

# Winning at Duplicate

## Matchpoint Defense: 60% Games

### ***Points to Master***

#### ***General Principles***

- a. Review bidding; picture where your side might get tricks.
- b. Imagine Declarer's plan.
- c. Use defensive signals (see below).
- d. Defensive signals are suggestions not "commands."
- e. Count out hands using bridge hand & suit patterns.
- f. If Declarer is ready to cash, take your tricks.
- g. Generally only ruff with natural trump trick when keeping Declarer from cashing winners.

#### ***Leads***

- a. When Partner leads low, she suggests returning suit.
- b. With 4 or more trump, adopt a forcing defense<sup>1</sup> unless Declarer is likely to ruff losers with Dummy's trump.
- c. Leading dummy's first bid suit at a suit contract tells Partner you likely want to ruff.
- d. With a singleton in Partner's suit versus NT, another suit may be better choice, especially if you have strength.

#### ***Make Honors Count***

- a. Defense against finessing: Cover an honor when you can promote a lower card in your hand or Partner's.
- b. Don't cover if your honor cannot be captured.
- c. When Declarer leads one of two touching honors, cover the second time, unless you have a doubleton honor yourself.
- d. Do not split your honors if Declarer might attempt a deep finesse and you do not need a quick entry.

#### ***Helping Partner***

- a. Defensive Signals:
  - i. When Partner first leads a suit, show Attitude, unless irrelevant, then show Count.
  - ii. When Declarer leads, show Count.
  - iii. If Attitude and Count are known show Suit Preference.
  - iv. After 1<sup>st</sup> discard, subsequent discards show present count or suit preference, depending on which is relevant.
  - v. Don't signal with defensive tricks.
- b. Watch Partner's signals.
- c. Lead direction:
  - i. Overcall
  - ii. Advancing with good suit
  - iii. Doubling artificial bids
- d. Follow from bottom of touching honors (reverse of Declarer)

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<sup>1</sup> Exception: With small trump and a singleton, leading singleton will be slightly better in long run.

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### *Points to Ponder*

#### **General Principles**

- a. Use Upside-Down Count and Attitude Signals (UDCA)
- b. Count HCP when Declarer has limited hand, e.g. 1N opening.

#### **Leads**

- a. Active vs Passive Defense
  - i. Passive if opponents have limped into game.
  - ii. NT is often active, as both sides race to establish long suit tricks; whereas 6NT and any 7 bid is typically passive.
  - iii. If Declarer is setting up a running suit, you may need to immediately switch to active.
  - iv. If opponents have bid two suits and ended in a third, lead trumps.
  - v. If Partner has left in a TOX or re-opening double, lead trumps.
- b. Leads of KQx(x) and QJ(x)x too often give away a trick.
- c. Against NT: If partner has lead a relatively high spot card, e.g. xXxx, she probably has dummy's or declarer's suit or is trying to hit you (your HCP will indicate the latter).
- d. Against NT: Don't lead a weak, long suit when bid by Declarer.
- e. Against 3 level or higher preempts: In general, better results are obtained by leading your strength; even unsupported Aces. Thus, A asks for Attitude (but denies the K) and K asks for Count and shows either AK or KQ; likewise defending against 5 and 6 level contracts.

#### **Make Honors Count**

- a. Ace Management:
  - i. Not typically led at trick #1, but if you chose to lead a suit with unsupported Ace, lead the Ace.
  - ii. During the hand, under-leading an Ace may make Declarer mis-guess.
  - iii. Hold up your Ace to deny entry or make Declarer guess.
  - iv. Play Ace to give Partner a ruff, save Partner's entry or take the setting trick.

#### **Entries**

- a. Keep communication with Partner:
  - i. at a suit contract for a ruff;
  - ii. at No Trump to enable a suit to run when the hand with length has no additional entry.
- b. Against NT: Locking Declarer on board or in hand can be an effective tactic for hands where Declarer and her partner's hand don't match.

#### **References**

- a. *Card Play Technique - The Art of Being Lucky*, Victor Mollo
- b. *Defensive Signaling At Bridge*, David Bird
- c. *Winning NoTrump Leads*, David Bird and Taf Anthias
- d. *Winning Suit Contract Leads*, David Bird and Taf Anthias