

The Pillars of Defense

The Kootenay Jewel Bridge Club
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<http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDefense/Pillars-Of-Defense.pdf>

Last Revised February 7th, 2018

1.0 Defensive Footprint and Exit Cards

Unlike a carbon footprint, a defensive footprint matters. Every time the defense leads a suit for the first time, declarer may be saved a trick.

Example 1: Who Leads this Suit

Look at the following club suit.

♣J32

♣Q54

If declarer has to play the suit, he only gets a trick if the Ace and King are in the same hand. However, odds are in favour of the honours splitting and the above combination is zero tricks if the declarer has to play the suit. Nevertheless, if the defense leads a club, the declarer is guaranteed a trick.


Overcalls, especially at the one-level are so important as they give partner a suit to lead. Then the defenders stick to this suit unless

there is a sluff and a ruff or a card owned by the declaring side can be promoted.

Example 2: Long Hand Ruffs are to be Avoided

Short hand ruffs gain a trick while long hand ruffs do not and actually may jeopardize the contract if there is a bad split. In this hand, there are no short hand ruffs because the hand with three spades has no shortness.

Neither vul.

				♠Q76 ♥1075 ♦AKQ4 ♣J98			
♠J854	♥8	♦J1098	♣10432		♠AK1032	♥A432	♦75 ♣76
				♠9 ♥KQJ96 ♦632 ♣AKQ5			
W	N	E	S				
	1♦	1♠	2♥				
P	3♥	P	4♥				
all pass							

West leads the ♠4. Without a bid from East, West would not lead from an honour just sufficiently guarded (Jxxx, Qxx, Kx) and has a natural diamond lead until East overcalls.

West will take the third heart so there is no short hand guard in dummy. If declarer pitches two diamonds on the first three spades, he

will make 140. There are nine tricks in hearts and ten tricks in diamonds because there are short hand ruffs if diamonds are trump.

Example 3: A Switch is a Must

Both vul.

♠Q76 ♥QJ53 ♦Q4 ♣5432			
♠54 ♥K876 ♦9832 ♣AQ10		♠J32 ♥A1092 ♦765 ♣876	
♠AK1098 ♥4 ♦AKJ10 ♣KJ9			

W	N	E	S
	P	P	1♠
P	2♠	P	4♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥6, declarer plays the ♥Queen and West wins the ♥Ace. The heart suit is done. If East wrongly returns a heart, declarer pitches the ♣9 and will get another pitch on the Queen. We seldom lead a suit that sets up a trick for declarer or gives a sluff and a ruff.

East wins the ♥Ace and switches to the dead suit in dummy. This is an excellent switch because it is also his dead suit.

The defenders note what declarer does at his first opportunity. He draws trump because he does not need a diamond ruff. He will then run his second suit and pitch two clubs. Declarer will lose two clubs and a heart for +620.

Exit Cards

Exit cards are a safe lead in the middle of the play that do not give declarer an undeserved trick. There is one opening lead and twelve possible exit cards.

Underleading an Ace

In a trump contract, an Ace should never be underled on the opening lead, unless it is trump. However, in the middle of play it must be underled.

If declarer's RHO leads a suit and declarer has KJx, does that mean he always sticks in the Jack. Yes but this is wrong. Aces must be underled after trick one.

Elimination and End Play

Elimination is the stripping or removal of the defenders' safe exit cards. The end play is the process of this removal and throwing a defender in with the lead that saves declarer a trick.

Partner's Suit

We usually keep a low defensive footprint by leading partner's suit. It is the third best natural lead. Ace from Ace King is first and three touching honours is second.

Do you always have to lead partner's suit? No, not always.

These are the exceptions:

- When you have a natural lead in a suit not bid by the declaring side. That is top of three touching honours or Ace from Ace-King.
- At No Trump when a singleton is held in partner's suit. To go out alone with another suit, the hand must have outside entries and a reasonable suit. It is imperative to lead partner's singleton from a dead hand to give partner a start on setting up his suit.
- When you have Axx or longer, you keep the Ace to kill something in declarer's hand. Expert players do not lead the A from Axx in partner's suit. They also know when the Ace must be cashed.

For partnership moral, it is best to lead partner's suit. Then the result of the hand is on him. When partner has bid two suits, you lead the shorter holding against a trump contract and the longer holding against a No Trump contract.

Sometimes you lead a suit of the declaring side only when you can get a ruff or give partner a ruff. Pointe Finale!!!

Bad Lead

Sometimes when a bad lead has been made, the damage has been done and it is best to stick to this suit to avoid opening (leading for the first time) another suit for the declarer.

2.0 Dead Suit in Dummy

When dummy has a dead suit to your right, it is a good lead especially if it is your dead suit as well. When dummy has limited entries we do not lead suits that declarer needs led from dummy. If the dead suit in dummy is not your dead suit, you may be helping declarer with transportation.

If dummy is to your left, you want to lead the dead suit in declarer's hand. This is harder to determine so we try an unbid suit.

3.0 Unidirectional Suits

♦K654

♦732

If you were declarer, you would not think twice about leading the ♦2 towards the ♦King. The same applies to a defender except the hand opposite is not visible.

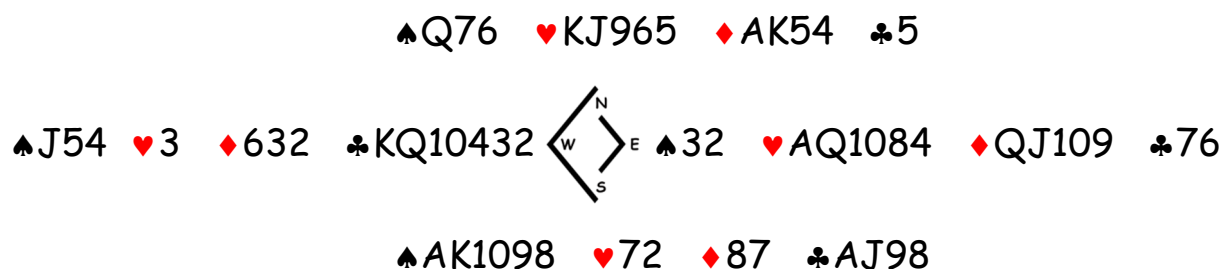
♥K432

♠Q876

If as defender, you lead small from King, the King only gets promoted if partner has the Ace or Queen. If a defender leads small from a Queen, a trick is not lost if partner has the Ace, King or Jack. If one of the required honours is not held by partner, a defender just finesses himself for the declarer and that suit must be played by the other defender. Therefore, the suit is unidirectional.

Example 4: Avoid Setting up a Suit for Declarer

Neither vul.



W	N	E	S
		P	1♠
P	2♥	P	2♠
P	4♣	P	4♠
all pass			

The Bidding

They are playing Standard American. 2♥ over 1♠ shows five hearts (also in Two-Over-One) so a direct raise shows three cards. South rebids a five-card major because 2NT promises a diamond and a club stopper, he cannot raise hearts without three, and a new suit at the three level is game forcing showing 14 or more opposite 10+.

4♣ is a delayed splinter showing a singleton club, three spades and enough for game. South has no wasted values in clubs so he should cuebid, but he has nothing to cuebid so he bids 4♠ where it passes out.

The Play:

West leads his singleton heart without trump control because there is no future in a club lead because North has a singleton or void and a ruff does not cost a natural trump trick. He plays the spades the 5 then the 4 showing three trump or more and a desire to ruff. This is called the trump echo.

Declarer plays the ♥ Jack and East wins the Queen. Declarer drops the ♥ 7 because if he drops the ♥ 2, East will know the ♥ 3 must be a singleton. The ♥ 3 is not led from a doubleton ♥ 73, but the ♥ 3 is led from a doubleton ♥ 32.

Hearts is a unidirectional suit not to be played by East. He cannot continue a heart that would set up a ♣ discard for the declarer.

Declarer ruffs two clubs and loses two hearts and a club for +420.

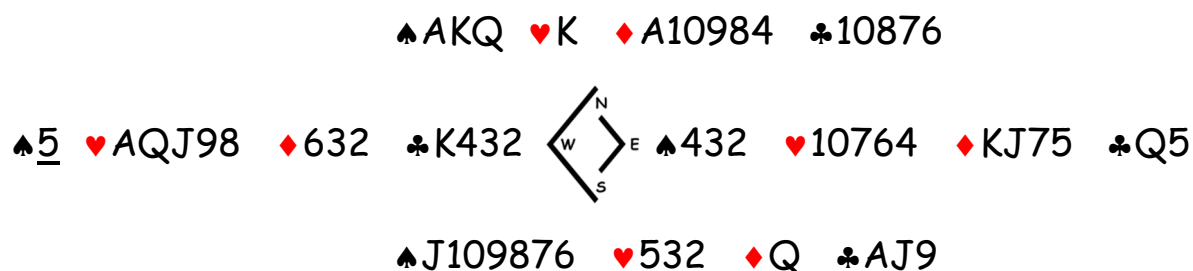
4.0 Killing Dummy's Entry

When dummy has a source of tricks, we want to strand declarer from dummy or we must grab our winners quickly at any type of contract.

We also attack dummy's entry. We drop everything we are doing to do this.

Example 5: Avoid A Long Suit of the Declaring Side

Neither vul.



W	N	E	S	
		P	P	
P	1♦	P	1♠	
2♥	dbl	P	2♠	support double
P	4♠	all pass		

Declarer drew two rounds of trump and messed around with ♣'s for some bizarre reason. She then played a heart. I won the Ace and gave partner a club ruff.

The board looked like this

♠A ♥--- ♦A10984 ♣10

East led a diamond and declarer made her contract. It is bizarre East would lead the longest suit in dummy. He asked me if he should have led the King smothering the Queen. Leave the suit alone and play the suit I bid killing entry in dummy. Simple as that.

Avoid leading suits bid by the opponents. Lead partner's suit. Do the opposite of what declarer does.

5.0 Danger Hand

As a defender we want partner to get on lead if he is the danger hand that can hurt declarer with a lead. Remember good results come from obeying the direction of unidirectional suits.

We lead an honour in a suit that we think partner has the touching honour.