

EDDIE KANTAR

2ND ED. REVISED & UPDATED



DEFENSIVE TIPS
FOR
BAD CARD HOLDERS



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To my wife Yvonne, who helped me with this book as well as many of the others I have written. She has an amazingly unerring touch knowing how intermediate players think, what they can absorb, and how I should punctuate.

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Introduction

This book was completed after the Richter 6.8 Los Angeles earthquake of January 1994. That is not to say that the tips are shaky, just perhaps the author.

This work completes a trilogy of tips books. The first, *A Treasury of Bidding Tips* (bidding); the second, *Take Your Tricks* (declarer play), and this, a collection of defensive bridge tips. I consider this to be the most important because it is in defensive play that most players are weakest.

The level ranges from intermediate to expert. Given some 580 tips, certainly some are basic; but blocking and tackling (common sense and counting) win not only football games but bridge games as well. 'Advanced' tips have been noted with an **A**. Advanced tips that are not standard practice have been noted with a **P**. The **P** tips come with a strong author bias and are not standard: they require *partnership agreement*.

As you might imagine it is tough to construct tips that cover every possible defensive situation. Your partner and declarer's skill level are intertwined. The right play with one partner may result in disaster with another. Similarly, you must make allowances when playing against an inexperienced declarer. Normal bidding and play inferences just don't apply.

Another problem is defensive conventions. In the past, fourth-best leads, the king from ace-king and standard attitude and count were the norm. Nowadays many have shifted gears. There is an ever-growing trend towards leading third and lowest, ace from ace-king vs. suits, as well as upside-down count and attitude.

In this tome we'll assume that you lead ace from ace-king against suit contracts. This gives you a small but clear edge, provided you make all the exceptions listed. I am going to stick with fourth-best leads as well as standard count and attitude on grounds of familiarity. However, I am convinced that besides other scenarios, upside-down attitude when (a) discarding, and (b) signaling with *known four-card length* when dummy also has four cards, is superior.

If you and partner have other agreements, simply substitute your leads and signals for the ones mentioned and all will work out just fine. This book

is not designed to plug one method over another (other than the **P** tips). This book is designed to help you recognize and deal with common defensive situations.

As for the bidding, unless otherwise stated, common methods: Weak twos and weak jump overcalls; a strong artificial 2♣ opening with a neutral 2♦ response (though many use the 2♥ response to show a double negative); limit raises; preemptive jump raises in competition; Roman Keycard Blackwood 1430; a 15-17 1NT opening range plus Stayman and transfers. Never mind that you have superior methods, we have to assume something. What is important is that you pay attention to *their* bidding in order to interpret partner's leads and signals. This, in harmony with counting, is basic to good defense.

Counting is still where it's at. Counting means not only counting declarer's distribution (as early as possible), but also counting declarer's points and declarer's tricks. Counting gets easier as the play progresses and various clues are processed... providing you start at Trick 1!

As you will see, some tips include a complete four-hand diagram. This was done to reinforce important tips with examples. Other tips are followed with a defensive problem, to see whether you can apply the tip to the problem. The remainder of the tips are either self-explanatory or are followed by a one-suit diagram as a sort of second look.

Keep in mind that even though these tips are directed at 'you', you must allow for partner to be following the same tips. For example, it may be necessary for you to attack a suit by leading the jack from KJx. If you can do it, so can partner.

If some of these tips seem too difficult to absorb, patience. As your defense improves, these tips will begin to make more sense. After all, what good is a book if you already know everything that's in it?

I have tried not to use any great example hands from other material that I have written even though it killed me. I know I have fallen from grace more than once.

However as there are some fifty two-hand diagrams presented as problems and over ninety four-hand diagrams presented as examples, I am not making any apologies for the repeats.

I must finish with a special thanks to my readers — Ron Garber, Danny Kleinman, Arthur Baron, and (for this edition) Norman Schwartz. *Nobody* ever had a better crew.

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BITE-SIZED BRIDGE ADVICE

Twenty years ago, Eddie Kantar set about distilling his bridge wisdom into a trilogy of books for the intermediate player, one each on Bidding, Play and Defense. Each book contains several hundred short Tips, and the author believes that any reader who absorbs even a fraction of them will improve his or her game by at least 25%.

The Tips in this book on Defensive Play have been completely revised and updated by the author, and a number of new tips have been added.



EDDIE KANTAR (Santa Monica) is one of the world's best-known and best-loved bridge writers. He is a World and National champion, and has been inducted into the ACBL Bridge Hall of Fame.



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