

BARBARA SEAGRAM & DAVID BIRD



# BRIDGE



## 25 WAYS TO BE



# A BETTER DEFENDER

From the authors of  
*25 Ways to Take More Tricks as Declarer*

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**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)  
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[www.bridgeblogging.com](http://www.bridgeblogging.com)  
Email: [info@masterpointpress.com](mailto:info@masterpointpress.com)

**Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Seagram, Barbara

Bridge : 25 ways to be a better defender / written by Barbara Seagram  
& David Bird.

ISBN 978-1-55494-032-5

1. Contract bridge--Defensive play. I. Bird, David, 1946- II. Title.

GV1282.42.S39 2006

796.41'53

C2006-902112-0

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) for our publishing activities.

Editor

Ray Lee

Cover and interior design

Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

Interior format

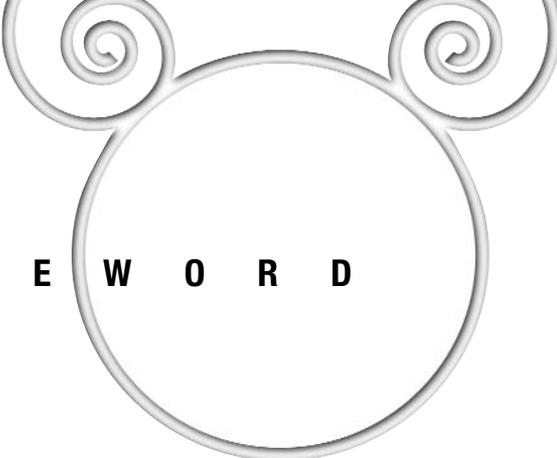
Luise Lee

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To Eddie Kantar, a great author and teacher. His wit, style and presence have helped students and instructors alike, all over the world, to learn and teach this wonderful game.

Barbara Seagram  
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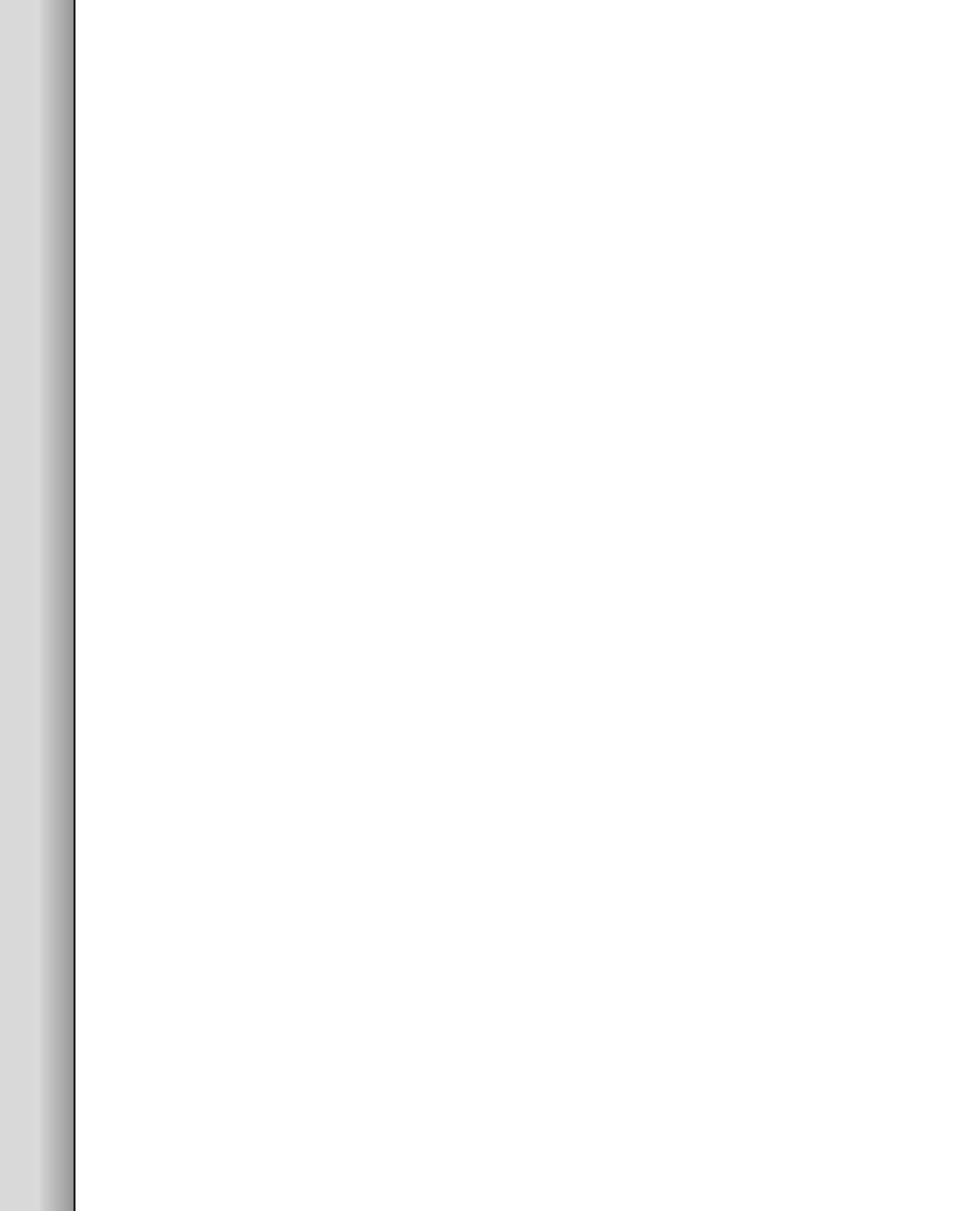
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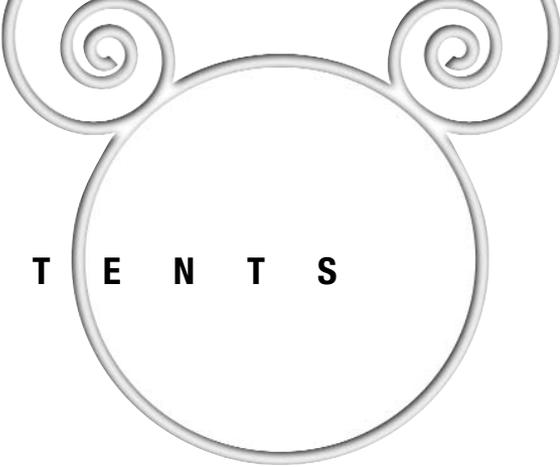
Suppose someone said to you, “Close your eyes and picture a great bridge champion at the table.” What image would come to mind? Jeff Meckstroth studying his cards, deciding whether to bid a slam? Bob Hamman deep in thought, deciding how to play a tricky 3NT? If your answer is one of these, we’ll believe you. It is very unlikely that you would imagine anyone defending a contract, because for some reason this is a neglected aspect of the game. It is not thought to be glamorous, even though finding the only defense to beat a contract is one of the most satisfying parts of the game.

Many average players go through their bridge careers making the same defensive mistakes time and again. They give away countless tricks by covering an honor when they shouldn’t or playing high in the third seat when it is necessary to play a lower card. In this book we cover all the situations where it is easy to go wrong. The first section, *The Basics of Sound Defense*, covers such topics as opening leads, correct play in the second and third seats, whether you should defend actively or passively and how to preserve communications with your partner. The second section, *Building a Picture of the Hidden Hands*, shows you how to discover what cards declarer and your partner hold. With all the cards known, defense becomes so much easier! Finally, in the third section, we cover some more advanced topics, such as how you can put declarer to a guess, promoting trump tricks, disrupting declarer’s communications and defending deceptively.

If you are new to the game, you may think that we have given you a mountain to climb. Don’t worry. There are twenty-five chapters and you can tackle them one at a time, at your own pace. Each chapter you absorb will make you a better defender. Your partners will notice the difference. If they don’t, then lend them this book! Good luck.

*Barbara Seagram and David Bird*





# C O N T E N T S

## **Section 1    The basics of sound defense**

Chapter 1	Leads, signals and discards	11
Chapter 2	Third-hand play	19
Chapter 3	Opening leads against a notrump contract	27
Chapter 4	Second-hand play	35
Chapter 5	Opening leads against a suit contract	43
Chapter 6	Active defense or passive defense?	51
Chapter 7	Lead the right card in the middle of the play	61
Chapter 8	Should you cover an honor lead?	67
Chapter 9	Scoring ruffs on defense	77
Chapter 10	Preserving defensive communications	87

## **Section 2    Building a picture of the closed hands**

Chapter 11	Attitude signals on partner's leads	101
Chapter 12	Counting tricks for the defense	109
Chapter 13	Clues from the bidding	117
Chapter 14	The rule of eleven	125
Chapter 15	Count signals on leads by declarer	133
Chapter 16	Choosing a helpful discard	139
Chapter 17	Counting declarer's tricks	145
Chapter 18	Keeping the right cards	153

## **Section 3    Becoming a great defender**

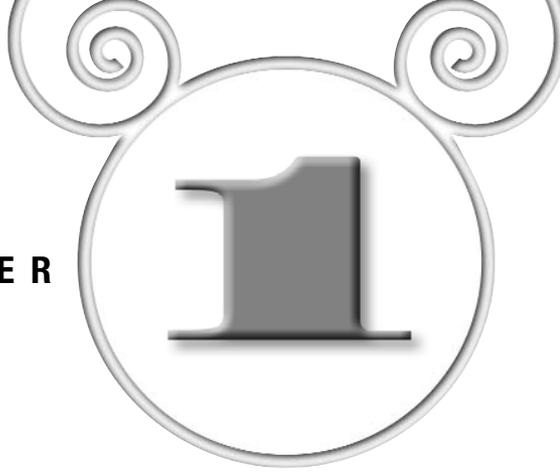
Chapter 19	Unblocking honors	163
Chapter 20	Destroying declarer's communications	169
Chapter 21	Promoting trump tricks	177
Chapter 22	Playing a forcing defense	187
Chapter 23	Cashing your tricks	193
Chapter 24	Defending deceptively	199
Chapter 25	Putting declarer to a guess	209



**1**

# **THE BASICS OF SOUND DEFENSE**





## LEADS, SIGNALS AND DISCARDS



If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable.

*Seneca*

Any book on defense needs to lay out, right at the start, the basic methods that will be assumed throughout. Are we going to suggest something new and wonderful? No! You will be relieved to hear that we are going to recommend methods that have been tried and tested over the decades.

### *Opening leads*

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We will look first at opening leads. In later chapters we will explain how you should choose which suit to lead. Sometimes it is right to attack by trying to score tricks or set them up. Other times it is better to be passive, seeking an opening lead that is unlikely to give a trick away. For the moment, we will consider only the particular card that you should lead from various suit holdings. The choice of card is usually the same, whether you are defending a suit contract or a notrump contract.

### *Which card should I lead against notrump?*

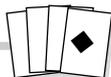
- ◆ From a 'perfect sequence' of three or more honors, lead the top card: the ace from A-K-Q; the king from K-Q-J.
- ◆ From a 'broken sequence' of three or more honors, again lead the top card: the ace from A-K-J; the queen from Q-J-9.
- ◆ From an interior sequence, lead the top of the touching honors: the jack from K-J-10; the ten from Q-10-9.
- ◆ From a holding of four or more cards containing at least one honor (not a sequence of three), lead the fourth-best card: the two from K-8-7-2 and the four from Q-J-6-4-3.
- ◆ From a holding of three cards containing one honor or two non-touching honors, lead the bottom card: the five from Q-8-5; the three from K-J-3.
- ◆ From three cards containing touching honors, lead the top honor: the king from K-Q-4; the jack from J-10-5.
- ◆ Lead the top card from a doubleton.

### *What should I lead from three or four small cards?*

Suppose you decide to make a lead from ♥8-5-2. Which card should you lead? We recommend 'top of nothing' from three small cards. When partner sees your ♥8, he will know that you are leading from weakness. Many players in Europe lead the second-best card from a weak suit and would lead the ♥5; however, it then becomes difficult to distinguish between ♥K-8-5 and ♥8-5-2. Some players in North America lead the ♥2 from ♥8-5-2, but this makes it impossible to tell if they are leading from strength or weakness. You won't go far wrong by leading 'top of nothing'.

#### **BY THE WAY**

*Even if you normally lead 'top of nothing' from three spot cards, it is common practice to lead the lowest card instead when partner has bid the suit and you have not raised. The reasoning behind this is that it is now more important for partner to know how many cards you hold.*



The situation is slightly different when you hold four cards. Now the lead of your top card may cost a trick. Suppose you are West here:

♠ 9 7 6 2	♠ Q 5 3 □ ♠ A K 8 4	♠ J 10
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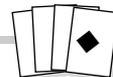
If you lead a top-of-nothing ♠9, declarer will make four tricks in the suit, scoring the ♠8 on the fourth round. It is better to lead the second-best card from four small,

preserving your top card. Lead the ♠7 and you will restrict declarer to three tricks in the suit.

You get the idea, then. You lead a low spot card to suggest that you have something good in the suit and would welcome it being continued. A high spot card suggests that you are leading from a weak suit and it may be a good idea for partner to look elsewhere for tricks when he gains the lead.

### BY THE WAY

*A useful memory aid for this principle is BOSTON: Bottom Of Something, Top Of Nothing.*



### *Do I lead the same card against a suit contract?*

Most of the time you choose the same card from a given combination, whether you are leading against a suit contract or a contract in notrump. There are two exceptions to this rule. Suppose you hold ♠A-10-8-6-3. The ♠6 is a promising lead against a notrump contract, because you hope to set up the suit and score several spade tricks later, whereas the ♠6 would be a very poor lead against a suit contract. If declarer had a singleton spade, in his own hand or the dummy, you might never make a trick with your ace! Almost certainly, you would do better to lead a different suit. If you are determined to lead a spade, you must lead the ace.

#### *Do not underlead an ace against a suit contract*

Suppose next that you hold ♥K-Q-8-5-2. The ♥5 would make an admirable lead against a notrump contract because you hope to set up the suit and score several heart tricks later. However, there is little possibility of doing this against a suit contract because someone will be able to ruff the third round. If you choose to lead from this combination against a suit contract, you must lead the ♥K. Even if declarer wins with the ♥A, which you rather expect, you can score the ♥Q on the second round.

#### *Lead the higher of touching honors against a suit contract*

## *How do I tell partner that I like his lead?*

When partner leads a low card, you will often have to play 'third hand high' in an attempt to win the trick or force declarer to win with a higher card, thereby promoting a trick for the defense. When instead partner leads an honor, you may have a choice of spot cards to play and a chance to 'signal'. What does this mean? You choose one of your spot cards to pass a message to your partner. The most popular scheme of signaling is to play a high card to indicate that you like the suit and would welcome a continuation; a low card discourages a continuation. This is known as giving an 'attitude signal'. Here is a straightforward example:

♠ A K 10 3	♠ 8 6 5 □ ♠ J 7 4	♠ Q 9 2
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