

Learning Points – Take all Your Tricks on Defense

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Defense LEVEL: Basic

North Deals
NS Vul
MPs

♠ A6532	
♥ Q9	
♦ QJ75	
♣ 53	
N	
W 21 E	
S	
♠ J	
♥ AJ63	
♦ 63	
♣ AJ10864	

Cliff

♠ 94
♥ 10854
♦ AK1092
♣ 72

NS: 2♣
EW: 1♦, 1♥,
2♠, 2N
W: 3N

♠ KQ1087
♥ K72
♦ 84
♣ KQ9

Steve

Tuesday Evening November 10, 2009 Open Pairs, Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 . Tonight my partner is Cliff Pleatman. This is the 1st time we've played together.

Some unassuming hands can become a feeding frenzy. You have to be ready and alert to the possibility.

The Bidding

South has a nominal 3rd seat opening bid, risking only that EW might find a ♠ fit. West's ♠ overcall is standard. North chose 1N based on 9 HCP and a stopper in West's suit. South thought that that was a good suggestion and passed.

North East South West

Pass Pass 1♣ 1♠

1N All Pass

East leads ♠9

West knows his cards are working on defense but doubling sends a different message and he'd rather defend – after all they are vulnerable...

Often players attempt a riskier NT contract when a partial in a minor suit is available, because the difference can be big in match point scoring. What a difference it turned out to be for NS...

The Play

With the ♠9, ♠J, and ♠A falling on the 1st trick, the defense has already built 4 additional winners. Since dummy has a singleton ♣, East surely has 1 or 2 more ♠s. Declarer finesses the ♣J at trick 2 and East plays a coy ♣K. First, a ♦ switch to establish timing for East's winners in that suit (nothing else looks fertile). The ♦8 draws North's ♦Q won by partner's ♦K. Partner returns the ♥4. Yes we can run ♠ now, but partner is trying to help me cash my side tricks first. The ♥ finesse is irresistible, and my ♥K wins. A 2nd ♦ elicits the ♦J (split honors anyone?) and it's partner's turn to cash out. Partner's ♠ return seals declarer's fate. We manage 11 defensive tricks for down 5 and 7 of 8 MPs. I thank partner for getting me off the ♥ end-play early.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MPs	1	8	7	3.5	0	2	5-		3.5		5.5	
Score	-90	1100	500	100	-110	-50	200		100		200	

Post Mortem

This hand is a great example where points and length in opponent's suits are not working. The ♠A and 4 small ♠s are wasted in North's hand. They will never contribute to length tricks for north South. QJx is a much better holding for a competitive 1NT bid as you are not wasting so much of your high cards in the opponent's suit. Think instead that Ace and length in the opponent's suit means the Ace is not worth a full 4 HCP. Rather than bidding 1N, consider passing when holding Ace and length in opponent's suit. Passing with North's hand will work especially if you are playing disciplined negative doubles.

When defending a partial, consider partner's needs and look for logical switches based on likely holdings before you run your winners. Simply counting HCP, East can put West on 13 HCP on this auction. (E7+N11+S8-9 leaves 13-14 for West). West's side suit Kings might be ready for plucking. Avoid messy end plays and help your side get all the tricks you should get.

Learning Points

1. Ace-empty-4th or 5th is a bad holding for bidding a competitive NT. The more length you have in opponent's suit, the less length cards your hand can help promote for your side. The more points you hold in the opponent's suit, the more likely partner is a minimum. Opponents are bidding on something, aren't they? Better to hold QJx or Q10x.
2. Consider passing North's hand if you play disciplined negative doubles. You might save yourself.
3. Be circumspect when defending a hand and you're sure opponents have landed in the wrong contract. Cashing winners might lose your opportunity to develop extra tricks for your side.
4. Before putting partner on lead, check to see if a new suit lead might keep partner off an endplay.
5. When defending a game, be sure to set it before maximizing your score, especially at IMPS.

Key Words: Competitive NT, Working Points, Switch to develop tricks, switch to avoid end-play