



# How to Make Your Opponents Defend Worse

**LIAM MILNE**

**MONDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2019 – NEW SOUTH WALES BRIDGE ASSOCIATION**

# When do we make defensive errors?



- ▶ When we have to make decisions with limited information;
  - ▶ When are forced to find several discards;
  - ▶ When declarer's plan is unclear;
  - ▶ When we are on auto-pilot!
- 
- ▶ If we create these conditions for our opponents when we are declaring, we will find the defenders making more mistakes and more contracts coming home.

# Key themes of this talk



1. Give the defence more decisions to make.
2. Create illusions of strength and weakness.
3. Exploit the 'standard defence' tendencies:
  - ▶ 'Return partner's lead'
  - ▶ 'Second hand plays low'
  - ▶ 'Don't play on the suit that declarer is working on'

Main principle: see things from the defence's point of view.

# 1 a) Give the defence more decisions



♠ Q108

♥ AK6

♦ AK852

♣ 83

Contract:  
7♠ by South

♠ AKJ6543

♥ 53

♦ 74

♣ A6

▶ You bid your two hands like champions to get to your 28-point grand slam. The lead is a trump.

▶ What is the main chance for your thirteenth trick, and is there anything you can do to boost your chances?

# 1 a) Give the defence more decisions



♠ Q108

♥ AK6

♦ AK852

♣ 83

Contract:  
7♠ by South

♠ AKJ6543

♥ 53

♦ 74

♣ A6

▶ The main chance for your thirteenth trick is to establish the diamonds by ruffing out the suit. A simple way to play would be to draw trumps in the minimum number of rounds and then set about the diamonds. If diamonds are 5-1 you will almost certainly go down.

▶ A better plan that costs nothing is to first run five rounds of trumps throwing two clubs from the dummy. While it should be obvious that the key suit is diamonds, a defender with 5 diamonds and other holdings to protect might make a mistake and discard a diamond.

# 1 b) Give the defence more decisions



♠ 653

♥ K1083

♦ AJ

♣ 10732

♠ AK94

♥ A976

♦ KQ10

♣ 98

South	North
1NT	2♣
2♥	4♥

▶ Against 4♥, West leads the ♠J on which East plays the ♠Q.

▶ With four likely losers (a spade, a heart and two clubs), how should declarer play to create a problem for the defence?



# 1b) Give the defence more decisions



♠ 653  
♥ K1083  
♦ AJ  
♣ 10732

♠ J10872  
♥ J52  
♦ 984  
♣ AQ

♠ Q  
♥ Q4  
♦ 76532  
♣ KJ654

Contract:  
4♥ by South

♠ AK94  
♥ A976  
♦ KQ10  
♣ 98

- ▶ In the Open Playoff semi-final, Peter Gill won the spade lead and played ♥ K, ♥ A, diamond to the ♦ A, then a club to the ♣ 9!
- ▶ “West innocently won the ♣ Q, cashed the ♥ J and exited a diamond. But now declarer could strip the diamonds, discarding a spade from dummy and exit another club. Down to only spades, West is endplayed!”

*(S. Hans, Australian Bridge Dec 2018)*

- Principle: lead towards the closed hand to create illusions.
- Minor pips can help create the appearance of a ‘finesse’.

# 2a) Creating an illusion of weakness



♠ A9

♥ KQ10

♦ 654

♣ J10865

♠ KQ85

♥ 743

♦ A8

♣ AK42

South	North
1NT	3♣*
3♦*	3NT

▶ West leads the ♠ J against your 3NT contract.

▶ If the clubs run, there is no problem. How can we dissuade the defence from switching to diamonds if the ♣ Q doesn't drop?



# 2a) Creating an illusion of weakness



♠ A9  
♥ KQ10  
♦ 654  
♣ J10865

♠ J1064  
♥ J985  
♦ KQ97  
♣ 3

♠ 732  
♥ A62  
♦ J1032  
♣ Q97

Contract:  
3NT by South

♠ KQ85  
♥ 743  
♦ A8  
♣ AK42

- ▶ At the 2019 Gold Coast Congress, Michael Whibley, playing 3NT, ducked the opening spade lead in both hands!
- ▶ After winning the spade continuation in dummy, Whibley established the clubs by playing ace, king and another. East, transfixed by trick one into thinking that declarer was weak in spades, continued that suit; declarer now had time to establish a heart for the ninth trick.
- ▶ At most tables, after a spade lead (won) and three rounds of clubs, the defence found the diamond switch. Whibley's trick one duck was shortlisted for the IPBA Best Played Hand of the Year 2019.

# 2b) Creating an illusion of strength



♠ K943

♥ J8

♦ A97

♣ 10874

♠ QJ6

♥ Q6

♦ KQJ43

♣ AQJ

South	North
1 ♣ *	2 ♦ *
3NT	Pass

▶ You have a Precision auction to 3NT that reveals nothing (1 ♣ 16+ any, 2 ♦ 8-10 balanced). West leads the ♣ 2 (fourth highest) to the 8, 9 and Q.

▶ The situation looks hopeless. Is there anything to consider besides knocking out the ♠ A and hoping the defence doesn't switch to hearts?

# 2b) Creating an illusion of strength



♠ K943

♥ J8

♦ A97

♣ 10874

♠ A5

♥ 7542

♦ 862

♣ K632

♠ QJ6

♥ Q6

♦ KQJ43

♣ AQJ

♠ 10872

♥ AK1093

♦ 105

♣ 95

Contract:  
3NT by South

- ▶ Because the auction has been unrevealing, the defence will be in the dark early in the hand. If you decide to play on spades, it is important to lead small to the king (rather than the queen which reveals your strength in the suit).
- ▶ At the table, declarer opted to lead a spade to the king, winning (up to eight tricks). What now? A spade continuation will likely lead to a heart shift, so declarer decided to play a heart himself, hoping for a club continuation from West (in case East held ♣ J95) or some other mistake.
- ▶ East ducked the heart ('second hand low'!) and the hand was over. Clearly East should not have gone wrong as there is no legitimate reason for declarer to be playing hearts, but even the best players will occasionally err. Note that this deal was played in the later stages of a national teams championship.

# 3. Exploit defensive tendencies



♠ 75

♥ QJ108

♦ Q952

♣ K52

♠ AJ642

♥ AK4

♦ K4

♣ J108

South	North
1NT	2♠*
3♣*	3NT

▶ Partner opts not to use Stayman which has the benefit of concealing your spades. West leads the ♥7 to your king.

▶ The most obvious source of tricks is the spade suit, but there are lots of 'holes'. What's the best way to proceed?

# 3. Exploit defensive tendencies



♠ 75  
♥ QJ108  
♦ Q952  
♣ K52

♠ Q109  
♥ 7652  
♦ J7  
♣ Q964

♠ K83  
♥ 93  
♦ A10863  
♣ A73

♠ AJ642  
♥ AK4  
♦ K4  
♣ J108

Contract:  
3NT by South

- ▶ If you play on spades yourself, you sacrifice tricks on some favourable layouts while making your plan very obvious to the defence. If you leave spades alone, the defence may switch to dummy's weak suit and assist you.
- ▶ Andy Hung led the ♣ J and ran it at trick two. East won the ♣ A and instinctively switched to spades. Hung ducked two rounds of the suit and was up to nine tricks when the suit broke 3-3 and he could knock out the ♦ A.
- ▶ East-West were world-class players. At the other table, declarer played on spades himself and the defence had time to switch to diamonds to defeat the contract.



# How to be a more 'crafty' declarer



- ▶ If the contract looks hopeless, consider offbeat plays that might confuse the issue and lead the defence to stray off the winning path.
- ▶ Consider what information the defence has. Trickery is more likely to succeed after 1NT-3NT than after a longer auction where several suits have been shown.
- ▶ Remember that the defence will trust declarer's line of play more often than they should!