



## Unit 503 Lecture Series Presents

# Today's Lesson *on Defense*

## Interfering with declarer; When the two defenders cooperate!



In this lesson, we will take a look at how the defenders can make it difficult for declarer to take the tricks necessary to make the contract. The defenders have to imagine what declarer might be planning to do and then try to find an appropriate countermeasure. As when taking their own tricks, the defenders will have to work together as a partnership to prevent declarer from taking undeserved tricks.

Let's look at some of the techniques that are available to the defenders.

## Areas of Discussion

### Defending against suit establishment through:

1. Defensive hold-up.
2. Attacking declarer's entries.
3. Against the Finesse.



In the previous lessons, the focus was on how the defenders work together to take their tricks through promotion, suit establishment, finessing and ruffing declarer's winners. This lesson has a different focus. The defenders also try to make it difficult for declarer to take tricks. They have to visualize what declarer is planning to do and then try to prevent declarer from carrying out the plan. This is much more adventuresome than automatically following the guidelines such as *second hand low* or *cover an honor with an honor*.

Declarer often needs to establish tricks in a suit. Having established winners in a suit, declarer needs an entry to get to them. The defenders can't do anything about the cards declarer has been dealt, but they can try to prevent those cards from being used to declarer's best advantage.

# 1. the defensive holdup



Suppose declarer has no other entries to the dummy and needs to develop extra tricks from the spade suit to make the contract.

<b>1</b>		N Dummy	
		♠ QJ1096	
W Partner			E You
♠ 732			♠ A84
		S Declarer	
		♠ K5	
<b>2</b>		N Dummy	
		♠ QJ1096	
W Partner			E You
♠ 73			♠ A84
		S Declarer	
		♠ K52	

**Declarer leads ♠K**  
**Plan your defense!**

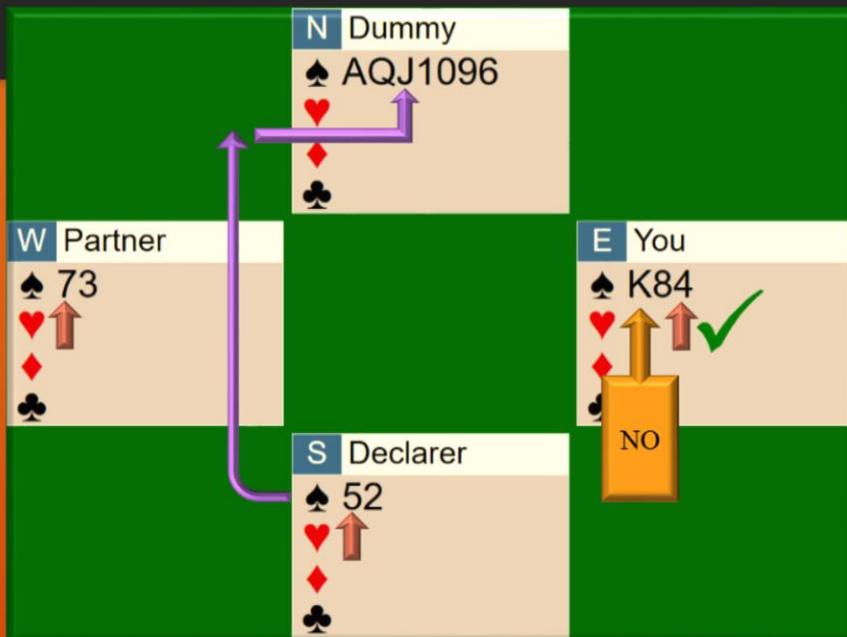
Declarer leads the ♠K. Now partner has to be careful to give you the information that you need. Partner plays the S2, the start of a low-high signal to show an odd number of cards in the suit. You can see five spades in the dummy and three in your hand, a total of eight. By playing low, partner is starting to show an odd number of cards — 1, 3 or 5. It is impossible for partner to have 5, since that would leave declarer with none.

If partner has only one card, then declarer has four, you can't prevent declarer from driving out your ♠A, using dummy's spades. If partner has three, however, declarer has only two spades. You will be able to strand dummy's winners by holding up your ♠A.

In layout 2: Declarer again plays the ♠K. This time partner plays the ♠7, starting a high-low to show an even number of cards in the suit. You can't be certain at this point whether partner has two or four — or even a singleton. Again you can wait to find out — duck the first trick. When declarer leads another spade and partner contributes the ♠3, the layout becomes clear. If partner has two spades, declarer must have three. You can't afford to take the ♠A on the second round because declarer will still have one left to get to dummy's established winners. You hold up one more round, and declarer is limited to the minimum possible number of tricks, two, on this layout. If you take your ♠A on the first or second round, declarer will take four tricks.



## 2. the defensive holdup



**Declarer leads ♠5  
Plan your defense!**

**DO YOU WIN THE  
K WHEN  
DECLARER  
FINESSES THE J ?**

Suppose declarer leads a low ♠, partner plays the ♠7 to start showing an even number, and declarer finesses dummy's ♠Q ( or ♠J, etc.). If you take the first trick with your ♠K, declarer still has a low ♠ left to use as an entry to the five winners in dummy.

Look what happens if you refuse to win the first trick. Declarer can take the ♠A and lead the suit again to drive out your ♠K, but unless declarer has an outside entry to the dummy, you have limited declarer to two tricks, rather than five. Since the finesse 'worked' the first time, declarer may well return to the hand in another suit and try a second finesse. When you take your ♠K, declarer is limited to only one trick in this suit!

	N North		
	♠		
	♥		
	♦ QJ10875		
	♣		
W West		E You	
♠		♠	
♥		♥	
♦ 2		♦ A93	
♣		♣	
	S Declarer		
	♠		
	♥		
	♦ K64		
	♣		

### 3. the defensive holdup



Suppose you're defending a Notrump contract and there are no entries to the dummy other than in the ♦ suit. When declarer plays the K to try to establish the suit, which card should you play?

The declarer isn't the only player who can use the hold-up play to try to prevent the opponents from enjoying established tricks. The defenders also can hold up in an attempt to strand declarer's suit. Lay out the following cards in the diamond suit:

Suppose you're defending a notrump contract and there are no entries to the dummy other than in the diamond suit. When declarer plays the king to try to establish the suit, which card should you play? (Low.) You hold up your ♦A. When declarer leads the suit again and your partner discards, you know declarer started with three cards in the suit. Which card do you play? (Low again.) If declarer leads the suit again, you'll have to take the ace. What has happened to dummy's winners? (They're stranded.)

## Exercise: the defensive holdup



1	N North	
	♠ KQJ98	
W West		E East
♠ 73		♠ A42
	S South	
	♠ 1065	

7 & 2  
3 & 4

2	N North	
	♠ KQJ98	
W West		E East
♠ A42		♠ 763
	S South	
	♠ 10 5	

2 & 3  
A & 6 (or 7)

3	N North	
	♠ AQJ92	
W West		E East
♠ 86		♠ K743
	S South	
	♠ 105	

8 & 4  
6 & K

In each of these layouts, declarer has no entries to dummy other than the cards in the suit shown. To limit declarer to the minimum number of tricks, which cards would you and partner play on the first trick if declarer leads the 10? Which cards would you play on the second trick if declarer leads a low card to dummy's queen?

In the first layout, partner starts by playing the 7, to show an even number. You play a low card, letting declarer win the trick. When declarer leads the suit again, partner plays the 2, confirming two cards in the suit. You play your remaining low card, holding up until the third round.

In the second layout, partner plays the 2 on the first trick and you play the 3, to show an odd number. On the second trick, partner plays the ace and you play the 6 or 7. Partner can safely win the ace on the second trick knowing that you have an odd number of cards in the suit. If you have a singleton, it doesn't matter when partner wins the trick. But if, as seems more likely, you have three, partner doesn't need to hold up until the third trick.

On the last layout, partner gives you a count signal by playing the 8 on the first trick. You play a low card, letting declarer win. If declarer leads a second card to dummy's queen, repeating the finesse, partner plays the 6 and you win the king. Declarer's winners are stranded. This is another advantage of ducking the first trick. Declarer may not know that you have the king and will end up with only one trick from the suit!

### Conclusion

The defensive hold-up play is one technique that can be used to try to prevent declarer from getting any undeserved tricks. The basic idea is for the defenders to take their winner when declarer plays the last card in the suit. If there is no other entry to the dummy, the winners are stranded.

# 1. ATTACKING DECLARER'S ENTRIES

You are East defending against a **3NT** contract by South.



Declarer may have an entry in another suit which will serve as a means of transportation to get to the established winners. The defenders want to eliminate that entry before declarer is ready to use it.

## The Full Hand

	<b>N</b> Dummy	
	♠ 52	
	♥ 843	
	♦ Q109862	
	♣ AK	
<b>W</b> Partner		<b>E</b> You
♠ J10986		♠ A4
♥ J952		♥ Q76
♦ 3		♦ AK5
♣ 874		♣ 106532
	<b>S</b> Declarer	
	♠ KQ73	
	♥ AK10	
	♦ J74	
	♣ QJ9	

# The Full Hand

	<b>N</b> Dummy	
	♠ 52	
	♥ 843	
	♦ Q109862	
	♣ AK	
<b>W</b> Partner		<b>E</b> You
♠ J10986		♠ A4
♥ J952		♥ Q76
♦ 3		♦ AK5
♣ 874		♣ 106532
	<b>S</b> Declarer	
	♠ KQ73	
	♥ AK10	
	♦ J74	
	♣ QJ9	

## 2. Attacking declarer's entries

You are East defending against a **3NT** contract by South. Partner leads the ♥J.

Study the dummy and plan your defense!

	<b>N</b> Dummy	
	♠ A5	
	♥ 742	
	♦ J54	
	♣ KQJ109	
<b>W</b> Partner		<b>E</b> You
♠		♠ KQ93
♥ J		♥ A5
♦		♦ 10872
♣		♣ A75
	<b>S</b> Declarer	
	♠	
	♥	
	♦	
	♣	

Declarer may have an entry in another suit which will serve as a means of transportation to get to the established winners. The defenders want to eliminate that entry before declarer is ready to use it.

The contract is 3NT and your partner leads the ♥J. Let's look at things from declarer's point of view. Declarer has a sure trick in ♠ and three sure tricks in ♦ with at least one trick from the ♥ suit, especially now that your side has led ♥. The main source of tricks will be the ♣ suit. Declarer plans to promote four tricks in the ♣ suit by driving out the ♣A, and dummy has the ♠A as an entry to the ♣, even if you hold up the ♥A.

Now let's look at things from your point of view. Your partner has led the ♥J and a low ♥ is played from dummy. You take the first trick with the ♥A. After all, partner might be leading from an interior sequence, and you don't want declarer to get a trick with the ♥Q if partner has the ♥K.

Your natural inclination is to return partner's lead and try to develop tricks in the ♥ suit for your side. But, looking at the long club suit in dummy, there is a more pressing task. Even without seeing declarer's hand, you can visualize what declarer is planning to do.

Your priority must be to get the ♠A off the dummy before the ♣ are promoted. You can do that by leading the ♠K (or the ♠Q). Even if declarer refuses to win the first ♠ trick, you can lead another ♠ and get rid of dummy's ♠A before declarer is ready to use it. Your primary objective is not to develop ♠ tricks when you lead the ♠K. You are trying to prevent declarer from taking ♣ tricks.

## 2. The Full Deal

You are East defending against a **3NT** contract by South. Partner leads the ♥J.

Take action as soon as you count declarer's hand.

	<b>N</b> Dummy	
	♠ A5	
	♥ 742	
	♦ J54	
	♣ KQJ109	
<b>W</b> Partner		<b>E</b> You
♠ 1064		♠ KQ93
♥ J		♥ A5
♦ 963		♦ 10872
♣ 862		♣ A75
	<b>S</b> Declarer	
	♠ J872	
	♥ KQ63	
	♦ AKQ	
	♣ 43	

Your task is not completely finished after the ♠A is removed. When declarer leads a ♣ from dummy, you must hold up the ♣A. On the first round of ♣, partner plays the ♣2, showing an odd number. Hoping that the ♣2 isn't a singleton, in which case you can't prevent declarer from establishing the ♣ suit, you win the second round of ♣. Declarer is held to one trick in the ♣ suit once you have removed the entry from dummy. No matter what, declarer can't take more than eight tricks.

Notice that it was very important for you to play a ♠ right away. If you returned a ♥, partner's suit, declarer would win with the ♥K (or the ♥Q) and play a ♣. Now holding up the ♣A wouldn't do any good.

Suppose you take the second ♣ trick and lead a ♠. It is too late. The ♠ have been promoted and the ♠A is an effective entry to them. Partner cooperated on the defense by giving you a count signal in the ♣ suit. The defenders would have to cooperate even more if the cards were distributed a little differently. If partner, rather than you, held the ♣A, it would not be as easy to see that it was necessary to lead a ♠. Nonetheless, that would be the winning defense. It would also be more difficult to lead a spade if you did not hold the ♠Q as well as the ♠K, or if partner held the ♠K rather than you. However, the defenders would still need to cooperate in the same fashion to defeat the contract.

Preventing declarer from getting to dummy is often an important defensive tactic. Let's look at some more examples.

### 3. ATTACKING DECLARER'S ENTRIES

You are East  
defending  
against a  
**3NT** contract  
by South.



When you can see that declarer is planning to develop a long suit and may have some entry problems, it is often a good idea to try to drive out any entries in the hand with the long suit before declarer has established the winners. You also must be careful not to create an entry to the long suit by playing your high cards prematurely.

### The Full Hand

	<b>N Dummy</b>	
	♠ QJ1092	
	♥ A73	
	♦ J3	
	♣ J64	
<b>W Partner</b>		<b>E You</b>
♠ 865		♠ AK4
♥ 985		♥ J1062
♦ K10752		♦ Q9
♣ 97		♣ Q1085
	<b>S Declarer</b>	
	♠ 73	
	♥ KQ4	
	♦ A864	
	♣ AK32	

# The Full Hand

	<b>N</b> Dummy	
	♠ QJ1092	
	♥ A73	
	♦ J3	
	♣ J64	
<b>W</b> Partner		<b>E</b> You
♠ 865		♠ AK4
♥ 985		♥ J1062
♦ K10752		♦ Q9
♣ 97		♣ Q1085
	<b>S</b> Declarer	
	♠ 73	
	♥ KQ4	
	♦ A864	
	♣ AK32	

# 1. defending against finesses



N Dummy		
♠ KJ		
W You		E Partner
♠ A1074		♠ Q9532
S Declarer		
♠ 86		

suppose declarer needs to take 1 trick in this suit and leads a low ♠ toward dummy!

Which card do you play from your hand?

**low**

N Dummy		
♠ K Q 2		
W You		E Partner
♠ A1074		♠ J 9 5 3
S Declarer		
♠ 86		

suppose declarer needs to take 1 trick in this suit and leads a low ♠ toward dummy!

Which card do you play from your hand?

**low**

One of the ways declarer gets the extra needed tricks is by finessing. Declarer hopes to take a trick with a high card when you have a higher card — a card will usually be led toward the card declarer hopes will take a trick. You may think there is nothing you can do about this, but let's look at some examples. Lay out the following cards in the club suit:

On the left deal; We have already seen this situation in the lesson on *second hand low*. Suppose declarer needs to take one trick with this combination and leads a low card toward the dummy. If you play your ♠A, then declarer plays the ♠J and is guaranteed to take a trick with the ♠K. Instead, you play a low club. It is true that declarer could play the ♠K and take the trick, but declarer might play the ♠J, ending up with no tricks. After all, declarer doesn't know which of you holds the ♠A and which the ♠Q. If you held the ♠Q, declarer would be correct to finesse dummy's ♠J. So this is one way you make life difficult for declarer when trying to take a finesse — leave declarer guessing!

On the right deal; This time, declarer doesn't have to guess. It is still best for you most of the time to play low, however, because it makes it more difficult for declarer to take two tricks in the suit. If you take the ♠A right away, dummy's ♠K and ♠Q will both be winners, and declarer will have an entry to them. By ducking, you create a problem for declarer. To get a second trick from the suit, declarer will have to find an entry back in order to lead toward dummy again. Even then, you can win the second trick and the winner might be stranded in dummy. There are many angles involved in giving declarer a difficult time taking tricks.

## 2. defending against finesses



		N Dummy		
		♠ KQ2		
W You			E East	
♠ 1074			♠ AJ95	
		S South		
		♠ 863		

suppose declarer needs to take 1 trick in this suit and leads a low ♠ toward dummy!

Which card do you play from your hand?

**low**

		N Dummy		
		♠ KQ102		
W You			E Partner	
♠ J74			♠ A95	
		S Declarer		
		♠ 863		

suppose declarer needs to take 1 trick in this suit and leads a low ♠ toward dummy!

Which card do you play from your hand?

**low**

On the left example: This is a very interesting situation. When declarer leads a low club toward dummy, the finesse is destined to lose since partner has the ♠A. Partner is not forced to win the first trick, unless winning the trick will defeat the contract immediately. When dummy's ♠Q (or ♠K) is played, partner can play a low spade, ducking the ♠A. This doesn't cost anything and may lead declarer astray. Thinking that you have the ♠A, declarer may take the trouble to come back and lead toward dummy's remaining high card. This time it will be unsuccessful and a wasted effort. The entry to declarer's hand might have been put to better use. You must sometimes duck to give declarer a legitimate problem.

On the right example: If declarer leads a low club toward dummy's ♠Q and partner wins the ♠A, declarer may decide to finesse you for the ♠J the next time clubs are lead toward dummy. This time declarer will be successful. If partner plays a low card on the first round, however, declarer will be left with a guess later. When declarer comes back and leads another low club toward dummy, it will not be clear whether to play dummy's ♠K or ♠10.

## Exercise defending against finesses



	N Dummy	
	♠ KQJ7	
W Partner		E You
♠ A943		♠ 10 6 2

3;2

	N Dummy	
	♠ AQJ2	
W Partner		E You
♠ 10 8 7		♠ K 6 3

7;3

	N Dummy	
	♠ AJ1094	
W Partner		E You
♠ 8 5		♠ K Q

5;K (Q)

In each of the layouts, you are defending a NT contract and declarer leads a low card toward dummy's Jack. Which card should partner play and which card should you play to give declarer the most difficulty in the suit?

In the first layout, declarer will get three tricks from the suit if partner plays the ace on the first round. Both you and your partner should therefore play low cards on the first trick. If declarer leads a high card from dummy, partner can take the ace and restrict declarer to two tricks. If declarer comes back and leads another card toward dummy, partner can play low again. Declarer is held to two tricks in the suit and is forced to use up an entry.

In the second layout, partner can play a low card to show an odd number of cards in the suit. When declarer takes the finesse, you should play a low card, also. Declarer, thinking the finesse has been successful, may come back to repeat it. This time, you will give declarer a surprise. It would be a bit much to discuss the possibility of ducking a second time in this situation.

In the last layout, partner should play a low card, and you can win with either card when declarer plays dummy's jack. It may seem like a good idea to always win with the king to make declarer think you don't have the queen. That might lull declarer into repeating the finesse. But if you make it a habit to always win with your higher card in this type of situation, declarer may expect you to have the queen as well when you win the first trick with the king. Instead, win with the queen some of the time. Keep declarer guessing.

Note that partner should keep declarer guessing as well. If partner always plays high-low to show an even number of cards, declarer will probably figure out the situation and not repeat the finesse. By playing low-high, declarer may think that partner started with three cards and try a second finesse, losing two tricks in the suit.

### Conclusion

Keep declarer guessing about how to play a suit. Don't reveal any information that will help declarer decide how to play the cards in a particular suit unless you have to. The more guesses you create, the more opportunities for declarer to go wrong.



Thank you

*Hope you enjoyed this lesson . . .*

Now for a few practice hands!

Please visit my website:

[www.sanmateobridgecenter.com](http://www.sanmateobridgecenter.com)



**Board 1** ♠ Q 9 5  
 North Deals ♥ Q 9 4  
 None Vul ♦ K 6 5  
 ♣ Q 10 8 2

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

9 ♠ K 10 7 4  
 9 17 ♥ J 8 3 2  
 5 ♦ 8 3  
 ♣ J 7 5

EW 4♦; EW 2♠; EW 1N; EW 1♥; EW 1♣;  
 Par -130

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1 N	Pass
3 N	All pass		
Lead: ♠ 4			

East open 1 NT. West respond 3 NT. How does the auction proceed? (Pass, pass, pass.) Who is the declarer? (East.)

South opening lead ♠ 4, fourth highest. North play on the first trick if a low card is played from dummy? (♠ Q, third hand high.) North next return the ♠ 9, top of the remaining doubleton in partner's suit. What would North play if the first trick is won in dummy? (♠ 9, encouraging.) Which suit must the defenders try to stop declarer from establishing? (♦s.)

Review the steps in declarer's PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer has one spade trick, two heart tricks, one ♦ trick and 2 ♣ tricks. The remaining 3 tricks needed must come from the ♦ suit. Declarer plans to lead the ♦ Q, taking a finesse. If South has the ♦ K, declarer may be able to take all 6 ♦ tricks. Even if the finesse loses on the first round, 5 ♦ tricks will be established in dummy. One danger is that the opponents may be able to take too many ♠ if they win a ♦ trick. Declarer should duck the 1st ♠ trick, holding up. The second danger is that the ♦ winners could be stranded if North is able to hold up the ♦ K after dummy's ♠ A has been driven out.)

There was the danger that declarer would be able to establish a long suit in the dummy. The defenders first had to remove the sure entry to dummy and then use the hold-up play to prevent declarer from capitalizing on dummy's long suit.

**Board 3** ♠ A J 8 6 2

South Deals ♥ K Q 7

E-W Vul ♦ A Q

♣ A 8 5

♠ 9

♥ J 8 3

♦ J 10 9 6 3

♣ 9 6 4 2



♠ 10 3

♥ A 6 5 4

♦ 8 5 4 2

♣ J 10 3

♠ K Q 7 5 4

♥ 10 9 2

♦ K 7

♣ K Q 7

20

2 5

13

NS 6N; NS 6♠; NS 3♥; NS 4♣; NS 2♦;

Par +990

West North East South

1 ♠

Pass 6 ♠

All pass

Lead: ♦ J

South's opening bid 1♠. East and West pass throughout. North have 21, 20 HCP plus 1 for the doubleton heart. North respond? 6♠.

The opening lead ♦J. Holding the ♥A, what possibilities can East see for a second defensive trick? (Partner might have a ♥ trick or a ♣ trick.) What does East plan to do if a heart is led to dummy's ♥K or ♥Q? (Duck, if it appears that declarer doesn't have a singleton.) Why? (Declarer might have a guess in the heart suit as to which opponent holds the ♥A.) Which suit must West avoid discarding? (Hearts. West must keep the ♥J guarded.)

“Review the steps in declarer's PLAN. How does declarer plan to make the contract? (Declarer can afford only one loser. The only two possible losers are in the heart suit. Declarer plans to lead toward dummy's hearts, hoping that West has the ♥A. If East has the ♥A, declarer can hope that West has the ♥J and lead the ♥10 for a finesse.)

**Board 5** ♠ A 5 4 2

North Deals ♥ A J 3

N-S Vul ♦ K J 4

♣ A K Q

♠ K 10 7 6

♥ Q 9 8

♦ 8 5

♣ 10 9 7 2



♠ 9 8

♥ K 7 5 4

♦ A 7 3

♣ J 8 5 3

♠ Q J 3

♥ 10 6 2

♦ Q 10 9 6 2

♣ 6 4

22  
5 8  
5

Everyone will bid this hand like so, reaching a 3 NT contract.

Assuming East makes a passive lead of ♠ 9 to ♠ J. West must duck to prevent a later entry to the dummy to run the ♦ suit. Declarer has 2 ♠, 3 ♣, 2 ♦, 1 ♥. Declarer has to establish her 9th trick from the ♦ suit. East will duck ♦ twice, while West will duck ♠ once. Declarer will have a problem getting to the dummy to run the ♦ suit.

NS 4N; NS 3♠; NS 3♥; NS 4♦; NS 1♣;

Par +630

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
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2 ♣		Pass	2 ♦
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Pass	2 N	Pass	3 N
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All pass