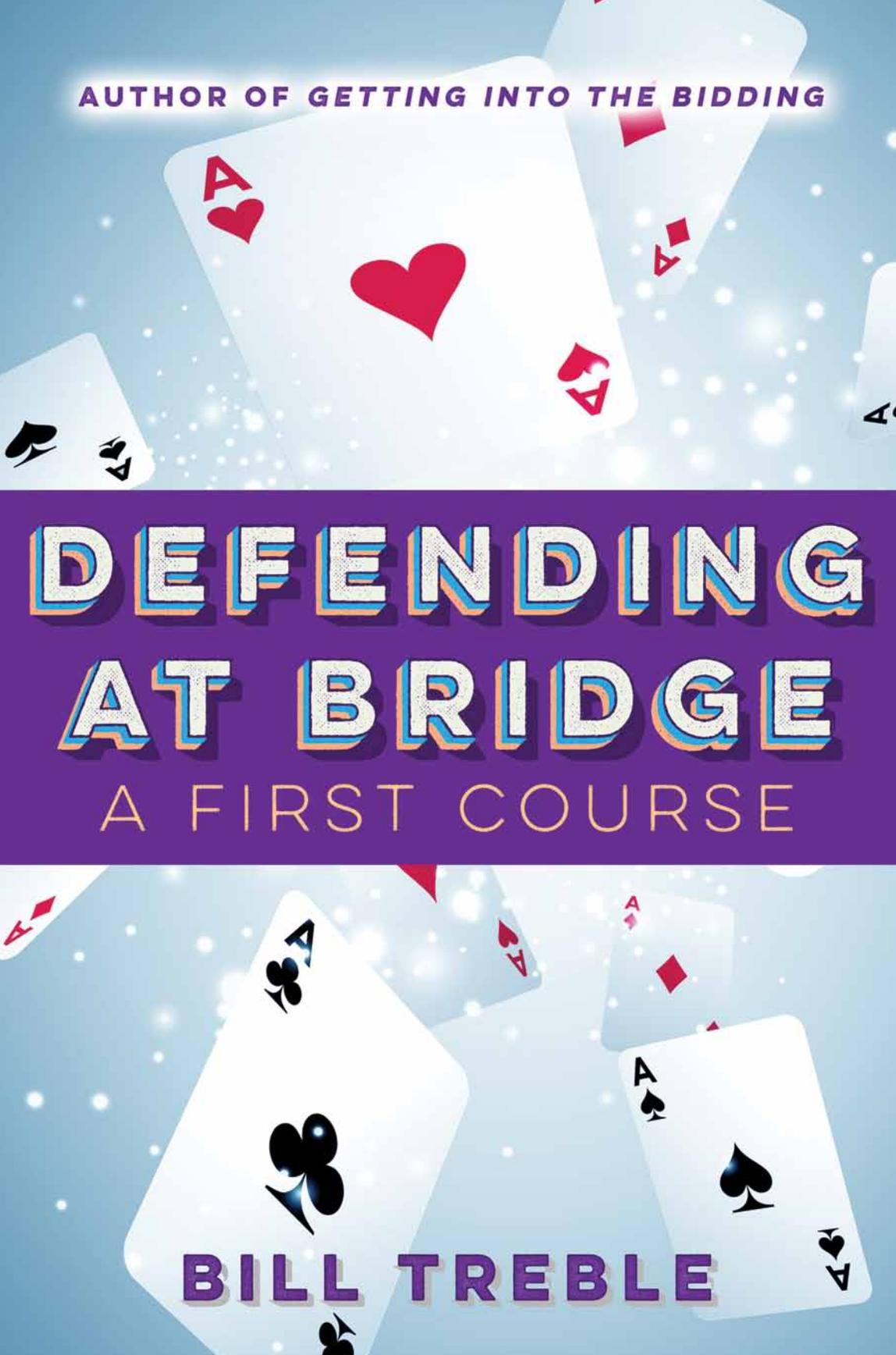


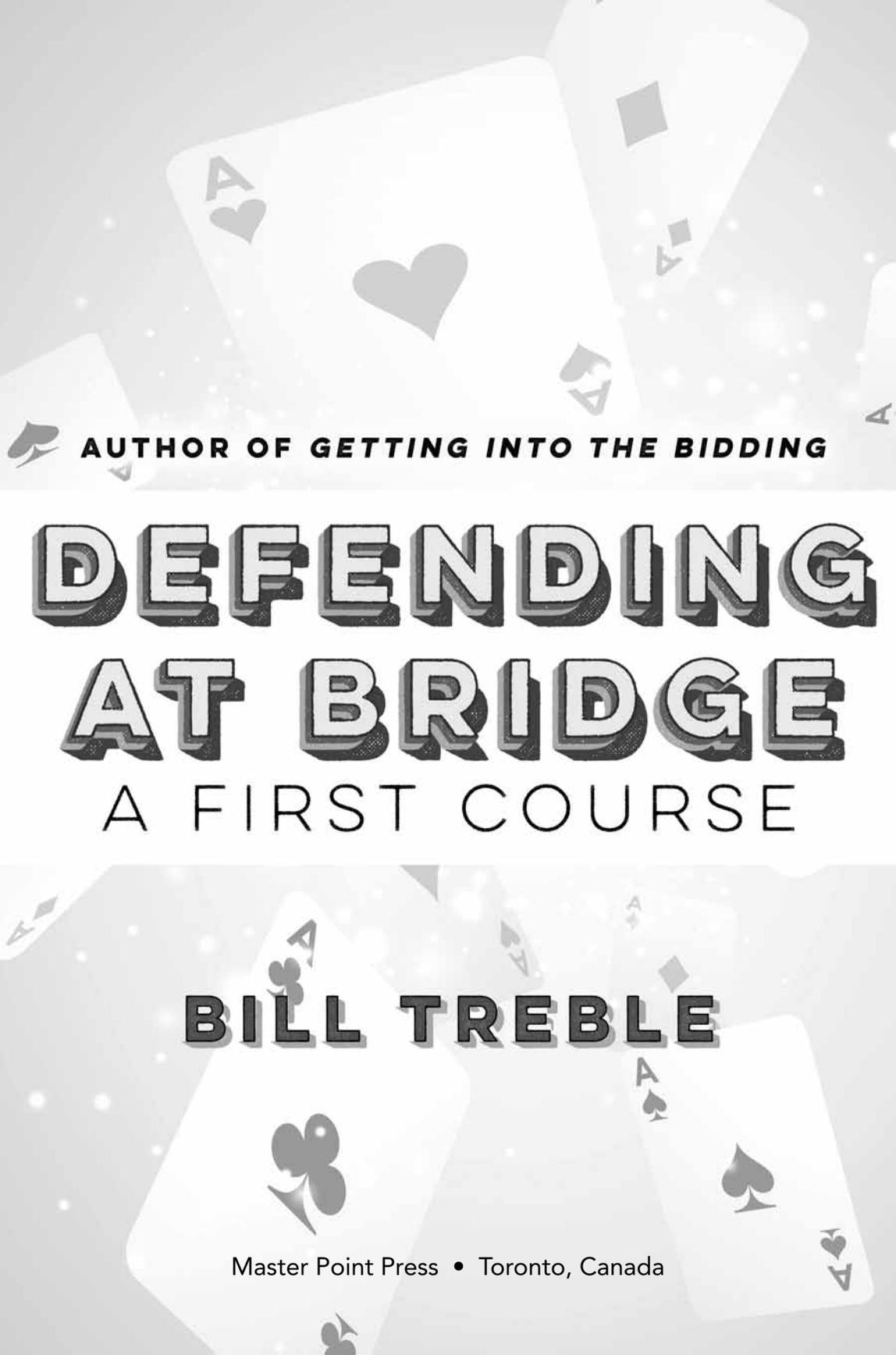
AUTHOR OF GETTING INTO THE BIDDING



DEFENDING AT BRIDGE

A FIRST COURSE

BILL TREBLE



AUTHOR OF *GETTING INTO THE BIDDING*

DEFENDING AT BRIDGE

A FIRST COURSE



BILL TREBLE

Master Point Press • Toronto, Canada

Text © 2016 Bill Treble
Cover © iStockphoto/dzima1

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
214 Merton St. Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4S 1A6 (647)956-4933

Email: info@masterpointpress.com
Websites: www.masterpointpress.com
www.teachbridge.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.ebooksbridge.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Treble, Bill, author
Defending at bridge : a first course / Bill Treble.

Issued in print and electronic formats.
ISBN 978-1-77140-036-7 (paperback).--ISBN 978-1-55494-631-0 (pdf).--
ISBN 978-1-55494-676-1 (html).--ISBN 978-1-77140-875-2 (html)

1. Contract bridge--Defensive play. I. Title.

GV1282.42T74 2016 795.41'5 C2016-905425-X
C2016-905426-8

 We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.
Nous reconnaissons l'appui financier du gouvernement du Canada.

Editor Ray Lee
Copy editor/interior format Sally Sparrow
Cover and interior design Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
LESSON 1: OPENING LEADS – THE BASICS	7
LESSON 2: OPENING LEADS – OBJECTIVES	21
LESSON 3: OPENING LEADS – PAYING ATTENTION TO THE BIDDING	35
LESSON 4: SIGNALING IN A SUIT CONTRACT	55
LESSON 5: MORE SIGNALING AND SECOND-HAND PLAY	75
LESSON 6: THIRD-HAND PLAY	95
LESSON 7: THE MIDGAME: DISCARDS, NEW AND OLD SUITS	117
LESSON 8: AUCTION-DEPENDENT LEADS AND FINAL HANDS	139

INTRODUCTION

Students have often asked me which aspect of bridge is the most important for improving your game fairly quickly. Is it bidding, declarer play or defense? My vote is for defense, which is also the toughest to master. Most players have access to the same resources for learning how to bid a hand. A few hands over the course of an evening might require some delicate bidding judgment, but on the majority of them, using those tools will get you to the optimum contract. On the declarer play front, you have the luxury of seeing both your hand and your partner's before you play to the first trick. Also, the opening lead will have given you some information. Knowing how many tricks you need to win or can afford to lose, plus some familiarity with the mathematical probabilities, will give you a decent chance of fulfilling your objective if you're in the right contract.

When you're defending a hand, the only cards you see before the start of play are the thirteen that you have. When dummy hits after you've chosen your lead, you'll see another hand, but unlike declarer you will not know exactly what your partner has. Consequently, you need to communicate (legally!) with your partner. You'll have to send accurate messages through the cards you play and also be able to interpret what partner is trying to tell you through what he contributes on each trick during the hand.

For about three or four years after I started to play bridge, I had my moments but didn't achieve a real consistency in my results. At that point, I decided that since I was apt to be on defense on half of the boards over a normal session, that was where I ought to be directing a substantial portion of my energies. Once I did that, the quality of my game took a significant leap forward.

There have been many books written on both defense and opening leads that I've drawn upon for the course material and can suggest for additional reading. They are:

<i>Eddie Kantar Teaches Modern Bridge Defense</i>	Eddie Kantar
<i>Eddie Kantar Teaches Advanced Bridge Defense</i>	Eddie Kantar
<i>How to Defend a Bridge Hand</i>	William S. Root
<i>Defensive Play at Bridge: A Quizbook</i>	Barbara Seagram & David Bird
<i>Winning Bridge Conventions Series: Defensive Carding and Opening Leads</i>	Patty Tucker
<i>The Pocket Guide to Defense</i>	Barbara Seagram & David Bird
<i>The Complete Book of Opening Leads</i>	Robert Ewen
<i>Opening Leads</i>	Mike Lawrence

LESSON 1

OPENING LEADS — THE BASICS

The cornerstone of effective defense is the opening lead. While successful defense remains an ongoing process even after that first card is played, the choice of lead can either substantially increase or reduce your chances of defeating their contract.

There are three separate aspects to choosing a good opening lead. Each of them will be dealt with in turn in the first three lessons in this book.

1. You must play a card that sends a useful message to your partner.
2. You must be conscious of what your objective is going to be, against both suit and notrump contracts.
3. Perhaps the most crucial — you must use the information from the opponents' auction to help guide your final decision.

In this first lesson, we're going to focus on the first of these — which card you should lead from a given holding. On some hands, you can afford to lead an honor card, while on others you should be starting out with a low one. How can you know for sure whether you should be going big or small on the opening lead?

LEADING FROM SEQUENCES

A sequence consists of at least two cards that are touching in rank, including one or more honor card. They come in four varieties.

Perfect sequence

Three or more touching honors. This will be a very attractive choice for an opening lead, as you can either take or quickly promote tricks even if partner has little or no help. Here are some illustrations, showing just the top cards since the leader might have other small ones to go with them:

AKQ KQJ QJ10 J109

When you have a sequence to lead from, play the highest of your touching cards. While it may not matter to you which card you play, remember that partner does not have the gift of x-ray vision. You are sending partner a message — when you lead an honor, you have the next card below it in sequence, and perhaps the one below that. For example, if you lead the queen, partner will know you also have the jack and possibly the ten as well.

Broken sequence

In this case, you'll have two touching cards and the next highest but one after that. Below are some typical broken-sequence holdings:

AKJ KQ10 QJ9 J108

Again, there is enough strength in these layouts for you to be leading the top card, as it could be very productive and there is little risk involved.

Interior sequence

This variation is the opposite of the broken sequence, in that it consists of a top card that is not supported and two touching honors below it. Here are some examples:

KJ10 K109 Q109
AQJ AJ10 A109

The principle with the interior sequence is to lead the top of your adjoining honors, not the very highest card. So from KJ10, for example, you would lead the jack.

You'll notice I have the examples on two lines, and that's because it's fine to lead from the interior sequences headed by the king or queen against either a suit or notrump contract. From the holdings that contain the ace, you can adopt a similar policy against notrump contracts *only*. If they are playing in a suit contract, it's not a good idea to underlead the ace and you should probably avoid leading the suit at all — you are too likely to give away a trick unnecessarily.

Two-card sequences

Here you'll still have two adjacent cards, but nothing much of consequence below them. They are nice to have, and you can often consider leading from those suits, but there are fewer guarantees of producing tricks. (The exception, of course, is leading an honor from AKx(x) against a suit contract, which is almost always a good choice.) Here are a few examples:

KQx(x...) QJx(x...) J10x(x...) 109x(x...)

Against suit contracts you should lead high from this kind of holding. Against notrump, where the objectives are a little different, it is usually better to lead a low card (see below).

GUIDELINES FOR WHEN TO LEAD FROM SEQUENCES

Against suit contracts, regardless of length, leading from a perfect, broken or two-card sequence is worth serious consideration. So is leading from an interior sequence if it is headed by the king or queen. As mentioned above, you should avoid leading from interior sequences headed by the ace against suit contracts, as either leading or underleading an ace may prove to be quite costly. In those cases, you're better off looking for another suit to start off with.

Against notrump contracts, assuming you have at least four cards in the suit, you'll have a decent chance of success leading from a perfect or a broken sequence. The same applies to an interior sequence, even the one including the ace as you will take a trick with that card later on the vast majority of the hands.

Against notrump the best policy is to lead a small card from a holding headed by a two-card sequence, rather than the top honor. You'll need some help from partner for the lead to be effective, and if he has it, you'd rather put him in a situation where he has to play the high card right away.

To illustrate why this is a better course to follow, let's consider the holding below in the West chair. You have nothing much in the way of high cards outside of your long suit.

♥ A K 7 6 4

If the opponents are in a 4♠ contract, it's obvious to lead the ♥A. You may be able to take the first two tricks and, on a good day, partner may be able to trump the third round of the suit.

Now let's say the auction has gone:

RHO	LHO
1NT	3NT

To be sure, you can take your two heart winners right off the top, but will you be getting anything besides that? Here are two layouts where the answer would be no:

	Q J 10	
A K 7 6 4	<input type="text"/>	8 5 2
	9 3	

With the way the cards are sitting here, partner has no help in hearts but will return your suit if he gets in, so you can eventually take four heart tricks by leading a small card from your two-card sequence. If you lead the ace and king, on the other hand, it restricts the number of tricks you can win to two, as there won't be any communication between the two hands after the top hearts are played.

	J 9 5	
A K 7 6 4	<input type="text"/>	Q 3
	10 8 2	

It gets worse in this example, where a low heart lead results in five quick winners for the defense. But if the ♥A is played instead, the suit is *blocked*. West can lead a small heart now, and East can win the second trick with the queen, but he has no more hearts to return. And if West plays the ♥K on the second round, his partner's queen falls under it: declarer now miraculously has a winner (the ♥J) in a suit where he was missing the top three cards.

WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A SEQUENCE

Alas, the card gods sometimes aren't so obliging as to deal you a perfect or even a two-card sequence. A fair number of times, your long suit will consist of holdings such as:

Q9652

K8752

Q1064

J985

KJ962

These can still be worthwhile suits to lead. That said, you can't afford to lead an honor as you really don't have much of an idea about where the length and strength is in the other three hands. From these holdings, you should lead one of the small cards. You're still trying to do something constructive, as you might be able to build some immediate tricks once the first round has been played, and if they're in a notrump contract, you could be well on your way to establishing long-suit winners for your side.

Let's survey five holdings in the diamond suit and choose which of them has the most potential. Assume that they're in 3NT.

1. ♦ K 6 4 3
2. ♦ K 7 6 4 3
3. ♦ K 10 8 4
4. ♦ K J 9 7
5. ♦ K J 9 6 5

If you lead from holding #1, you'll be holding your breath. It could be good for your side, but very much hinges on what partner has in diamonds. With the second holding, at least you have a fifth card and a potential extra trick. Holding #3 has a useful spot card (the ten), and that could help establish tricks if partner has as little as the jack. Our fourth exhibit is better yet, as you'll be quite happy if partner has the ace or queen of your suit. And finally, in #5, you have the extra length to go with your honors.

The recommended lead when you have a long suit is the fourth-best card. It may not seem particularly relevant whether you start out with that or the lowest card in the suit, but it is an agreement that enables partner to apply a useful tool when playing to the first trick and deciding whether to continue the suit or look elsewhere for tricks. More on that in a subsequent lesson.

Are there any exceptions to the "lead fourth best from longest and strongest" guideline? There is one for sure, and arguably a second.

- You can underlead the ace of a long suit against notrump, but not against a suit contract.

Suppose you're in possession of ♥A10765. If the contract is 3NT and the suit hasn't been bid, you should start with the ♥6, because some honors might appear on the first trick and you'll be well placed to take tricks later on in the deal. But if they're in 4♠ instead, there might be a singleton heart lurking in either declarer's hand or dummy, so it would not be advisable to lead a small card — declarer might score an undeserved king, and you might never take a trick with your ace.

- From a poor four-card suit, there is a contingent of players that will lead highest or second-highest.

To illustrate, let's say the auction has gone 1NT-3NT and you're on lead with:

♠ 9 8 6 5 ♥ Q 7 ♦ A 6 4 3 ♣ K 10 5

Hearts and clubs aren't really options — you don't have enough cards in those suits to have much prospect of building tricks in them — so that leaves a spade or a diamond. Some would go ahead and lead a diamond, but others might lead a spade because responder has denied major-suit length, not having used the Stayman convention. A spade could be the right way to go, but the glitch is that partner may return the suit expecting more in the way of high-card strength. A way to let him know that you have some length but an unremarkable suit is to lead a high spot card rather than a low one. Since partner is familiar with the fourth-highest axiom, he should be able to clue in on what you have in the suit because of your abnormally high card.

This leads us into an acronym that Barbara Seagram and other bridge teachers use, namely BOSTON. That means Bottom Of Something, Top Of Nothing. That can be helpful advice, but sometimes gets misinterpreted, most notably when people lead small from perfect or interior sequences rather than an honor card. So a bit of clarification is in order. 'Bottom of something' refers to leads from broken holdings rather than sequences. 'Top of nothing' arises mainly in leading from four small and also when playing up to dummy's weakness later on in the hand.

Now it is time to try some practice hands and get some experience applying these ideas in real life.

HAND 1

South dealer

	♠ K 3 2											
	♥ A 8											
	♦ Q 6 5 4											
	♣ Q J 7 2											
♠ 10 9 7 4 ♥ 10 6 5 4 2 ♦ A 3 ♣ K 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <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		♠ J 8 6 ♥ 9 7 3 ♦ J 10 9 ♣ A 8 5 4	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A Q 5											
	♥ K Q J											
	♦ K 8 7 2											
	♣ 10 9 6											

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

With 10 HCP, responder has enough to raise to game after partner's 1NT opening.

THE PLAY

Declarer has six major-suit tricks, and the club and diamond suits offer chances for developing the three additional winners he needs. He'll start by driving out the ♣A and ♣K to set up two more tricks there, and then establish a diamond trick.

West's hearts seem pretty nondescript, but a lead of a small card from the five-card suit will defeat the contract. As long as the defense keeps playing the suit throughout the hand, they'll eventually create two heart tricks to go with their two club winners and the ♦A.

Long suits are fertile ground to develop tricks of your own when the opponents are in a notrump contract.

THE BASICS OF DEFENSE

No bells or whistles, just the plain, simple stuff to get you started on the road to becoming a good defender. In eight easy lessons, this book covers the things you really need to know: opening leads and signaling against notrump and suit contracts, second- and third-hand play, the Rule of Eleven, discards, and basic strategy. Quizzes and example hands make the whole process of learning both fun and productive.

Praise for Bill Treble's *'Getting into the Bidding'*

An excellent intermediate-level book covering contested auctions. The focus is on providing a foundation for choosing and using methods – which are available, which are popular, and what are the trade-offs among them. - The Bridge World



BILL TREBLE lives in Winnipeg, Canada, and teaches bridge with his wife, Sue. He is an expert player and two-time winner of the Canadian Open Pairs Championship, in 2000 and 2002. Sue feels Bill would be a better player if he paid more attention to the advice in his own books.

