

Be An Active Defender

You are sitting West and hold

♠A J 6 4 3 2
♥A 10 4
♦J 6 3
♣5

Both sides are vulnerable.

The bidding has been:

West (you)	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	
?			

What do you do?

If you were sitting in the first or second seat, you might open 1♠. Your hand is very distributional and you might miss a game with a fairly good dummy. But in the third seat, when partner has already passed, 2♠ looks like a better bid. You probably don't have game and you make it more difficult for the opponents with your "weak 2" spade bid. Partner will either raise you or pass. When you open in the third seat you can do some crazy things. Points aren't nearly important as shape. You can even preempt with 0 points, knowing the opponents certainly have a game.

The bidding proceeds:

West (you)	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
2 ♠	DBL	4 ♠	5 ♣
?			

Now what do you do?

Generally, when you open preemptively your goal is to interfere with the opponents bids. When you have achieved the mission (here, driving them directly to the 5-level) you should let nature take its course. Playing at the 5 level yourself is extremely dangerous with this hand and if you are doubled, you may give yourself a bottom. 5 ♣

is an unusual contract –not many in the field will reach it – and if you them you will get a good score whether it is doubled or not. If 4 ♠ is makeable you can't score better than +620 by setting 5 ♣. You need +800 points which is a 3-trick set, doubled. Setting the contract 3 tricks is very improbable. Pass is the best bid.

What do you lead against 5♣?

You might as well lead the ♠A. One of the opponents is likely very short in spades and you might as well cash your winning spade if you have one. Plus you get a chance to look at the dummy and plan your second lead.

Here is what you see:

North		
	♠10	
	♥Q 5 3	
	♦A Q 10 5	
	♣A J 10 7 2	
West (You)		East
♠A J 6 4 3 2		♠5
♥A 10 4		
♦J 6 3		
♣5		
South		
♠Q		

The ♠5 is played by partner and declarer drops the ♠Q. What is your second lead?

This is a critical decision. Your choices: ♥A or ♦3 or ♠2?

The answer is clear. Your partner told you what to lead. Normally, the size of the card played by partner tells how she feels about the lead. A low card says she has no interest and a high card encourages you to continue the suit. But where the dummy holds a singleton spade, your attitude about spades is irrelevant. Therefore, her card should show “suit preference.” A high card is your signal to lead the highest of the two possible suits: hearts and diamonds. That is hearts. A low card signals a diamond lead. Since partner supported spades she must have had a choice and she chose to play her lowest card in

that suit (you see the ♠2, ♠3 and ♠4) so she is telling you to lead diamonds. Here is the full deal.

Contract: 5 ♣

Vul: Both

Lead: ♠A

North

♠10
♥Q 5 3
♦A Q 10 5
♣A J 10 7 2

West (You)

♠A J 6 4 3 2
♥A 10 4
♦J 6 3
♣5

East

♠K 9 8 5
♥J 8 2
♦K 9 8 4 2
♣6

South

♠Q 7
♥K 9 7 6
♦7
♣K Q 9 8 4 3

West (you)

North

East

South

Pass

Pass

2 ♠

DBL

4 ♠

5 ♣

All Pass

You lead the ♦ 3 and Declarer takes it with the ♦A. He then pulls trump and ruffs spades and diamonds. Eventually, South must break the heart suit. He leads up to the dummy. You play low and dummy wins the ♥Q. Now your ♥A and ♥10 both take tricks. On the other hand, if you had led the ♥A on trick 2, South could have finessed your partner's ♥J and captured your ♥10 with dummy's ♥Q, losing just 1 heart and 1 spades to make his contract.

Signaling is a powerful tool for the defenders. It one of the few ways you and your partner can share information about your hands.

You must be conscientious about sending and reading signals to be an active defender.