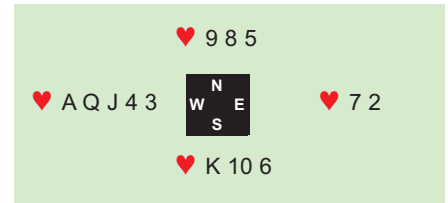


Weakness in dummy (Part I)

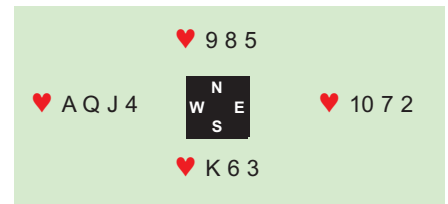


not quite so clear-cut which heart to lead. On the opening lead most people lead small from three to the ten and it is usually right to switch to the card that you would have led. The disadvantage of leading the ten is that partner may place you with a doubleton and think that three rounds of the suit will stand up. The risk in leading the seven is that partner may think the layout is actually this:



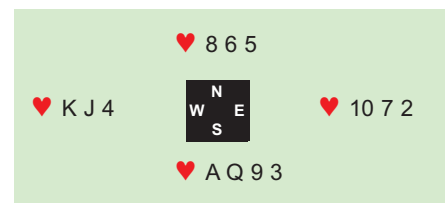
If declarer is clever enough to duck the seven, perhaps because the bidding marks West with the ace, partner will not know whether it is safe to continue the suit.

Can you think of a time when East needs to lead the ten?



If you lead a normal two, declarer can duck and your side can cash only two quick tricks. By contrast, by leading the ten your side can take all its tricks straight away. With the nine visible in dummy, there is no danger of confusing partner as to its whereabouts.

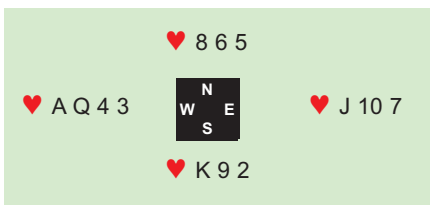
Can the seven ever be the right card to lead?



Can you see what might go wrong if you lead the two? Declarer might duck and partner, after winning, may place you with the queen or ace and return the suit. Even more danger attaches to leading the ten. After the queen and king cover, partner will surely return a heart expecting you to hold the nine.

Continued on page 26 ►

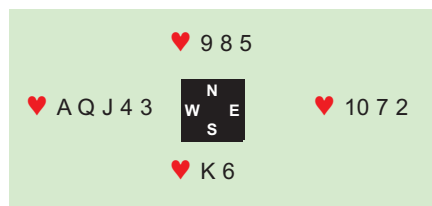
In the last issue, we discussed the relative merits of an active and a passive defence. Ideally, of course, you want to take actions that combine attack with safety. For this, an effective strategy tends to be to lead round to a weak suit in dummy.



As East, this is a good suit to lead, and the right card is the jack. If declarer ducks, you hold the lead and can continue the suit. This allows your side to cash three tricks (four in no-trumps).



Trading the high cards around slightly still makes a heart lead (strictly speaking, switch) attractive. Again, the jack works best. If declarer ducks, you will stay on lead and be able to continue the attack. Most likely, if declarer can afford one heart loser but not two, the ace will go on your jack. This partly protects South's remaining Q-x from further attack. You (rather than partner) will need to regain the lead in some other suit for your side to be able to continue hearts profitably.



Your holding is weaker and you no longer have a sequence, but this heart suit is still a good suit to lead from the East seat. Not only will doing so allow your side to cash two quick tricks (assuming the third will be ruffed) but it will also make it safe for partner to continue leading the suit. This time it is

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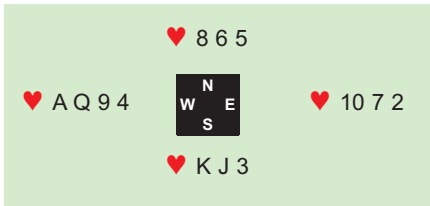
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POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 25



In a suit contract leading the ten also courts disaster on this layout. Partner captures with jack with the queen (or the king with the ace), cashes a second winner and attempts to give you a ruff. You cannot ruff and this manoeuvre has set up an undeserved winner for declarer. So my advice with 10-x-x in your hand and low cards in dummy is this:

1. Normally lead the two from this holding;
2. Lead the ten if you think you need three fast tricks;
3. Lead the middle card if you want partner to switch.

So, you should only lead the seven when neither you nor dummy hold the nine.

Partner welcomes your lead

There are a whole host of layouts on which leading up to the weakness in dummy works well. One of the reasons for this is that partner, on opening lead, will try to lead from a sequence. Therefore there is a higher than average chance that partner holds a tenace of some description in any suit not led at trick one. If partner bids a suit but does not lead it, you will often find that declarer has the king and partner the ace. The same

applies if partner fails to lead a suit that you have bid. I could fill the whole article with layouts on which a lead round to weakness proves successful, but let us be content with a handful or two.



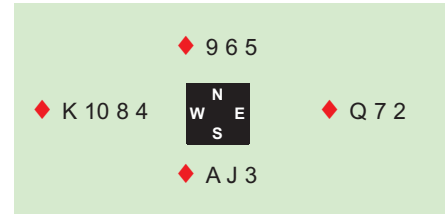
By leading this suit twice, you allow partner to score both the king and queen.



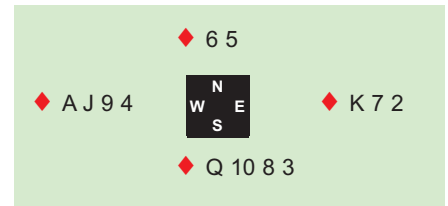
Again, it probably takes two leads to bear fruit as declarer will not finesse this time on the first round. Other things being equal, you lead the seven first and the eight next time.



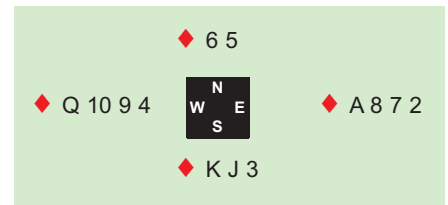
This time you cannot set up any tricks but the lead remains safe. Some of the time, you will have to be content with safety.



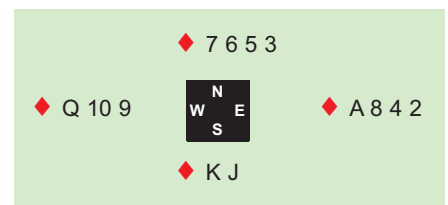
Now that you have the queen, a switch stands more chance of being productive. The normal lead with this holding is the two. Whether declarer lets the lead run round to dummy or inserts the jack, partner can win and safely continue the suit to set up a further winner (and long cards in a no-trump contract).



In a no-trump contract, a switch to the two here proves particularly fruitful. Partner can win cheaply, put you back in with the king and score two more tricks when you lead the suit again.



Life becomes more complicated when you hold the ace. When the layout is like this, you want to underlead the ace. This leaves declarer with a guess on whether to play the jack or the king.



For the reason that cashing the ace may spare declarer a guess, it tends to be right to lead low whenever you have the ace but cannot see the queen or jack. Here, assuming the ace is not the setting trick, you must lead low. How can you tell that declarer does not have a singleton king? The answer is simple. That would

Continued on page 27 ►

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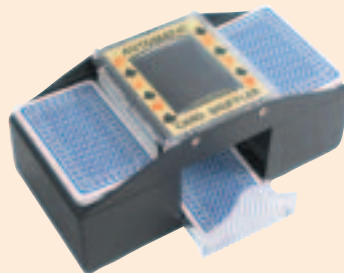
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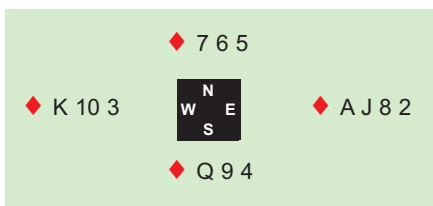
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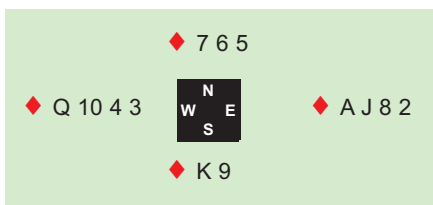
POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 26

leave West with Q-J-10-9. Holding Q-J-10-9 West would very likely have led the queen of diamonds initially.



Here, certainly in a no-trump contract, it works best to lead low once more. This allows partner to win with the ten, cash the king and leave you with two winners. Cashing the ace first risks blocking the suit: declarer may save the queen until the third round.

We revert to a suit contract for the next layout:



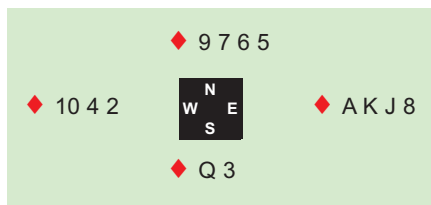
In theory it does not matter whether you cash the ace or lead low. Declarer makes one diamond trick but that is all. However, this is considering the diamonds in isolation. Perhaps declarer has a long suit in dummy and can discard a diamond on it. In this case, you risk losing your ace if you underlead it. Also, if you cash the ace and partner discourages, you hold the lead and can switch to a different suit. How would partner know to discourage? The answer is that after the first trick a lead of the ace tends to deny the king and asks partner to encourage if holding the king. The logic for this method is even clearer when it is the opening leader who switches to an ace. Holding both the ace and king, it would be normal to have led the suit at trick one.

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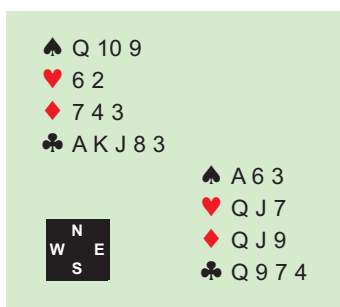
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When you are fortunate enough to hold the ace and king, you should switch to the king, which asks for a count signal. Suppose you cash the king and declarer drops the queen. When West plays the two you know the queen is a false card since with 10-4-3-2 West would play the four.

Focus on full deals

The time has come to consider all four suits. You can stay in the East seat – West's turn will come in the next article.



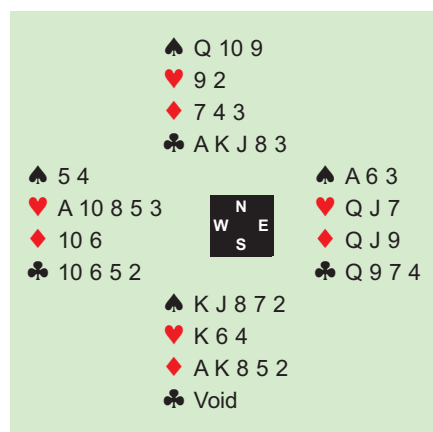
West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
End			

Partner leads the five of spades and you win your ace. What should you return?

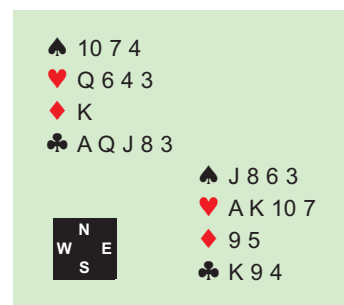
A trump, though superficially attractive, is unlikely to be essential. The only thing declarer might ruff in dummy is the third round of hearts but surely declarer can discard any slow heart loser on dummy's clubs if you do that. Dummy has two weak suits and it is attractive in a way to lead diamonds: you need three more tricks and finding partner with A-10-x would enable you to set the contract at once. A moment's reflection, however, will deflect you from that course. Declarer is marked with four diamonds (at least) on the bidding and so, with a 5-3-4-1 (or 5-3-5-0) shape, will only be able to discard a long diamond on the clubs. A third-round defensive diamond trick cannot easily run

away. The only time you might need to lead a diamond is when South is 6-3-4-0 with the ace-king of hearts and king-high diamonds. If this is the case, partner has led a singleton trump in preference to something like 10-9-8-x-x in the unbid heart suit. This is hardly likely, is it?

Indeed partner's very failure to lead a heart makes it almost certain that if declarer is missing an ace then it is in hearts. You should lead the queen of hearts. This is the full deal:



Your side makes the first three tricks and, in due course, a diamond. Note that leading the seven of hearts – not that you would seriously consider such a play – is no good. Declarer could duck to leave partner in a dilemma after scoring the ten: cash the ace of hearts and set up South's king for a diamond discard from dummy, or switch and have South throw two hearts on the clubs.



West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	5♦
End			

Partner leads the king of spades, you play the eight and the ace wins. Declarer cashes the ace and queen of diamonds, to which all follow, and then runs the ten of clubs. What do you do?

Continued on page 28 ►

POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 27

Let us say that you solve the first part of the problem easily enough. If two rounds of trumps were enough to draw them, declarer started with eight diamonds. These eight winners together with two aces come to ten. This rules out any thought of ducking the club smoothly and allowing declarer an easy eleventh trick. Having taken the king of clubs, you may see three possibilities. The first is that South is 3-0-8-2, in which case the jack and queen of spades will stand up. The second is that South is 2-1-8-2, in which case your side can take one trick in each major. The third is that South is 1-2-8-2, when you need to cash two hearts.

You can cater for the first two possibilities by returning the three of spades. Partner should be able to read you for an original four-card holding and will know whether a third spade will cash. It is curtains, unfortunately, if declarer ruffs your spade return. Then you do not make any heart tricks at all.

For two reasons you can probably forget about catering for the 3-0-8-2 shape. For one thing, since South has so many more diamonds than West, it is unlikely that South has more low spades than West. For another, and perhaps more significantly, with A-x-x

of spades declarer would surely have held up the ace one round hoping for a 5-2 spade split. Your correct switch is to the king of hearts. If South is 2-1-8-2, partner will have an even number of hearts (four) and play a high heart. If South is 1-2-8-2, partner will have an odd number of hearts and play low. In both cases, you will know what to do next.

Note that it would be a mistake to switch to the ace of hearts. Partner will play low in any event (to deny possession of the heart king) and you will be none the wiser.

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

Can it ever cost to lead up to weakness?

I offer you a few isolated situations of which to be aware:

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

It is natural to lead the jack in case, for instance, South has A-Q-x and can afford to duck the first club. On the actual layout, leading the jack crashes the queen and telescopes the defensive winners from two to one.

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

This represents a more typical position. At first glance, it seems that declarer is entitled to four tricks and the defenders to none.

Now suppose I tell you that dummy is short of entries. If declarer cannot get to dummy twice to finesse, East's king becomes a winner. A single entry will suffice if East breaks the suit. ■

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