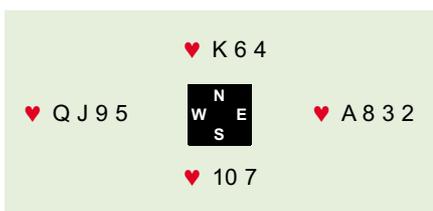




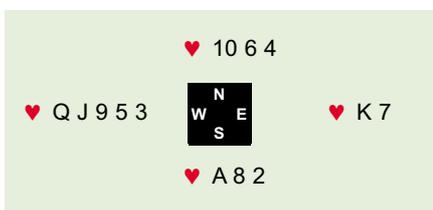
Continuations and Returns

Often it works well for the defenders to persevere with the suit led at trick one. You or your partner, whoever made the opening lead, must have had a reason for choosing it, and that reason may still apply. Moreover, if you switch from one suit to another, you risk giving up tricks as you do.

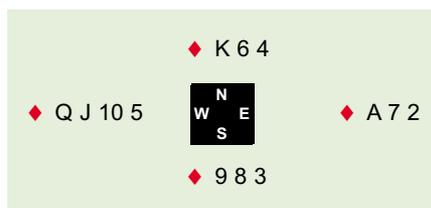
If you are the opening leader, common sense may dictate how you should continue:



If, as West, you lead the queen and it wins, then you need to continue with the jack. If you mistakenly were to lead a low card next, declarer would play low from dummy and ultimately score a trick in the suit.



Again, you lead the queen and win the trick (declarer could win the first trick and block the suit, but this may not be obvious to your opponent). This time it is just as important that you continue with a low card. East could not afford to play the king on the queen, as that would set up dummy's ten, but if you were to lead the jack second time around, setting up dummy's ten by crashing honours is precisely what you would achieve.



On the preceding layouts partner knew you had the jack because you would hardly lead the queen without it. Besides, with the jack in hand, declarer would not be ducking the first trick. Here you have the queen, jack and ten. So, the normal card to lead second time is the ten. If you were to lead the jack instead and declarer decided to play dummy's king on the second round, East might place South with the ten and abandon the suit.

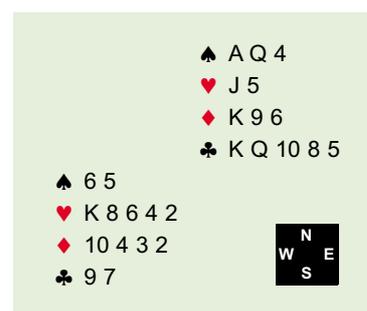
If you have led other than from an honour sequence, you are unlikely to retain the lead for trick two. Nevertheless, certain widely accepted rules apply for when you do get back in and continue the suit. With an original holding of a doubleton, obviously you play your lower card on the second round. If you started with three low cards and played the middle one first, you normally play the highest one next, so telling partner that you did not start with a doubleton. If you led fourth highest from a five-card suit then, if you are not trying to win the second round of the suit, you

play your lowest card next. This will suggest to partner that you have led from a five-card suit (on most deals it will be possible to work out whether playing high-low means five cards in the suit or two).

If partner leads a suit and you return it, some almost equally universally accepted rules apply. If you started with a doubleton, you will have only one card left in the suit and so no choice. If you started with three, you normally return the higher of your two remaining cards. If you started with four or more cards in the suit then, unless you have to lead high to prevent declarer from scoring a cheap trick, you return your original fourth best, i.e. a card you might have started with if you had been on lead.

A Few Examples

Let us see how this all works with a few examples:



South deals and opens a weak 1NT (12-14) and North raises to 3NT. You lead the four of hearts and East wins with the ace as South follows with the ten. Partner returns a heart and declarer produces the queen. What do you?

The quick answer is to check which heart partner has returned! If it is the three, then you hope the full deal looks like this:

Continued on page 19 ►

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POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 18

♠ A Q 4 ♥ J 5 ♦ K 9 6 ♣ K Q 10 8 5 ♠ 6 5 ♥ K 8 6 4 2 ♦ 10 4 3 2 ♣ 9 7	N W E S	♠ J 10 8 2 ♥ A 9 7 3 ♦ Q 8 ♣ J 6 4 ♠ K 9 7 3 ♥ Q 10 ♦ A J 7 5 ♣ A 3 2
--	---------------	--

On this layout, you need to start by winning with the king. Then you will play a low heart to East's nine, overtake the seven with the eight and cash the fifth heart.

Perhaps that was not so difficult – after all, South's queen and ten looked like a doubleton.

Well, now suppose that East returned not the three of hearts but the seven. In this scenario the complete deal may look like this:

♠ A Q 4 ♥ J 5 ♦ K 9 6 ♣ K Q 10 8 5 ♠ 6 5 ♥ K 8 6 4 2 ♦ 10 4 3 2 ♣ 9 7	N W E S	♠ J 10 8 2 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ A 6 4 ♠ K 9 7 3 ♥ Q 10 9 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ J 3 2
--	---------------	--

If you win the second round of hearts with the king, this will be the last heart trick you win. You can knock out declarer's stopper, the nine, but partner will have no heart left to lead after getting in with the ace of clubs. Instead you need to duck the second round of hearts, driving out declarer's stopper while East still has a heart to return. To

indicate that you have a five-card suit, you should play the two. Now you will defeat the contract with four heart tricks and the ace of clubs.

Let us consider a further example illustrating the importance of returning the right card (and paying attention!):

♠ Q 10 6 5 4 ♥ Q 8 6 2 ♦ 4 2 ♣ 9 3	N W E S	♠ 7 ♥ K 5 ♦ A J 10 9 6 5 3 ♣ A Q 5
---	---------------	---

North	South
1♦	1♥
3♦	3NT
End	

You lead the five of spades and East plays the king, which loses to the ace. Declarer runs the queen of diamonds for a finesse and the king wins. Partner returns a spade and you capture South's nine with the ten. What do you do next if the spade partner returned is the eight? What will you do if it is the two? Please decide before reading on.

If East returns the spade eight, you read this as the higher card from a three-card holding. In this case, the full deal may look like this:

♠ Q 10 6 5 4 ♥ Q 8 6 2 ♦ 4 2 ♣ 9 3	N W E S	♠ 7 ♥ K 5 ♦ A J 10 9 6 5 3 ♣ A Q 5 ♠ K 8 2 ♥ A 10 7 ♦ K 8 ♣ 10 8 7 6 4 ♠ A J 9 3 ♥ J 9 4 3 ♦ Q 7 ♣ K J 2
---	---------------	---

Knowing that you cannot run the spades, and seeing seven winners including the ace of clubs in dummy, you will need to switch to a heart in the hope East has the ace. This way you defeat the contract by at least two tricks, scoring four spades, one heart (even if declarer guesses right) and one diamond.

If, instead, East returns the two of spades, you will read it as a fourth highest (East cannot hold a doubleton on this auction) and might continue spades expecting the deal to look like this:

♠ Q 10 6 5 4 ♥ Q 8 6 2 ♦ 4 2 ♣ 9 3	N W E S	♠ 7 ♥ K 5 ♦ A J 10 9 6 5 3 ♣ A Q 5 ♠ K 8 3 2 ♥ J 10 7 ♦ K 8 ♣ K 8 7 4 ♠ A J 9 ♥ A 9 4 3 ♦ Q 7 ♣ J 10 6 2
---	---------------	---

Now You Are East

The time has come to move across to the other side of the table.

♠ A 7 5 ♥ A 5 2 ♦ K J 10 9 ♣ 8 6 5	N W E S	♠ Q J 3 ♥ 10 7 4 ♦ A Q 8 ♣ Q J 10 4
---	---------------	--

North	South
1NT ¹	3♣
4♠	End

¹12-14

West leads the queen of hearts and the king wins on your left. Declarer plays a spade to the ace and one back to the king, partner following twice, and then finesses the nine of diamonds to your queen. What do you return?

If you had been on lead, you would have led a club, and it does appear tempting to try the queen of clubs now. Unfortunately, a club switch is likely to be too slow. To force to game opposite

Continued on page 20 ►



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POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 19

a weak no-trump with only a five-card suit, South must have the values for an opening bid, which will include the ace-king of clubs. Partner's lead took out one of declarer's heart stoppers and you should continue the good work by returning the suit. You might, indeed probably should, cash the queen of spades first, both to draw two trumps for one (generally a good idea) and to see what partner discards, but it is most unlikely to make any difference. This is the full deal:

<p>♠ A 7 5 ♥ A 5 2 ♦ K J 10 9 ♣ 8 6 5</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	<p>♠ Q J 3 ♥ 10 7 4 ♦ A Q 8 ♣ Q J 10 4</p>	<p>♠ K 10 9 8 2 ♥ K 8 3 ♦ 7 3 ♣ A K 2</p>
---	--	--	---

You may observe that if partner had led a club initially (or if you had done so, say if North-South were using transfers) then it would be correct to return a club. In that case, the heart switch would be too slow. Again, you see the principle of plugging away at one weak spot until it gives way rather than weakening several spots but not to the point of breaking.

On the next deal, the opponents use a special convention, one that may be unfamiliar to rubber bridge players but is meat and drink to the tournament player. Since the player who makes the bid ends up as dummy, you need not worry too much about it.

<p>♠ Q 8 7 5 ♥ J ♦ J 9 8 2 ♣ A K 9 5</p>	<p>♠ K J 3 ♥ A 8 5 4 ♦ K 6 ♣ J 7 6 4</p>
--	--

North	South
4♥ ¹	1♠
End	4♠

¹ Four-card spade support and a singleton or void in hearts

West leads the six of spades and your jack draws the ace. Declarer leads a low heart at trick two, West plays the two and you are in with the ace. What do you return?

One can just about construct a hand for declarer on which you would need to switch to diamonds, either now or after cashing the king of trumps:

<p>♠ A 10 9 4 2 ♥ K Q 10 3 ♦ Q 7 ♣ 10 2</p>	
---	--

However, this is a most unlikely holding for several reasons. As you will find out when we cover count signals in a future article, partner should not play the two from 9-7-6-2. Even without that inference, the opening lead provides a major clue.

Knowing dummy would be short in hearts, West has led what looks like a

singleton trump, an unusual lead under normal circumstances – surely only a good heart suit would justify this. You should therefore follow partner's line of defence by playing the king and, unless something extraordinary happens, another spade. Able to ruff only one heart in dummy, declarer will finish a trick short if the full deal looks like this:

<p>♠ 6 ♥ K 10 9 6 2 ♦ Q 10 5 4 ♣ 10 8 3</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	<p>♠ Q 8 7 5 ♥ J ♦ J 9 8 2 ♣ A K 9 5</p>	<p>♠ K J 3 ♥ A 8 5 4 ♦ K 6 ♣ J 7 6 4</p>
---	--	--	--

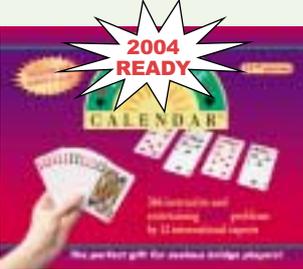
I mentioned at the beginning that one reason for sticking to the same suit is that opening up a new suit often costs a trick. This applies particularly when the honours lie spread around the table. The ultimate example is:

<p>♦ J 7 3</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	<p>♦ Q 8 4</p>	<p>♦ K 9 5</p>
----------------	--	----------------	----------------

The defenders cannot make a single trick by attacking this suit. If, however, they wait for declarer to do so, they are certain to make one and will often get two.

Despite this, occasions do arise when you should switch suits, and this will be the subject of the next article in this series. ■

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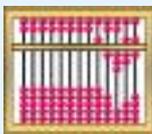
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