

Defend
These
Hands
With
Me



JULIAN POTTAGE

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Foreword

Over 5000 bridge books have been published but fewer than 200 of these contain collections of deals based on declarer or defensive play. It strikes me as odd that these books have not been more popular, as after all they offer the readers the chance to practice and so improve their technique. Although I think that many bridge players would like to develop their game, I suspect they don't know how to get the best out of the bridge literature in a way that suits them personally.

For my own part, I love any book that I can treat as a quiz because it gives me a chance to expand my repertoire of automatic plays. I like to try to solve each question, not in one reading but with several, over the course of a year or two. I find that when I see the problem a third or fourth time, I recognize it and so solve it almost at once.

This has great benefit when I actually sit down to play, because in many situations, whether as a defender or declarer, I have already 'seen' the problem at hand in a book. This reduces the effort I have to put in at the table and so reduces the number of mistakes I make. After all, a player is most likely to err when he comes across a situation he has not seen before.

This new book on defensive play from Julian Pottage contains a fantastic collection of deals to expand your repertoire. In particular, I am impressed with the way Julian introduces a fresh outlook on suit combinations, both in situations where there is nothing to indicate how to play the suit and, notably, where there has been a revelation in the bidding or the play. These are the problems I find a special delight for I am always surprised at the variety, novelty and application they have.

So, take advantage of your luck in having one of the two all-time masters of this format to test, and so improve, your game. Please join me in reading and re-reading this wonderful set of new defensive problems from Julian Pottage.

*Tim Bourke
Canberra
January 2006*

Introduction

Most bridge players, unless they bid very aggressively, spend roughly twice as much time defending as they do declaring. Despite this, there are many more books written on declarer play than there are on defensive technique. I suspect that there are many more bridge lessons delivered on declarer play, too. Perhaps these are some of the reasons why many players handle the dummy rather better than they defend. I believe that the time has come to begin redressing the balance.

In preparing this book, another major factor hit me. Most players try to get by with the minimum of defensive signals. They might play high-low if they want a ruff or show a particular feature of their hands with their first discard. Often this is not enough. I had not chosen the examples for this reason, but you will find that on many of them my ability or my partner's ability to defeat a contract depended on more subtle signals. In other words, 'every card means something.'

Something else struck me in putting this collection together. Rarely does the solution depend upon a spectacular falsecard or other flashy play. Far more often you need to picture the unseen hands, working out what is and is not possible from the bidding and play to date. Then you need to identify which layouts enable you to defeat the contract and, if there are more than one, figure out which are the more likely. Then, if possible, you defend in a way to cater for several of these layouts.

The way I have structured the book means that you need not consider the deals as problems. Still, I encourage you to think about the next play whenever you reach a decision point. Many of these I have marked with a fresh diagram or a new paragraph. On some

deals, an early play proves decisive but, on many, it merely acts as a preparatory move for the endgame. You need to stay on your toes either way. With rare exceptions I have not included any deals that are too difficult for anyone to expect to solve at the table.

I have arranged the deals so that you can focus on West for a group of fifteen deals, on East for the next fifteen and so on. Other than that, the deals come in no particular thematic or chronological order.

I would like to thank all those either directly or indirectly involved in enabling this book to be in your hands now. I must include all the partners with whom I defended the deals, some of whom have also helped in the checking, and my two proofreading stalwarts, Peter Burrows and Maureen Dennison. Others who have played a smaller part I may refer to at the relevant point in the text.

I would also like to mention the late Terence Reese. He not only devised the idea of the over-the-shoulder format but also it seems he did not suggest to any other authors that this particular book was one that needed to be written! Lastly but by no means least I must pay tribute to my long-suffering wife, Helen. The nine years we have so far been together have been the happiest nine years of my life. Without her support, I doubt that I would have been able to start this book, let alone complete it.

*Julian Pottage
Porthcawl, Wales
January 2006*

Instinctive View

1

When in fourth seat, do you ever try to guess what bidding will take place before it is your turn to bid and whether you would open if the first three players pass? I sometimes do, but I cannot remember whether this was the case when, as West, the following hand came along in a local Teams match with neither side vulnerable:

♠ A 6 ♥ 9 6 ♦ Q 10 7 5 2 ♣ K Q 10 7

North opens 1♣, which could in theory be a short suit. My partner, Graham, overcalls 3♥. Since we play weak jump overcalls, he should have a seven-card suit, but one can never be sure of these things. South bids 3♠ and I pass. North raises to 4♠ and two further passes follow. Again, I have nothing to say facing a hand that might offer no defensive values and 4♠ becomes the final contract. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	3♥	3♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

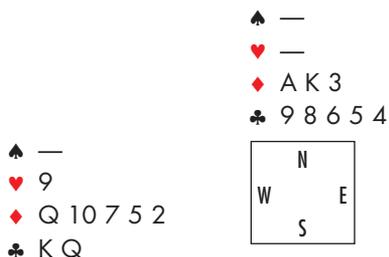
With the minors well protected and knowing that partner has the hearts, it seems natural to begin with the ace of trumps to cut down dummy's ruffing value. This is what you and I see:

	♠ K J 7									
	♥ —									
	♦ A K 3									
	♣ 9 8 6 5 4 3 2									
♠ A 6	<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S	
		N								
W			E							
		S								
♥ 9 6										
♦ Q 10 7 5 2										
♣ K Q 10 7										

It is usually gratifying when one has led a trump and dummy puts down a void suit somewhere. I need to restrain myself from smiling. Declarer plays low from dummy; Graham follows with the two and South with the four. I see no possible reason to change my initial view of the situation and continue with the six of spades.

Dummy's jack wins the second round of trumps when East and South produce the eight and five respectively. Declarer now comes to hand with the ace of clubs, collecting partner's jack along the way, and leads the two of hearts.

We play reverse count signals, making it an easy decision to play the six of hearts. Dummy ruffs, with the king performe, and a club comes next. Graham discards the queen of hearts, presumably from A-Q-J (we are not going to defeat the contract if South has the two top hearts) and declarer, after considering the position for a while, discards a heart. My ♣10 wins, and this is what we can see left:



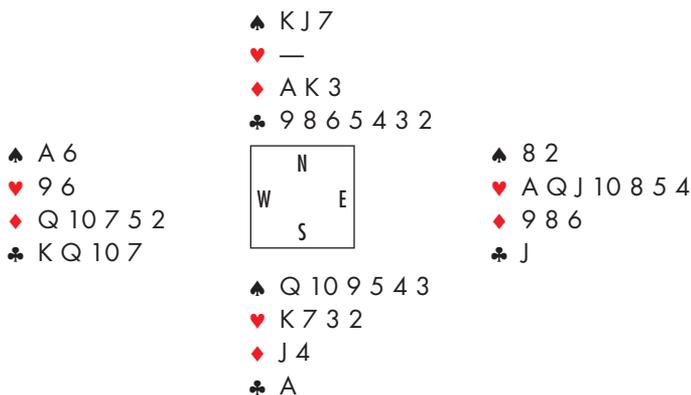
Knowing that any time on lead as a defender may be critical, I pause to consider my options. With three suits to choose from, which do you think is best?

A club return I dismiss quite easily. Barring a strange distribution, declarer would be able to ruff that and then cross to dummy with a top diamond. A further club ruff would set the suit up, after which dummy's second top diamond would provide access to the established winners.

A heart return cannot work either. Declarer already has nine sure tricks — five trumps, a heart ruff and three top winners in the minors. The king of hearts would provide the tenth.

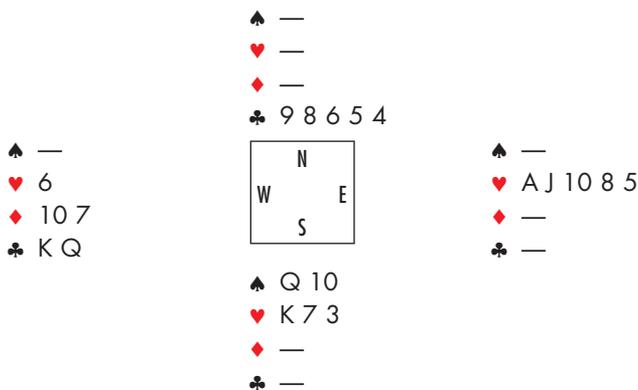
I shall have to lead a diamond and it scarcely matters which one if partner has the jack. In case South has this card, my diamond will need to be the queen. In theory, this also concedes a trick, but the suit will be blocked because South is surely 6-4-2-1.

Winning the queen of diamonds in dummy, declarer ruffs a club to hand and runs the trumps. I know to keep two diamonds and the winning club, and partner just needs to keep at least two hearts. This duly happens and, when declarer cashes the jack of diamonds and exits with a heart, East claims the last two tricks. This was the full deal:



POST MORTEM

As it turns out, playing low on the first heart was vital. Had I played the nine, declarer would have been able to play three rounds of diamonds (ruffing the third) and then lead the seven of hearts to endplay East in a position like this:



I would like to think that, even if we had been playing standard count signals, my instinctive view that the nine of hearts might be useful would have prevented me from going astray.