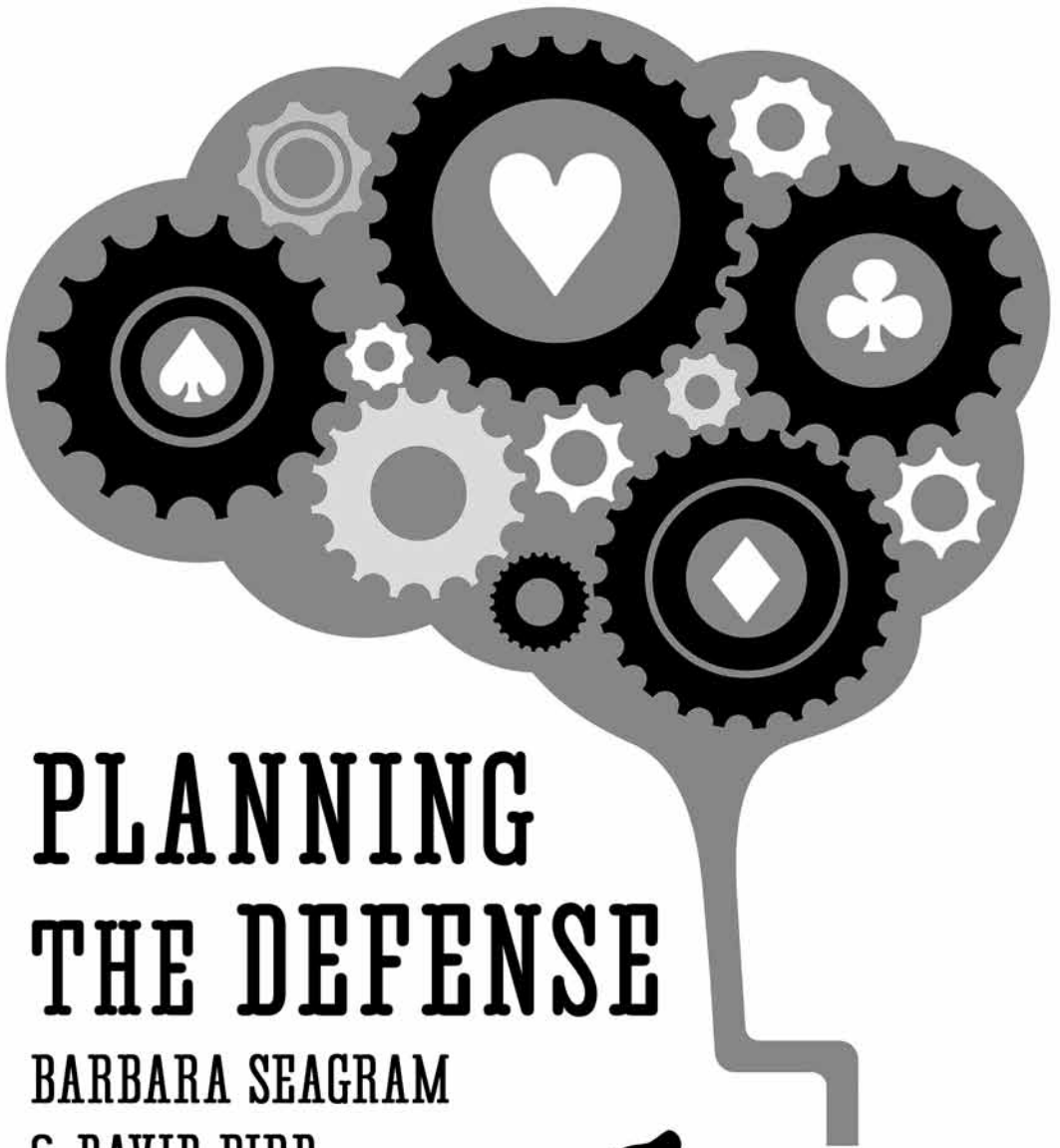


PLANNING THE DEFENSE

BARBARA SEAGRAM & DAVID BIRD



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& DAVID BIRD



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CONTENTS

Introduction	7
PART I SIGNALS AND DISCARDS	9
1. Four Types of Signal	11
2. Attitude signals	12
3. Count Signals	25
4. Suit Preference Signals	35
5. Attitude Discards	45
PART II MAKING A DEFENSIVE PLAN	55
6. Planning Your Play in Third Seat	56
7. Planning the Defensive Entries	71
8. Planning Whether to Cover	85
9. Planning Your Play in Second Seat	99
10. Planning Defensive Ruffs	113
11. Continue the Led Suit or Switch?	129
PART III PLANS THAT INVOLVE COUNTING	143
12. Planning by Counting Points	145
13. Planning by Counting Tricks	154
14. Planning by Counting Distribution	167

INTRODUCTION

Planning a defense is not as easy as planning the play of a contract. Although you can see twenty-six cards once dummy goes down, they are not the total assets belonging to your side. Helpful clues arrive from various sources. The bidding often assists you, and partner's opening lead will provide further information. So will his subsequent plays and signals, as well as the line of play chosen by declarer. Constantly, throughout the defense, you will need to count the shape of the hands, the number of points declarer and your partner hold, how many tricks declarer has and how many possible tricks you can see for the defense.

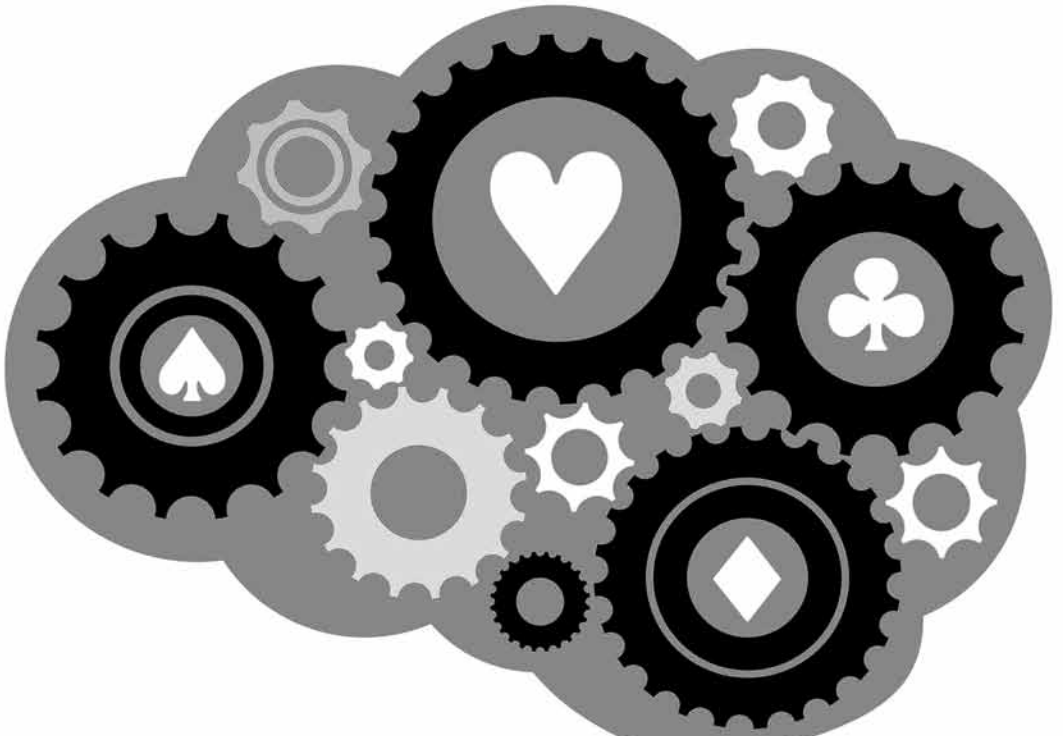
Does this sound like a bundle of fun? Perhaps your answer is 'You must be joking!' It is sometimes hard work, yes, but this makes it all the more satisfying when you find the only way to beat a contract.

Each chapter contains examples of successful defenses on a particular theme. Every deal ends with a condensed version of the defensive plan that you should make. The end-of-chapter 'Remember these points' section serves as an *aide-memoire* and is followed by several quiz questions on the topic.

Many players can play a hand well as declarer. Considerably fewer have mastered the techniques of defending accurately. Join their ranks and you will be in demand as a partner!

Barbara and David

Many thanks indeed to Tom Anderson, who very kindly checked an early draft of this book for us. In addition to his accurate proofchecking, he made many valuable suggestions.



PART I

SIGNALS AND DISCARDS



1

FOUR TYPES OF SIGNAL

You may have your own ideas about signals and discards. That is just fine. If you are comfortable with one particular method and it works well for you, by all means continue to use it. For the purposes of this book, we will suggest the following scheme, widely adopted around the world. It applies against both suit and notrump contracts.

- When partner leads a suit, you will generally give an **attitude signal** (a high card encourages, a low card discourages)
- When declarer leads a suit, you may give a **count signal** (a high card shows an even number of cards, a low card shows an odd number).
- In certain situations where neither an attitude signal nor a count signal would be useful, you can use a **suit-preference signal**. A high card shows interest in the higher of the other suits (never trumps). A low card shows interest in the lower suit.
- When you are **discarding**, a low card will show that you are not interested in that suit. A high one will show interest in the suit.

(A good number of players use ‘upside-down’ attitude signals, where a low card encourages and a high card discourages. There are also upside-down count signals, where a high card shows an odd number of cards, a low card shows an even number. While other methods have their merits, in this book we will assume that standard signals are being played.)

2

ATTITUDE SIGNALS

There are two situations when you will have the chance to give an attitude signal:

- Your partner has led an ace, king or queen
- Your partner has led a low card and the next hand has won the trick

SIGNALING WHEN PARTNER HAS LED THE ACE, KING OR QUEEN

Let's look first at some contracts played with a trump suit. Take the West cards here:

<p>♠ 8 5 3 ♥ 10 5 3 ♦ 10 9 3 ♣ A K J 3</p>	<p>♠ K 7 ♥ Q 9 7 2 ♦ A K Q 7 ♣ 10 5 4</p>	<p>♠ A 10 9 4 2 ♥ J ♦ 8 5 4 2 ♣ 9 8 2</p>							
	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E		
	N								
W	S	E							
	<p>♠ Q J 6 ♥ A K 8 6 4 ♦ J 6 ♣ Q 7 6</p>								

West	North	East	South
pass	2NT	pass	1♥
all pass			4♥

North's Jacoby 2NT shows at least a sound game-raise in hearts. South has no slam interest and signs off in game. You lead the ♣A and partner plays the ♣2 (a discouraging attitude signal). What is your defensive plan?

It would make little sense to continue with the ♣K when partner has told you that he does not hold the ♣Q. Declarer would then make a trick with the queen.

The best chance of beating the game will be to score three club tricks and one other winner in partner's hand. You must look for an entry to partner's hand, so he can return a club through declarer's ♣Q.

Since you can see all the high diamonds in dummy, you should switch to a spade at Trick 2. You lead a high spot card (the ♠8) to tell partner that you have no honor in the suit. East wins with the ♠A and returns a club. You make two more tricks in that suit, and the game is one down.

Suppose partner held ♣Q92 instead. He would encourage a club continuation by playing the ♣9 at Trick 1. You would continue with king and another club, taking the first three tricks.

DEFENSIVE PLAN (West): Partner's ♣2 is a low card, a discouraging attitude signal telling me that South holds the ♣Q. I will switch to a spade, hoping that partner can win and return a club to my ♣KJ.

This next example shows a common situation where you have led a king against a trump contract:

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

West	North	East	South
pass	2♥	pass	1♥
all pass			4♥

You lead the ♠K, partner plays the ♠3 (an attitude signal) and declarer plays the ♠7. What is your defensive plan?

The lead of a king suggests that you hold the queen also. Your partner would give you a high attitude signal if he held an honor touching your honors (the ♠A or ♠J here). When he plays the ♠3 and your ♠K wins the trick, you know that declarer holds the ♠AJ. Declarer has held up his ace, hoping that you will continue the suit

and give him two spade tricks. Your partner's discouraging attitude signal prevents you from falling into declarer's trap. You will switch passively to a trump, giving nothing away, and declarer will then lose two tricks in each black suit, going one down.

DEFENSIVE PLAN (West): Partner's ♠3 attitude signal is a low card (discouraging). A spade continuation will run round to declarer's ♠AJ, giving away a trick. I will switch to another suit, and a trump looks the safest bet.

WHICH CARDS ARE HIGH, WHICH ARE LOW?

A good question to ask is: 'Which cards are considered to be high and which are low?' You will hear some inexperienced players saying: 'We play 6 or lower as discouraging, 7 or higher as encouraging.' This makes little sense because you can signal only with the cards that you were dealt!

Suppose this was the spade situation on that last deal:

	♠ 6 4 2	
♠ K Q 10 5	□	♠ 9 8 7
	♠ A J 3	

Again, East wants to discourage a spade continuation, but he has only the 9, 8 and 7 available. How should you read the situation when East plays the ♠7 and declarer the ♠3? You can see what nonsense it would be to read the ♠7 as encouraging. You can see the 6, 5, 4, 3 and 2 of the suit, so you know that the ♠7 is East's lowest spade. It is therefore a discouraging signal and you should not continue spades.

Let's look at one more spade position:

	♠ 7 6 4	
♠ K Q 10 5	□	♠ J 3 2
	♠ A 9 8	

You lead the ♠K and this time East wants to encourage because he has a touching honor. He plays his highest available spot card, the ♠3. Whether declarer plays the ♠A or the ♠8, you must bear in mind that the ♠2 is missing and East's ♠3 might well be intended as an encouraging card.

LOOK AT THE OTHER SUITS BEFORE SIGNALING

You must sometimes look beyond the suit led before deciding whether to encourage a continuation. Look at this deal:

	♠ Q 9 4 ♥ J 7 5 ♦ K 10 7 ♣ A K J 7										
♠ 7 2 ♥ A K 10 ♦ 6 4 3 2 ♣ 10 8 5 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6 3 ♥ Q 9 8 4 2 ♦ A Q 9 5 ♣ 9 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K J 10 8 5 ♥ 6 3 ♦ J 8 ♣ Q 6 4										

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	4♠
all pass			

You are sitting East and your partner leads the ♥A. He is expecting an attitude signal. What is your plan for the defense?

You expect partner to hold the ♥AK and you hold the ♥Q. Perhaps it seems right to play the ♥9, an encouraging signal. See what may happen if you do. West continues with king and another heart. Declarer ruffs the third round and draws trumps. He then plays four rounds of clubs, discarding a diamond loser, and makes the game.

Here you can see that two hearts and two diamonds may beat the contract. You should therefore play the ♥2 at Trick 1, a discouraging signal. Expecting declarer to hold the ♥Q, your partner will switch to diamonds. You take two tricks in diamonds and return a heart for one down.

DEFENSIVE PLAN (East): To score two diamond tricks, I will need partner to lead the suit. I will therefore discourage a heart continuation by playing the ♥2.

ENCOURAGING WITH A DOUBLETON

Against a suit contract there is one common situation where partner may play an encouraging high card when he does not hold a touching honor:

<p>♠ 8 ♥ J 8 6 3 ♦ Q 7 3 ♣ A K J 7 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 10 6 2 ♥ A 9 ♦ K 9 6 2 ♣ Q 9 5</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; width: 100%;"> S </div> </div> <p>♠ A K J 5 4 ♥ Q 4 ♦ A 10 5 ♣ 8 6 3</p>	<p>♠ 9 7 3 ♥ K 10 7 5 2 ♦ J 8 4 ♣ 10 4</p>
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West	North	East	South
pass	3♠	pass	1♠
all pass			4♠

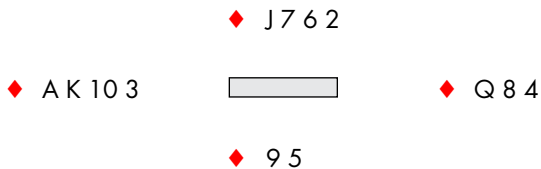
You are sitting East and see your partner lead the ♣A. Such a lead would make little sense unless it was from an AK combination. Since you have a doubleton, you would like West to continue clubs and give you a ruff. You therefore give an encouraging attitude signal with the ♣10. West continues with king and another club and you ruff the third round. What then?

A switch to either red suit could easily give a trick away, allowing declarer to make the contract. You should look for a safe return, playing back a trump. Declarer can then set up a diamond to discard a heart but will go one down.

As you see, a diamond switch at Trick 4 would give away the contract. Declarer could then score four diamond tricks and discard his heart loser. A heart switch from the king would have cost if declarer held ♥Qxx ♦Ax.

DEFENSIVE PLAN (East): Partner has surely led from the ♣AK. Since I will be able to ruff a third round of clubs, I will play the ♣10 on the first round to encourage a club continuation. After taking the ruff, I will exit safely with a trump.

It's time for a word of warning. If you freely give an encouraging signal when holding the queen and partner has led from the ace-king, this may work poorly here:

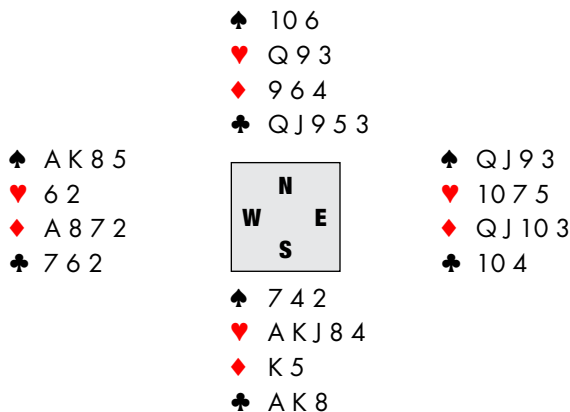


Partner leads the ♦A against, say, a major-suit game. If you encourage with the ♦8, he will not know whether you hold ♦84 or ♦Q84. If he places you with a doubleton and continues with the ♦K, declarer will be able to ruff a third round of the suit to bring down your ♦Q. Dummy's ♦J will score an undeserved trick and this may give away the contract.

To avoid this unwelcome situation, when dummy holds some length and there is a risk of giving declarer an extra trick you should only encourage with a doubleton.

A SPECIAL SIGNAL

When partner leads from an ace-king combination and you hold the queen and jack, you will have the chance to make a special signal. When you play the queen under partner's ace, you promise the jack (or a singleton queen). This tells partner that if he wishes to get you on lead, he can next lead a low card to your jack. Such a signal would work well here:



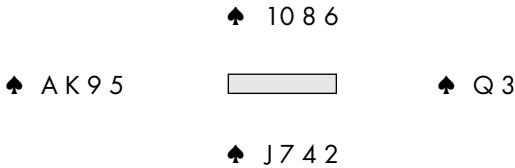
West	North	East	South
pass	2♥	pass	1♥
all pass			4♥

West leads the ♠A and East signals with the ♠Q, showing that he holds the queen and jack. Two spade tricks and two diamonds will beat the game, but on this layout diamonds have to be led from the East hand.

Instead of playing the ♠K next, West leads the ♠5 to partner's ♠J. The return of the ♦Q then gives the defenders two tricks in that suit and beats the contract.

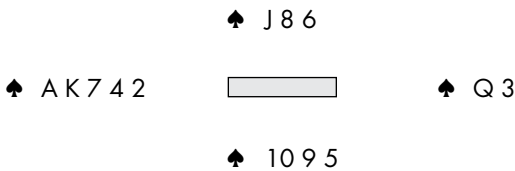
DEFENSIVE PLAN (East): Partner has surely led from the ♠AK. I will make the special signal of the ♠Q to indicate possession of the ♠QJ and give partner the option of underleading the ♠K on the second round of spades. A spade to the jack and a ♦Q switch beats the contract.

Since playing the queen under partner's ace promises the jack, you will not play high-low from Qx. Suppose the spade suit lies like this:



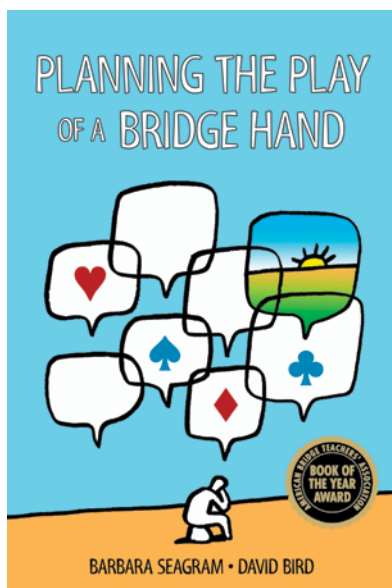
West leads the ♠A against a heart contract. If you mistakenly play the ♠Q, West might lead the ♠5 next in the expectation that you hold the ♠J.

However, if the jack is in dummy, you can play the queen from a doubleton without any risk of confusing partner:



West leads the ♠A and you play the ♠Q. This is known to be from a doubleton (or singleton), so West continues with king and another spade to deliver the ruff.

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