

♠♥♦♣ DEFENSIVE SIGNALS ♠♥♦♣

Today, you are sitting in the East and you hear this auction:

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

West, your partner leads the ♣A, dummy plays low. What do you play to this first trick?

N	undefined
♠	AQ76
♥	Q1076
♦	73
♣	Q104

E	undefined
♠	J53
♥	KJ9
♦	Q962
♣	983

♣A

The title of this piece should alert you to need to signal on almost every card you play. But what should you signal in this deal?

When you are playing defense, you always want to count your hands and try to determine what your partner has. Here, you see 10 HCP in the dummy and 7 in your hand. The declarer jumped to game with only a simple raise from his partner. Therefore, you can assume he has extras for his opening bid. Say he has 16 HCP. North only promised 6 HCP, so that is a reasonable assumption. That's 33 HCP for the three hands, and leaves only about 7 for West. You've just "seen" 7 HCP by his lead of the ♣A. We never lead unsupported Aces in a game contract, so he is promising the ♣K as well. You can write off your partner for any tricks beyond his two top clubs.

The card you play to partner initial lead in a suit contract is always Attitude. That means you encourage or discourage the club suit by the size of the spot card you play. Standard Attitude is high card = I like; low card = I don't like. You certainly have no fondness for the club suit, *per se*. Seeing the ♣Q in the dummy, you can't see more than two club tricks.

However, you do see two heart tricks in your own hand. South, undoubtedly, has the ♥A. He has no way to avoid losing two heart tricks. If he leads up the dummy's honors, you will win them both; if he leads trump from the dummy, you will cover whatever cards he picks, scoring 2 of your ♥KJ9 holding.

You know that if you show discouragement on the initial club lead, partner will consider not playing his ♣K, because that will set up dummy's ♣Q for a discard in declarer's hand. But you don't want him to hold up. You need his two club tricks to go along with the only two tricks you can take – the two trump tricks.

So, play the ♣9. When your partner lays down the ♣K you will play the ♣3, confirming your positive attitude on the first trick. You are also showing a high-low echo, so West will expect you to ruff his third club. He will be confused when you produce the ♣8. Don't worry, though. He will be all smiles when you end up setting the contract with your two heart winners.

Notice that if West didn't play his ♣K at trick 2, declarer would have had time to discard his second club loser on the long spades in the dummy. You would have ended up with only 2 hearts and 1 club!

This deal was featured in Barbara Seagram's recent and excellent book, Barbara's Bridge Tips

This is the entire deal:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">11</div> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">D</div> </div>	N undefined	W	N	E	S
	♠ AQ76	♠ 10984	P	2♥	P
♥ Q1076	♥ 3	P	P	P	4♥
♦ 73	♦ J105	P	P	P	
♣ Q104	♣ AK762	E undefined			
	♠ K2	♠ J53			
	♥ A8542	♥ KJ9			
	♦ AK84	♦ Q962			
	♣ J5	♣ 983			
	S undefined				
		4♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0			

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/yc3atd5c> , or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. If you don't want to see the opponents hands, click on the white area in the South hand before you start.

Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.

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