

# **Active vs Passive Defence**

**Presenter:  
Paul Gosney**

# Active vs Passive Defence

- Active – trying to take tricks while you can, or actively trying to deny declarer taking tricks
- Passive – attempting to not give away tricks by ‘doing nothing’ and waiting for your tricks
- Active is far more common than Passive

# Examples of **Active** Defence

- Trying to get a ruff
- Cashing your tricks before declarer discards his losers in the suit
- Forcing declarer to ruff so that they run out of trumps
- Leading trumps to stop declarer ruffing in dummy (or in hand)
- Knocking out an entry to dummy (or hand) before declarer is ready to use it
- Getting an uppercut (by ruffing) or ruffing a winner so that declarer can't use it
- Forcing declarer or dummy to ruff with a high trump (or even a low trump so declarer can't finesse) thereby promoting one of yours
- Pretending to do one of the above to fool declarer
- Setting up a long suit in no trumps

# Passive Defence

The idea of passive defence is essentially to avoid leading from a tenace where that will give a trick away and avoid leading a suit that will expose partner's holding where they otherwise may have won a trick (example they have the queen).

# Examples of **Passive** Defence

Some less common examples of defending passively are

- avoiding a ruff and sluff,
- avoiding playing suits declarer or dummy can ruff (where that gains a trick, e.g. eloping),
- avoiding playing suits that give declarer an extra (and needed) entry to dummy or hand
- avoiding playing a suit that allows declarer to finesse

# Passive Defence

This is typically achieved by

- leading solid suits
- leading from nothing suits where we can't expose partner's holding (e.g. leading through strength)
- leading suits we know are safe – (e.g. we know declarer is down to 1 or 0 in the suit and it can't help them to ruff)
- leading suits where declarer has already all the tricks
- leading trumps where partner won't have a trick (they are marked with small cards)

# Active Defence

## Forcing Declarer to Ruff

North	East (Us!)	South	West
	1H	1S	Pass
2S	Pass	4S	

Lead: ♥A: 2, 3, ♠ 2  
♠ 3: 8, K, A?

**Board 7**  
*Dealer S*  
*Vul Both*

♠ KT9  
♥ T852  
♦ KQJ8  
♣ T7



♠ A876  
♥ KQJ943  
♦ A  
♣ Q9

# Active Defence

Leading trumps to stop dummy ruffing

North	East (Us!)	South	West
	1D	1S	Pass
1NT	Pass	2H	Pass
4H			

Lead:  $\spadesuit$ 3: Q, K, 4  
?

**Board 7**  
*Dealer S*  
*Vul Both*

$\spadesuit$  3  
 $\heartsuit$  7652  
 $\diamondsuit$  AQ52  
 $\clubsuit$  A754



$\spadesuit$  KQJ5  
 $\heartsuit$  A9  
 $\diamondsuit$  KJ98  
 $\clubsuit$  T65



# Active Defence

Knocking out an entry to dummy

North	East (Us! )	South	West
	1d	Pass	Pass
2c	Pass	3nt	Pass

Lead: ♦ 9: 5 ?

**Board 7**

*Dealer S*

*Vul Both*

♠ A5  
♥ 852  
♦ 75  
♣ KQJT98



♠ K93  
♥ JT  
♦ AQT3  
♣ A762

# Active Defence

Forcing declarer to ruff to promote your trumps

North	East (Us! )	South	West
		3H	Pass
4H	All Pass		

Lead: ♠ 2: 4, A , 5 ?

**Board 7**

*Dealer S*

*Vul Both*

♠ 4  
♥ A2  
♦ AKQJ9  
♣ KQ853



♠ AQ853  
♥ KJ9  
♦ 62  
♣ A92

# Active Defence

## Promoting trumps via an upper cut

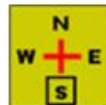
North	East	South	West (Us!)
		1H	1S
2H	Pass	4H	

Lead: ♠ A: 2, 3, J  
♠ K: 6, 5, Q  
?

**Board 7**  
*Dealer S*  
*Vul Both*

♠ AKT94  
♥ JT5  
♦ K3  
♣ K96

♠ 8762  
♥ 982  
♦ AJT  
♣ AT5



# Passive Defence

Defending passively

North	East	South	West (Us! )
	1S	4H	All pass

Lead: ♠ A: 2, 6, 7 ?

**Board 7**  
*Dealer S*  
*Vul Both*

♠ A75  
♥ 87  
♦ Q542  
♣ K543

♠ 9432  
♥ 2  
♦ K763  
♣ QT962



# Passive Defence

North	East	South	West (Us! )
	1H	1S	pass
2S	Pass	4S	

**Board 7**

*Dealer S*

*Vul Both*

♠ K7

♥ 7543

♦ Q52

♣ 9754

♠ J983

♥ 82

♦ KT93

♣ K32



Lead: ♥ 5: 2, K, 9

♥ A: T, 4, 8

♠ 2: A, 7, 3

♣ A: 4, 2, 6

♣ T: 5, K, 8

♣ 3: J, ♠ T, ♣ 9

♠ 4: K, 9, Q

?

# Passive Defence

Lead: ♥ 5: 2, K, 9

♥ A: T, 4, 8

♠ 2: A, 7, 3

♣ A: 4, 2, 6

♣ T: 5, K, 8

♣ 3: J, ♠ T, ♣ 9

♠ 4: K, 9, Q

?

**Board 7**

*Dealer S*

*Vul Both*

♠ -

♥ 73

♦ Q52

♣ 7

♠ J8

♥ -

♦ KT93

♣ -



# Passive Defence

Good time to defend passively is on lead

- we don't know what suits we need to attack
- if we have lots of points partner won't have any to help is e.g. on lead to a grand slam
- After the following auction, what to lead with  
x AJxx Qxxx KJxx

North	East	South	West (Us!)
		1S	Pass
2NT	Pass	4S	All pass

# Passive or Active Defence

When to go active and when to go passive?

- Against a NT contract go active (very rarely right to go passive, exception 6NT/7NT but even then...)
- Set up tricks or cash tricks when dummy has a long strong suit that will provide discards
- Lead trumps when declarer has a side suit that he would like to ruff, or when dummy is marked with a shortage (e.g. they've shown a 3 suiter)



# Passive or Active Defence

- Get ruffs when you don't have natural trump tricks – good when you have trump control, partner has entries and you have suits that don't need setting up - e.g.

North	East	South	West (Us!)
1D	Pass	1H	Pass
2H	Pass	4H	All Pass

On lead with 8762 K93 5 KQJ84?

# Passive or Active Defence

- Force declarer to ruff when you have long trumps (usually 4 or more)
- 

If none of the above applies, and nothing else stands out (e.g. knocking out an entry to dummy) then maybe you should defend passively.

But generally it pays to defend actively – there is almost always something you need to be doing in defence (especially against No Trumps)

**Hands from the  
Spring National Open Teams**

Sitting South defending against Michael Whibley



North	East	South (Us! )	West
Pass	1C	1S	Pass
3S	Double	Pass	5D
All Pass			

Lead: ♠7

### Board 9

Dealer N

Vul E-W



♠ AQT65  
♥ QJ3  
♦ A  
♣ T987

♠ K  
♥ A54  
♦ KQ83  
♣ AQ532

**Board 9**  
*Dealer N*  
*Vul E-W*

♠ J84  
♥ T98  
♦ J97652  
♣ 4

♠ 9732  
♥ Q762  
♦ T4  
♣ KJ6



♠ AQT65  
♥ KJ3  
♦ A  
♣ T987

♠ K  
♥ A54  
♦ KQ83  
♣ AQ532

Active defence required – need to take your tricks when dummy has a long suit that will provide discards.

Sitting North defending against Ron Klinger



North (Us! )	East	South	West
		1C	2C
Double	2H	Double (T/O)	2S
All Pass			

Lead: ♣3: 6, 8, A

♠ 2: A, 8, 3 ?

**Board 7**

*Dealer S*

*Vul Both*

♠ A  
♥ JT85  
♦ A752  
♣ T732



♠ K8  
♥ 632  
♦ Q9863  
♣ Q96

**Board 7**

*Dealer S*

*Vul Both*

♠ JT6542

♥ AQ974

♦ T

♣ A

♠ A

♥ JT85

♦ A752

♣ T732



♠ Q973

♥ K

♦ KJ4

♣ KJ854

♠ K8

♥ 632

♦ Q9863

♣ Q96

Active defence required – where one defender is long in trumps, consider a forcing defence: forcing declarer to ruff until he runs out of trumps.

Sitting South defending against Paul Gosney



North	East	South (Us! )	West
		1H	Pass
2H	3D	4H	Pass
Pass	5D	All Pass	

Lead: ♠A

**Board 19**

*Dealer S*

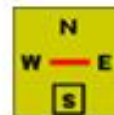
*Vul E-W*

♠ Q9754

♥ 873

♦ 42

♣ K63



♠ AK2

♥ KQT942

♦ 8

♣ QJ2



**Board 19**

*Dealer S*

*Vul E-W*

♠ Q9754

♥ 873

♦ 42

♣ K63

♠ JT63

♥ AJ6

♦ 63

♣ T985



♠ AK2

♥ KQT942

♦ 8

♣ QJ2

♠ 8

♥ 5

♦ AKQJT975

♣ A74

- Passive defence required – don't attack dummy's long suit (by "attack" I mean cash tricks or attempt to set up tricks).
- If tricks can't disappear there's no need to be active.

Sitting South defending against Mathew Thompson



North	East (Us!)	South	West
			Pass
1S	Pass	2S	Pass
4S	All Pass		

Lead ♣Q: 4, 3, A

♦3: 6, A, 2

♠Q, 4, 2, 6

♠J, 5, 3, 8

♠7, K, A, ♥6

♦Q?

### Board 16

Dealer W

Vul E-W



♠ QJ7

♥ J53

♦ A74

♣ 8754

♠ 86

♥ 862

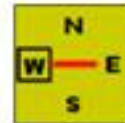
♦ KJ86

♣ QJT6

**Board 16**  
*Dealer W*  
*Vul E-W*

♠ K54  
♥ KQT94  
♦ T952  
♣ 3

♠ AT932  
♥ A7  
♦ Q3  
♣ AK92



♠ QJ7  
♥ J53  
♦ A74  
♣ 8754

♠ 86  
♥ 862  
♦ KJ86  
♣ QJT6

- Passive defence required – if tricks can't disappear there's no need to be active.

Sitting East, defending against Peter Gill



North	East (Us!)	South	West
		1NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Lead: ♠6: 4, 8, J

♠2: K, Q, ♥2

♥4: K, A, 5?

**Board 7**

*Dealer S*

*Vul Both*

♠ Q4

♥ KT7

♦ AK76

♣ T532



♠ 8

♥ AJ982

♦ T532

♣ J76

**Board 7**  
*Dealer S*  
*Vul Both*

♠ K9763  
♥ 43  
♦ J9  
♣ K984

♠ Q4  
♥ KT7  
♦ AK76  
♣ T532



♠ AJT52  
♥ Q65  
♦ Q84  
♣ AQ

♠ 8  
♥ AJ982  
♦ T532  
♣ J76

Passive defence required - if an active defence will give tricks away then there is clearly no point – defend passively

Sitting South defending against Justin Howard



North	East	South (Us!)	West
	1S	2D	2S
3D	4D	Pass	4S
All Pass			

Lead: ♥2: 3, T, A  
♠A: 4, 3, T  
♠Q: K, 5, J?

### Board 18

*Dealer E*

*Vul N-S*

♠ 9853

♥ J83

♦ 932

♣ JT2



♠ K4

♥ 97542

♦ KQJT7

♣ K

**Board 18**

*Dealer E*

*Vul N-S*

♠ 9853

♥ J83

♦ 932

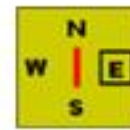
♣ JT2

♠ JT

♥ QT6

♦ A654

♣ Q754



♠ K4

♥ 97542

♦ KQJT7

♣ K

♠ AQ762

♥ AK

♦ 8

♣ A9863

Active defence required - bridge is a funny game – sometimes there are more reasons for active defences than you can think (or I can write down)

Sitting South defending against Felicity Beale



North	East (Us! )	South	West
		2S	Pass
4NT	Pass	5C	Pass
5S	All Pass		

Lead: ♣T

**Board 11**

*Dealer S*

*Vul None*

♠ K8  
♥ AK5432  
♦ K  
♣ AQJ2



♠ A432  
♥ J87  
♦ AQ72  
♣ 75



**Board 11**

*Dealer S*

*Vul None*

♠ 5  
♥ QT  
♦ T9543  
♣ KT986

♠ K8  
♥ AK5432  
♦ K  
♣ AQJ2



♠ QJT976  
♥ 96  
♦ J86  
♣ 43

♠ A432  
♥ J87  
♦ AQ72  
♣ 75

-Active defence required - actively switch to trumps to cut down on dummy's ruffs

A Sitting East defending against Mike Prescott



North	East (Us! )	South	West
		Pass	1NT
2NT (minors)	4S	5D	Double
All Pass			

Lead: ♠2

**Board 3**

*Dealer S*

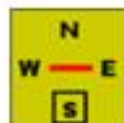
*Vul E-W*

♠ J

♥ JT

♦ QT984

♣ KJT93



♠ AK97543

♥ 743

♦ 2

♣ Q8

**Board 3**

*Dealer S*

*Vul E-W*

♠ T62  
♥ AQ982  
♦ KJ3  
♣ A2

♠ J  
♥ JT  
♦ QT984  
♣ KJT93



♠ Q8  
♥ K65  
♦ A765  
♣ 7654

♠ AK97543  
♥ 743  
♦ 2  
♣ Q8

- Active defence required - trying to look like you're getting a ruff

A Sitting East defending against Marlene Watts



North	East (Us!)	South	West
1S	All Pass		

Lead: ♥ Q: 2, 7 A

♦ 2: 4, A, 7

♠ 7: 2, Q, 8

♥ T: 4, 3, K

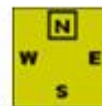
♣ J: A, 4, 3

♦ Q ?

**Board 1**

*Dealer N*

*Vul None*



♠ 7  
 ♥ 8532  
 ♦ AT63  
 ♣ 9873

♠ T8  
 ♥ QJ64  
 ♦ K984  
 ♣ KT4

**Board 1**

*Dealer N*

*Vul None*

♠ KJ652

♥ K97

♦ J75

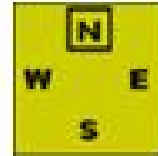
♣ J6

♠ AQ943

♥ AT

♦ Q2

♣ AQ52



♠ 7

♥ 8532

♦ AT63

♣ 9873

♠ T8

♥ QJ64

♦ K984

♣ KT4

# Active vs Passive Defence