

Defensive Tips

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Kootenay Jewel Bridge Club

Warren Watson

Leads

There are books on leads, but here are some tips.

Lead: partner's suit
top of touching honours
4th best from an honour

Leading from Qxxx does no good if partner has no points in the suit.

Always use clues:

the bidding
your distribution
the dummy when it comes down
Is partner likely to have points?
Is partner likely to be holding-up?

When leading against 3NT:

Do you have entries to set up your suit.
The bidding should tell you how many points partner may have.

As soon as you discover you have no more entries, consider a switch.
You have to use your entry before partner gets in with his so find his suit.

When leading a singleton at trumps:

It's best in partner's suit and risky in an unbid suit and riskier in opponent's suit.
Have trump preferably three
With three trump and the desire to ruff, one plays high low when following to the play of trump.
One may refrain from leading a singleton after considering whether partner have enough points to have:
the ace of the suit led or
a trump stopper.

When leading a doubleton at trumps:

It should be partner's suit.
Leading a doubleton will usually:
throw off the tempo for the defense and
may set up a side suit for the declarer.

Singleton Watch:

by Declarer:
The opening lead by LHO.
The suit led by RHO at his first chance to play.
An opponent leads into a strong dummy to his right.

by Defenders:
Declarer may have a singleton Queen when leading away from the king in the dummy
Declarer will probably lead a singleton to a king in dummy.
Go up with an Ace in slam.

Deer in the Headlights

The dummy is available for perusal as soon as it is down, not when declarer plays up to it in a critical suit. Decide what you would play in any suit if declarer led a low or high card up to it so you can **play smoothly**.

Example:

The dummy has in spades: AQ94
 The declarer has: J75

Before the declarer plays a small card or the jack up to the dummy, you ask yourself “what if declarer leads the jack or a small card up to the dummy”

you have:	K632	K1062	K102	K10	K6
you see: J	duck	duck	cover	cover	cover
	5	duck	duck	10	5

Note: If you have K632 and cover the Jack, the 10 of your partner that you are trying to make good will fall, but if you have K2, partner is likely to have 108xx so cover.

Defensive Footprint

You want a small defensive footprint. Do not break open suits when you do not have to and try not to lead risky card combinations like QJx or KQx.

Lead your or your partnership’s suit every chance you have. Every time you lead a different suit, you help declarer save a trick.

Example:

Qxx
 Jxx

Chances are declarer will get no tricks from the above holding if he leads the suit himself. Otherwise, if the defense leads the suit, the declarer is very likely to make one trick.

When faced with tenaces (A10xx, KJxx, etc) in your own, hand, it is likely declarer also has a tenace. Do not help declarer with his tenaces by leading those suits.

Example: Try not to find Queens for the declarer.

A109
 KJ2

Leading from a Queen is more dangerous than leading from a King with no outside information. If the defense leads the suit with declarer’s holding shown above, declarer will always win all three tricks.

Example: Try not to lead trump without a good reason

A10954
 2
 87JK
 Q63

Leading a singleton trump without seeing the dummy first is not good. In this example, declarer has nine trump and would have probably played for the drop losing the Queen which the lead of the 2 of trump captured.

Never help declarer in his finesses that work:

Also, do not help declarer with transportation. If a finesse is going to win for the declarer, try to attack another suit. Can the defense lose timing by helping declarer in this way? Usually.

Look out for End Play potential:

Take yourself or partner off of end play early in the hand if you can. Cash out your winners when you still have an exit card so declarer cannot throw you in to lead a suit he wants.

Do not lead a suit in which partner simply has to cash the top card. Lead a suit, that can't be played from partner's hand.

Exit card is a card that one can use to lose the lead without giving up a trick.

Playing Touching Honours

QJ1054

When leading or discarding, play the top of a sequence. the Queen

When winning with the sequence, win as cheaply as possible in 3rd or 4th seat. the 10

Splitting Honours

Second person usually plays low but not when holding (West) KQxx.

Example: 4♠

dummy (North) has in hearts:	AJ65
declarer (South) has:	82

Splitting one's honours means playing the lower of touching honours (Q) in 2nd seat to prevent declarer from winning the honour (J) just below one's two honours.

When the declarer plays the 2, West plays the Queen and dummy wins the ace. Now declarer has to come back to his hand to lead up to the Jack. If West does not split the honours by playing the Queen, declarer will not lose a heart trick, not lose an entry and not lose timing.

Example: 6NT

dummy has:	AK10
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If declarer has no more entries to his hand, split your QJ honours otherwise play small smoothly.