

LOOK FOR A DEFENSIVE CLUE

Here's a double dummy problem. You are sitting in the East position and your partner leads the ♥4 against South's 3NT contract. How can you set the contract?

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5	N North	♠A42 ♥83 ♦KQJ87 ♣765	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="color: white;">WES</th> <th style="color: white;">NOR</th> <th style="color: white;">EAST</th> <th style="color: white;">SOU</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">P</td> <td style="text-align: center;">P</td> <td style="text-align: center;">P</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">P</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3N</td> <td style="text-align: center;">P</td> <td style="text-align: center;">P</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">P</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	WES	NOR	EAST	SOU	P	P	P	1N	P	3N	P	P	P			
WES	NOR	EAST	SOU																
P	P	P	1N																
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W West	♠J8 ♥J9542 ♦62 ♣AQJ8	E East	♠Q963 ♥1076 ♦A54 ♣1092																
	S South	♠K1075 ♥AKQ ♦1093 ♣K43																	
3NT South NS: 0 EW: 0																			

While the declarer is planning how she will make the contract, you should also be planning how you can set it. You don't have much in your hand; only 6 HCP's. The declaring side has about 25 or 26 so your partner must have about 8 or 9. You will put up your ♥10 to show partner your highest heart, but the declarer will surely win the first trick with an honor and probably go about knocking out your ♦A to set up dummy's diamond suit. That will most likely be your only chance to lead a card from your hand so you must be ready with a plan of attack.

You could always rely on "return partner's lead". If he has the ♥A-J-x-x-x, you will trap the declarer's remaining heart honor and partner can clear the heart suit. But partner might not have the ♥A. He may have a 5-card, but weak heart suit but might also have a strong 4-card club suit. In this case switching to the ♣10 could be the killing lead. How can you tell which course of action is correct for this hand?

Well, you can't tell – by yourself. You need your partner to tell you. The only way he can tell you is by ducking the diamonds until your partner is out of diamonds and can discard. That discard will be the guiding signal. If he discards a low club, return the heart; if he pitches a low heart, indicating that hearts is not a good source of tricks, switch to clubs. Notice that a club will trap declarer's ♣K and four more club tricks will be yours.

Defense is difficult primarily because you can't see into your partner's hand. You must rely on clues from his leads and discards, as well as the spots on the cards he plays on tricks during the course of the play.