

Defending against no trump contracts: 4. Other stuff

This is the fourth of a series of articles on how to defend against no trump contracts. This article focuses on some different aspects of defence.

Showing attitude

When partner leads an honour card against 3NT you can indicate whether you have something to offer in the suit through attitude signals. This information is often useful in determining whether partner continues attacking this suit or whether a switch to another suit may be preferred. For example:

♠ 52
♠ KQT4 ♠ A83
♠ J976

If west leads the KS, west should use an encouraging signal. With 'low for encourage' east would play the 2S. West thinks east may have the AS or JS or both and would then lead the 4S to set up the suit. In this example defence makes four spade tricks.

In the following hand:

♠ Q73
♠ JT98 ♠ A62
♠ K54

West leads the JS. If dummy ducks then east should duck but play an encouraging card. With 'low for encourage' east would play the 2S. East has kept the AS to kill dummy's queen. Although south will make the KS, the defence will now take three spade tricks. If east goes up with the AS on the first trick declarer will make two spade tricks instead of one.

In the next hand:

♠ 763
♠ KQT9 ♠ 854
♠ AJ2

West leads the KS and east plays a discouraging card, say the 8S. West now knows that east has neither the AS nor the JS. If south ducks the first trick west should discontinue leading spades, otherwise south will win two spade tricks instead of one.

In the next hand south is in 3NT and west leads the JS (top of an inside sequence). Declarer plays the KS from dummy and east plays the 9S rather than an encouraging 2S. West should now know that south holds the QS. Declarer then plays the QD and lets it run to west's KD. It would be a mistake for west to continue with spades – better to change suits and hope that east can get the lead and run spades through south. So, west leads a club as hearts and diamonds don't look attractive options. East wins with the AC and immediately leads back the 5S resulting in four spade tricks for the defence.

<p>♠ AJT74 ♥ 765 ♦ K3 ♣ 985</p>	<p>♠ K3 ♥ AQJ3 ♦ Q96 ♣ J632</p> <p>♠ Q86 ♥ K98 ♦ AJT72 ♣ KT</p>	<p>♠ 952 ♥ T42 ♦ 854 ♣ AQ74</p>
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Using discards

During the play of the hand it is sometimes possible to use discards to inform partner of your interest in another suit.

In the following hand south is in 3NT and west leads the 5S.

<p>♠ QT85 ♥ 7532 ♦ A2 ♣ T82</p>	<p>♠ AJ2 ♥ KT ♦ KQJT64 ♣ K4</p> <p>♠ K97 ♥ 864 ♦ 8753 ♣ AQ6</p>	<p>♠ 643 ♥ AQJ9 ♦ 9 ♣ J9753</p>
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Declarer takes the trick and leads a diamond towards dummy – west ducks and dummy takes the trick. Declarer then plays another diamond from dummy and east needs to show their heart suit – if playing revolving discards they play a low spade or a high club – either discard shows a heart suit. West now leads a heart and the contract is lost.

A similar situation occurs in the next hand. Again south is in 3NT and west leads the TC.

<p>♠ QT83 ♥ 653 ♦ K8 ♣ T982</p>	<p>♠ K65 ♥ KJ ♦ QT62 ♣ QJ65</p> <p>♠ A9 ♥ 8742 ♦ AJ74 ♣ AK3</p>	<p>♠ J742 ♥ AQT9 ♦ 953 ♣ 74</p>
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Declarer wins with the AC, plays the KC and leads a third club towards dummy - east discards the 2S showing interest in hearts. After taking the four club tricks declarer runs the QD from dummy in an attempt to trap the KD. West takes the KD and returns a heart – the contract is now doomed.

Showing suit preference

Another way of telling partner information is through suit preference signals. Partners need to be vigilant to spot these but they can be used to devastating effect.

In the following hand south is in 3NT and, rather optimistically, west leads the 5C (fourth highest).

<p>♠ A9 ♥ T632 ♦ 95 ♣ J8654</p>	<p>♠ Q8 ♥ Q9 ♦ AQT7642 ♣ 93</p> <p>♠ KT432 ♥ AK8 ♦ J3 ♣ AT7</p>	<p>♠ J765 ♥ J754 ♦ K8 ♣ KQ2</p>
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West wins with the QC and south ducks. East now plays the KC and south ducks again. East now plays the 2C, AC by south. West now knows that they have two more club tricks if they can get the lead – west provides a suit preference signal – the JC – their highest club, to inform partner that they want a spade lead. South now leads the JD and lets it run in the hope that west holds the KD. However east has the KD and immediately returns a spade to west’s ace. The contract is now two down.

In the next hand south is again in 3NT and west leads the 5S.

♠ KQ852	♠ 974	♠ J6
♥ 972	♥ AT63	♥ K854
♦ 9	♦ QT3	♦ 8652
♣ A954	♣ KJ6	♣ 732
	♠ AT3	
	♥ QJ	
	♦ AKJ74	
	♣ QT8	

East wins the first trick with the JS and returns the 2S, again ducked by south. West wins the trick with the QS and thinks. West knows that south holds the AS but that west can win another two spade tricks if they can get back the lead. Holding the AC west uses a suit preference signal by playing the 2S – asking east to play a club if they get the lead. At some stage declarer has to lead hearts and will lose to east's king. A club lead then gives west three more tricks to sink the contract.

Showing count

Providing partner with a count on the number of cards held in a particular suit can also be useful to defence. This is particularly important when defending against a 3NT contract when it is obvious that declarer is trying to establish a long suit in dummy e.g. KQJT4, but with no outside entries.

Defence must try and break communication between declarer and dummy by holding up their ace until declarer has no more cards left in that suit. The defender not holding the ace must inform their partner how many cards they hold in the suit so that the ace-holding defender can work out the number of cards declarer holds in the suit. They can then determine on which trick to play the ace. When declarer starts to play the suit the defender without the ace must provide a count signal – playing high indicates an even number of cards (usually two in this scenario) and playing low indicates an odd number of cards (usually three in this scenario).

South is in 3NT after diamonds have been shown by south and hearts by north.

<p>♠ 982 ♥ KQJ98 ♦ T93 ♣ Q6</p>	<p>♠ QJT4 ♥ A652 ♦ 65 ♣ T53</p>	<p>♠ A763 ♥ 7 ♦ 872 ♣ K9742</p>
	<p>♠ K5 ♥ T43 ♦ AKQJ4 ♣ AJ8</p>	

West leads the KH followed by the QH which declarer ducks in dummy, playing the ace on the third trick. To make the contract declarer knows they need a couple of spade tricks. Declarer leads the 4S from dummy and takes the KS in their hand. West plays the 2S – indicating an odd number of spades. East can now work out that declarer must have a doubleton ($13 - 4 - 4 - 3 = 2$) and should take the second spade trick with the ace. That now breaks communication between declarer's and dummy's hands. Note that if east ducked a second time that would enable declarer to make the contract.

In the next hand south is again in 3NT and west leads the JC.

<p>♠ JT6 ♥ 9 ♦ 842 ♣ JT9863</p>	<p>♠ 432 ♥ 632 ♦ KQJT9 ♣ 42</p>	<p>♠ 9875 ♥ QJT85 ♦ A73 ♣ K</p>
	<p>♠ AKQ ♥ AK74 ♦ 65 ♣ AQ75</p>	

Declarer can see seven tricks – two clubs (given the lead), three spades and two hearts – a total of seven and needs to set up two tricks in diamonds (in dummy's hand). Diamonds are the only possible entry to dummy's hand so declarer leads the 5D towards dummy – it should be obvious to west that declarer is trying to set up the diamond suit so they need to show count on the first lead – with three diamonds west plays the 2D showing an odd number of diamonds. East hopes it's three diamonds (and not one) and works out that declarer must hold a doubleton diamond ($13 - 5 - 3 - 3 = 2$). So, east ducks the first diamond trick and takes the second, breaking communication between

declarer's and dummy's hands. This defeats the contract. Note that if east ducked twice that would enable declarer to make the contract.

In this hand, which is similar to the previous hand, south is again in 3NT and west again leads the JC.

	♠ 432	
	♥ 532	
	♦ KQJT9	
	♣ A4	
♠ KJ65		♠ 987
♥ T9		♥ QJ85
♦ 82		♦ A73
♣ JT987		♣ K63
	♠ AQT	
	♥ AK74	
	♦ 654	
	♣ Q52	

Declarer, cunningly, ducks the lead hoping to preserve an extra entry to dummy. However, east wins with the KC and immediately returns a club to dummy's ace. Declarer can see five tricks – one spade, two hearts and two clubs and has to set up four diamond tricks in dummy in case the spade finesse fails. Declarer returns to hand with a heart and then leads the 4D towards dummy. West plays the 8D which suggests an even number of diamonds. East does the maths again – $13 - 5 - 3 - 2 = 3$, so declarer likely has three diamonds. So, on this hand, east waits until the third diamond trick to play the ace. Again, this defeats the contract.

Using the rule of 11

Against a 3NT contract the defenders commonly lead their longest suit, often leading their fourth highest card in the suit to give their partner information about their combined holding in that suit. The lead of the fourth highest card allows partner (and declarer!) to apply the rule of eleven. Subtracting the value of the card led from 11 indicates the number of cards above the led card which are held in the other three hands.

In the following hand south is in 3NT and west leads the 7S (fourth highest).

	♠ K53	
	♥ QJ9	
	♦ Q32	
	♣ K543	
♠ QT87		♠ AJ92
♥ 52		♥ A643
♦ 764		♦ J98
♣ T862		♣ J7
	♠ 64	
	♥ KT87	
	♦ AKT5	
	♣ AQ9	

East does their arithmetic and works out that, excluding west's hand, there are $11 - 7 = 4$ cards higher than the 7S. East can see all of these - one in dummy's hand and three in their hand - therefore declarer (south) has no cards higher than the 7S. East therefore plays the 2S (which is also encouraging - assuming low = encourage). West continues with spades and the defence takes four spade tricks and the AH.

In the next hand south has denied a four card major in the bidding and ends up in 3NT. West leads the 6S.

	♠ 87	
	♥ JT93	
	♦ K73	
	♣ AQJ8	
♠ AQT63		♠ J95
♥ 542		♥ A76
♦ T8		♦ J9542
♣ T76		♣ 93
	♠ K42	
	♥ KQ8	
	♦ AQ6	
	♣ K542	

Again east does their arithmetic - given that there are $11 - 6 = 5$ cards above the 6S in the north, east and south hands, east knows that south has only one of those. East plays the JS and south must play the king, otherwise they will lose five spade tricks immediately. Declarer can see four club tricks, three diamond tricks and has now taken a spade trick. Only needing one heart trick to ensure the contract south leads a low heart towards the JH hoping that west has the ace and might duck. Not to be - east knows that they must take the AH immediately and return spades - four spade tricks and one heart trick sink the contract. If defence ducks the first heart trick south will make the contract.

In this hand south is in 3NT and west leads the 4D (fourth highest).

	♠ QJ95	
	♥ JT6	
	♦ 72	
♠ 872	♣ 8432	♠ T64
♥ 542		♥ 9873
♦ K984		♦ A3
♣ KJ9	♠ AK3	♣ QT65
	♥ AKQ	
	♦ QJT65	
	♣ A7	

East recognises immediately that there are seven higher cards than this in the north, east and south hands ($11 - 4 = 7$). Only two of these are visible which means that the remaining five must be in south's hand. This also means that partner only holds four diamonds. So, after taking the AD east recognises that diamonds are a lost cause and switches immediately to clubs, where they have some quality and dummy is weak. As soon as declarer plays the AC the rest of the suit is set up and the defence takes three club tricks and two diamond tricks.

Other stuff

Keeping length with dummy

When declarer is running a long suit forcing you to discard it can be important to try and maintain length parity with a suit visible in dummy (or alternatively, a long suit you know declarer holds) which might be the next suit declarer attacks. This is illustrated in the next hand.

	♠ 932	
	♥ T4	
	♦ AQ83	
♠ A8	♣ AT98	♠ QJ74
♥ Q8732		♥ KJ6
♦ JT		♦ 9742
♣ 6543	♠ KT65	♣ 72
	♥ A95	
	♦ K65	
	♣ KQJ	

South is in 3NT and west leads the 3H. South ducks two rounds and takes the third trick with the AH. Then declarer takes four tricks in clubs, forcing east to discard twice. East has to make a tricky decision – whether to maintain parity with dummy's diamonds or keep four spades. Give dummy's

weak spades east wisely decides to discard two spades and keep the four diamonds. Declarer can now only make three diamond tricks and a total of eight tricks and the contract goes down. If east had discarded a diamond the extra diamond trick would result in declarer making the contract.

Be alert to the need to switch suits

If third player wins the first trick it's common practice to return partner's led suit. There are occasions, however, when it's obvious that this is not the best course of action. Consider the following hand in which south is in 3NT having denied a four-card major.

	♠ 83	
	♥ KJ72	
	♦ KJ83	
	♣ KJT	
♠ A972		♠ QJT4
♥ 954		♥ T83
♦ T4		♦ 9752
♣ Q853		♣ A4
	♠ K65	
	♥ AQ6	
	♦ AQ6	
	♣ 9762	

West leads the 3C which could be a four or five card holding and East wins the trick with the AC. If declarer plays the 2C it's then obvious that west has only four clubs, probably including the queen. Returning a club looks to have no future so west switches to spades, leading the QS and optimistically hoping that west has the ace. Four spade tricks and one club defeats the contract. Although there was no guarantee west would hold the AS looking at dummy's hand it is apparent that spades represent the best chance for the defence, and so it proved.

Sometimes you just have to think

Despite all the 'rules' that we learn sometimes you just have to think – and even break these rules because as we know nothing works all the time in bridge!

In the following hand south was in 3NT after opening 2NT (explained as 20 – 21 points).

♠ Q8754 ♥ 8753 ♦ 9 ♣ J93	♠ J62 ♥ AQ4 ♦ QT76 ♣ 742 ♠ A9 ♥ KT6 ♦ AKJ5 ♣ KQ86	♠ KT3 ♥ J92 ♦ 8432 ♣ AT5
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West leads the 5S and declarer played the 2S from dummy. East does a quick point count – 20/21 with south, 9 with dummy and 8 in their hand so west has a maximum of three points – and recognises that west probably holds the QS. So east plays the TS, knowing that to win the trick declarer will have to play the ace. If declarer ducks east must now play the king to unblock the suit. When east wins the AC they can lead their third spade and the contract goes down. If east had blindly played the KS on the first lead dummy’s JS becomes another spade stopper for declarer and the contract will make.

The next hand illustrates an important principle when a defender has a strong suit but no entries in any other suit.

♠ 9864 ♥ 72 ♦ K92 ♣ 7543	♠ AQJ ♥ 653 ♦ QJT64 ♣ A8 ♠ KT5 ♥ QJ8 ♦ A75 ♣ K962	♠ 732 ♥ AKT94 ♦ 83 ♣ QJT
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The bidding went 1D (N); 1H (E); 3NT(S). West led the 7H (top of a doubleton), 3H from dummy. Now if east rises with the ace or king they will only take two heart tricks. East must play the 9H and hope west will at some stage lead another heart. West does get in later with the KD, leads their second heart and the defence wins four heart tricks and one diamond trick – contract down!

A bit of thinking is also required to defend successfully on the next hand.

	♠ A3	
	♥ AKT6	
	♦ T85	
	♣ AQ42	
♠ QJT9865		♠ 42
♥ 9		♥ QJ8754
♦ K62		♦ A4
♣ 86		♣ T75
	♠ K7	
	♥ 32	
	♦ QJ973	
	♣ KJ93	

The bidding went 3S (W); X (N); 3NT (S).

West leads the QS taken by the AS in dummy. East analyses the situation – the only way west can get to run the spades is if declarer’s ace can be removed and west has a subsequent entry. Declarer knows they need to make a diamond trick to achieve the contract and leads the 5D from dummy. Ordinarily second player plays low but in this case east must play the ace, return a spade and hope west has the KD. Contract down!

PG series: 5 (4)







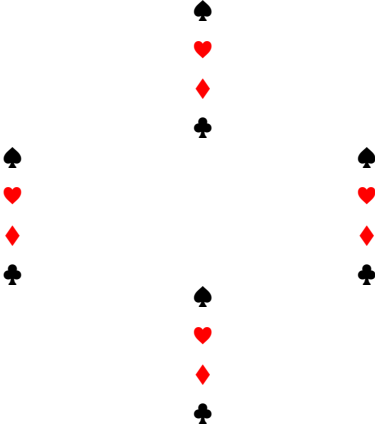
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	♠ 65	
	♥ K83	
	♦ 643	
	♣ QJ963	
♠ QJT8		♠ 9432
♥ 976		♥ AT42
♦ JT75		♦ Q8
♣ 42		♣ AT7
	♠ AK7	
	♥ QJ5	
	♦ AK92	
	♣ K85	

QS led, ducked, 4S is discouraging Next AS Plays KC – signal 4 then 2 – two hold up for third trick

	♠	
	♥	
	♦	
	♣	
♠		♠
♥		♥
♦		♦





Using signals, discards and count

& B – p 25 26 28 29 32 33

Recognising the need to switch

Thinking to determine the possible location of key cards

Severing declarer's access to dummy

Keeping length in suits held by dummy or declarer syd 154-156

Saving a card in partner's suit

Count points eg SB quizbook 13-15 and place the cards

Attitude

Other stuff.... Thru strength at weakness continue or switch part 111 s & B

Think!!

