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Compare and contrast deals for defensive strategy

VB#21 Year 2 Defence (Counting tricks) Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H By: West
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 1
Dealer: North	Vulnerable: None
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		
	♠ J972		
	♥ J		
	♦ K84		
	♣ AT853		
West		East	
♠ Q64		♠ K83	
♥ KQ763		♥ AT95	
♦ AJ75		♦ QT63	
♣ K		♣ Q7	
	South		
	♠ AT5		
	♥ 842		
	♦ 92		
	♣ J9642		

**This is the second set of six deals (its sibling is elsewhere in this issue of V-Blue) which aims to make you think as a defender, often in third seat. *What do you do and why?***

**Many of these deals require more than reflex plays What you need to do is to stop, think and – most importantly – count. What are you counting? Well, tricks, mainly. How can you manage to wangle sufficient tricks to beat the contract?**

**There are plenty of clues available in the bidding and the early play for you to work out what to do.**

**Just to make things interesting we have created these deals in contrasting pairs so that similar hands will appear consecutively. You may get an itching sense of *déjà vu* on every other deal. That's a good thing and it may help you defend accurately.**

Hand 1: If you ***read the lead*** here and study the dummy you might come up with a way to take enough defensive tricks.

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	P
1♥	P	3♥	P
4♥	P	P	P

Lead: ♠ 2

### Bidding

There are three Passes to West, who opens 1♥ in fourth seat. East has a textbook raise to 3♥ and West, holding 15 points, bids the fourth Heart.

### Play

Your partner, North, has a pretty poor choice of leads. Deciding that trumps, Diamonds and Clubs are just too repulsive to lead from, North tries the ♠2. The Two is a revealing card playing fourth-highest leads. It can only be from a four-card suit and it proclaims an honour (lead *low* for *like* and *high* for *hate*).

West plays low from the table and you should not be in a hurry to take the ♠A. Patience, remember, is a virtue. Best is to play the ♠10, *finessing against dummy* and keeping the ♠A over the top of dummy's ♠K.

There isn't an obvious way that declarer can pitch Spade losers from either hand, an important consideration here. Grabbing the ♠A would give declarer two Spade tricks immediately.

Declarer draws trumps and nonchalantly leads a low Club off the dummy towards his bare King. On some days that might sneak past an inattentive defender but here North is able to bash the King with the ♣A. Now comes the ♠J (after the ♠10 has gone the ♠J 9 acts as a sequence) which traps the ♠K in the dummy and the defenders score two Spade tricks.

North, also showing the virtues of patience, calmly exits with a Club to dummy's ♣Q and waits imperturbably and Zen-like for his ♦K. Declarer has no option but to try his luck with the Diamond finesse and 4♠ is one down when it loses.






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VB#21 Year 2 Defence (Counting tricks) Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H By: West
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 2
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: N / S
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		
	♠ J972		
	♥ 6		
	♦ AQ875		
	♣ T74		
West		East	
♠ Q64		♠ K83	
♥ KJT975		♥ AQ3	
♦ KJT		♦ 643	
♣ K		♣ AQJ9	
	South		
	♠ AT5		
	♥ 842		
	♦ 92		
	♣ 86532		

You are again defending against a game contract. This time (compared with Hand 1) dummy is intimidating.

Is there any chance of making enough tricks in defence?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	P
1♥	P	2♣	P
2♥	P	4♥	P
P	P		

Lead: ♠ 2

### Bidding

West opens 1♥ and East responds 2♣. West's rebid of 2♥ shows a minimum opening bid with long Hearts so East settles for 4♥.

### Play

North, with a poor collection, decides that a Spade lead is the least of all evils. A lead through dummy's suit is rarely a good idea (ruling out Clubs) and a Diamond away from the ♦A Q would be plain crazy against a suit contract. Singleton trump leads are not recommended so that means the only remaining choice is the ♠2.

We can see as South that North has four Spades headed by an honour, although it isn't clear whether that honour is the ♠Q or the ♠J.

West plays low from the dummy and we play....? Well, on the last deal (Hand 1) it was right to *finesse against the dummy*. Here that would be the wrong play. *Why?* Because this dummy is a goldmine for declarer and is a **dump dummy**. If we allow West on lead he is sure to draw trumps and run off four Clubs, chucking losers. Yes, we can't be sure that West has the ♣K but if he hasn't he'll take the Club finesse and we can see that it will work.

The only chance of defeating 4♠ is to grab four tricks quickly, before the mice nibble them. That means partner will have to have the ♦A Q, sitting over the ♦K. (North cannot have the ♦A K or he would have led the suit).


So we take the ♠A and fire back the ♦9. Luck is with us today; North plays three rounds of Diamonds and the ♥2 comes in handy. One off.



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VB#21 Year 2 Defence (Counting tricks) Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4S By: West
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 3
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: E / W
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		
	♠ 6		
	♥ Q8		
	♦ KQJT432		
	♣ AQT		
West		East	
♠ KQT9532		♠ AJ4	
♥ 2		♥ AKJT9	
♦ 96		♦ 7	
♣ K92		♣ 8654	
	South		
	♠ 87		
	♥ 76543		
	♦ A85		
	♣ J73		

A lively auction leaves the opponents holding the baby.

What do you think of the dummy?

Can you see how the play will go?

What can you do to counter it?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	P
3♠	4♦	4♣	P
P	P		

Lead: ♦ K

### Bidding

West opens 3♠ in second seat to show a decent seven-card suit and less than an opening bid. Vulnerable, such bids should not be made frivolously and here West has just about enough to make the call. North overcalls 4♦ and East, with three *quick tricks* and a side-suit singleton easily has enough for a raise to 4♣.

Some players get hung up by the point-count after partner has opened with a pre-empt. What a pre-empter wants to see for a raise is Aces and Kings and useful shortages.

As South you should not be tempted to bid 5♦.

### Play

We only have 5 points, but that doesn't mean we can fall asleep on the job. On this deal we have to be the hero.

When the dummy comes down, everyone at the table should **Count** and **Plan**. Declarer can see ten tricks if he is allowed to gain the lead (seven Spades, two Hearts and a Diamond ruff on table, in the short trump hand).

However, as South, we *look at the dummy, dummy* and see declarer's plan. We too can count ten tricks for West; in fact we can count more. Just look at those Hearts. We know they will run because we don't have the ♥Q. If North has it, it is finesseable, and if declarer has it...oh well, you can predict the outcome. The table is a classic *dump dummy*.

Our partnership only has one trick in Diamonds. With all those tricks waiting in dummy, we need to attack Clubs immediately and with a vengeance. The Clubs must be led from **our** side of the table, **through** the declarer.


So, at trick one, we grab the lead with our ♦A, and fire back the ♣J at the second trick. Yes, it's unorthodox play to lead the ♣J from ♣J × × but here circumstances dictate. If you switch to a low Club (the everyday, "routine" play) declarer ducks that to the ♣8 and smiles sweetly as your partner wins the ♣10 and is then powerless to beat 4♣.

As the cards lie, the ♣J holds. At trick three, we continue the suit, and the first four tricks are ours. Yes, for this defence to be successful partner needed to hold all of the ♣A Q 10. Note, thought, that if North didn't have them you weren't beating the contract so it's another case of heads you win, tails you don't lose.



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VB#21 Year 2 Defence (Counting tricks) Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4S By: West
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 4
Dealer: West	Vulnerable: All
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		
	♠ 6		
	♥ 42		
	♦ KQJT432		
	♣ AQ9		
West		East	
♠ KQT9532		♠ AJ4	
♥ 3		♥ AQT86	
♦ 96		♦ 7	
♣ KT2		♣ 8654	
	South		
	♠ 87		
	♥ KJ975		
	♦ A85		
	♣ J73		

A lively auction leaves the opponents holding the baby.

What do you think of the dummy?

What do you need to do (if anything)?

West	North	East	South
3♠	4♦	4♣	P
P	P		

Lead: ♦ K

### Bidding

West opens 3♠ in second seat to show a decent seven-card suit and less than an opening bid. Vulnerable, such bids should not be made on peanuts and here West has enough to make the call. North overcalls 4♦ and East stretches to raise to 4♣.

As South you may well be tempted to bid 5♦ on the reasonable grounds that it might make (partner needs a good hand to wander into the auction at the four-level, vulnerable) or it may only go only one down with 4♣ making. However, today you choose to take your chances in defence. Note that 5♦ can be beaten via a Heart ruff.

### Play

When the dummy comes down, everyone at the table should **Count** and **Plan**. Declarer can see nine tricks if he is allowed to gain the lead (seven Spades, one Heart and a Diamond ruff on table). A tenth may come from setting up an extra Heart trick or by playing you for the ♣A.

North-South have only one trick in Diamonds. With our Hearts making dummy's side-suit useless we are in no hurry to try and grab four quick tricks. Declarer is in no position to chuck losers on any long suit. Dummy might be a **trump dummy** but it certainly isn't a **dump dummy**.

We could leave partner on lead at trick two but we are nervous about what he might do. He might be scared about dummy's Hearts (North has no idea about who has what in the suit) and it is possible that he would make a disastrous switch to a Club.

So, at trick one, we take the ♦A, and play a calm and passive trump. Let declarer play Clubs himself – they aren't going anywhere. True, we could switch to a low Club but there is a danger that declarer would play the ♣10 and partner would play off the ♣Q, the ♣A and another Club. Not best.

A switch to the ♣J would also confuse partner.

Declarer would play the ♣K and could you blame North for continuing Clubs, playing you for ♣J 10 × ?


The trump switch protects partner from doing damage to himself (or to the partnership). Declarer wins, plays the ♥A and another Heart, crosses to the table and tries another Heart. His plan is to see if the ♥K comes down in three rounds. Nope, and now there is no way to avoid three Club losers. One off.



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VB#21 Year 2 Defence (Counting tricks) Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S By: West
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 5
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: N / S
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		East
	♠ 65		♠ KT4
	♥ 874		♥ A53
	♦ 86532		♦ KJT9
	♣ JT9		♣ KQ8
West			
♠ AQJ983			
♥ K62			
♦ 74			
♣ 72			
	South		
	♠ 72		
	♥ QJT9		
	♦ AQ		
	♣ A6543		

You have to defend a game against a strong dummy.

What can partner hold?

How might you defeat this one?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♠	P	4♣	P
P	P		

Lead: ♣ J

### Bidding

You open 1♣ as South, dealer and West overcalls 1♠. East, with 16 points, decides that he has plenty to raise to 4♣. Maybe this is a reasonable effort (he does know of at least a 5-3 Spade fit) but 3NT would have been a cake-walk.

### Play

Your partner dutifully leads your suit with the ♣J and you contemplate a useful dummy. Declarer doesn't need all that much for a one-level overcall non-vulnerable but equally he isn't going to bid 1♠ on a load of old tripe.

Firstly, **Read the Lead**. This isn't so easy. You have bid Clubs so partner is almost duty bound to lead them. This ♣J could be from any of the following holdings. ♣J singleton, ♣J ×, ♣J 10 ×, ♣J 10 9, or maybe ♣J 10 9 ×. How can we tell? Simply put – we can't. However, only if partner has a singleton Club would it be right to lead one back – and that is against the odds (it would leave declarer with four Clubs together with his long Spades).

If partner has precisely ♣J 10 9, a Club return sets up a Club winner but if that were the holding then West would only have a doubleton Club (so partner's slow Club winner would be ruffed).

Secondly, *count the tricks*. On the assumption declarer has at least two Diamonds we can see three tricks for our side – the ♣A and two Diamond winners. The danger is that the Diamonds might get set up for discards in declarer's hand.

So... the conclusion is that continuing Clubs is wrong. It is right to switch to something else and that "something else" is obviously Hearts. The idea here is that we might set up a Heart trick to go with our other three tricks. Win the ♣A and play back the ♥Q. This turns out to be the killing defence.

Declarer wins and draws trumps and tries his luck in Diamonds, playing low to the ♦9. Nice try, no cigar. We win the ♦Q and play another



Heart. Declarer takes that and forlornly tries another Diamond. We can win that and can cash a master Heart to defeat the contract. Declarer's winning Diamonds on table are useless to his cause.


The contract went off because we won the race to get a Heart trick going before West managed to get any Diamond tricks set up. Essentially this was a *tempo* hand where our side was ahead in the race.



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VB#21 Year 2 Defence (Counting tricks) Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S By: West
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 6
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: E / W
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		
	♠ 65		
	♥ 874		
	♦ 8653		
	♣ JT97		
West		East	
♠ AKQJ83		♠ T94	
♥ 652		♥ AQ9	
♦ 74		♦ KJT92	
♣ 62		♣ KQ	
	South		
	♠ 72		
	♥ KJT3		
	♦ AQ		
	♣ A8543		

As in Hand 5 you can work out who has what from the bidding.

So what should you do about it?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
1♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

Lead: ♣ J

### Bidding

You open 1♠ as South, dealer and West overcalls 1♠. East, with 15 points, decides that he has plenty to raise to 4♠. Here (compared with Hand 5) East is right to be wary of 3NT.

### Play

Your partner dutifully leads your suit with the ♣J and you contemplate a useful dummy. Declarer doesn't need all that much for a one-level overcall but equally he isn't going to bid 1♠, vulnerable, on a heap.

Our first job is to figure out how many points our partner has. Good defenders make a habit of this, as it is useful to know if there's any way to get the lead to North if we need to. Between dummy, our hand and suspected 10-ish points in declarer's hand, partner is marked with not a sausage, zilch, de nada, rien.

Next, we *look at the dummy, dummy* and suspect that declarer is planning to dump losers on the Diamonds after he establishes them. That suit will be good for three tricks.

Finally, in the "tricks for" column we probably have two Diamond tricks and one Club. Additional tricks are going to have to come from Hearts. We could sit and wait for declarer to take the Heart finesse. However, we'd be waiting some time; probably until the next Ice Age (and we don't mean the movie). Given time, West will set up the Diamonds and use them to dump his Heart losers. He won't (dare) touch those Hearts.

Knowing that North has nothing (if that), and will never be on lead to lead a Heart should inspire us to take daring action.

When we win the first trick with the ♣A, we have to attack. We realise that we have to set up a Heart trick and therefore make – at trick two – what appears at first to be a totally bone-headed move. We lead the ♥J right into dummy's Heart tenace. It may look insane, but there is considerable method in the madness.

Tricks three and four are for the declarer as he pulls trumps in two rounds. Then he starts to establish his Diamonds by taking a finesse. At trick five, we win the ♦Q and – sound of trumpets – at trick six, we knock out his last Heart stopper.

When we get in at trick seven with the Diamond, we have to pray that the Hearts split the way we need them to, and that declarer has one more.

He does, and we get a Heart winner to go with our two Diamonds and one Club. The rest are declarer's and we graciously concede.

This hand proves how important it is to visualise **where** our winners are going to come from and **how** we are going to get them. On this hand, we could plan on no help from partner. We had to do it on our own.

A final remark. This defence would have been much easier if we had started with ♥Q J 10 9 and dummy with ♥A K × (check out Hand 5 again). Somehow it's harder to see when the cards are like this.

A case of one point too many?