

PLANNING FOR DEFENSE

You are sitting in the south and the bidding has started on your right.

		South		
		♠AK		
		♥62		
		♦KJ1096		
		♣10862		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
		1♣	1♦ (1)	
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass	
4♥	All Pass			

(1) With 12 HCP and a good 5-card diamond suit, your overcall is automatic.

The opponents continue on to a game in hearts and partner leads the ♣A. You see this dummy:

North		
♣A		
	East	
	♠QJ10.	
	♥AJ5	
	♦74	
	♣KQJ95	
South		
♠AK		
♥62		
♦KJ1096		
♣10862		

While the declarer is looking at his dummy and planning how he can take 10 tricks, you and your partner should be looking at the same dummy and planning how you're going to take 4 tricks to set the contract. Planning is just as important to the defenders as it is to the declarer.

You see 3 easy tricks in the black suits. Where are you going to get the 4th trick? Dummy's has 4 club tricks ready to run plus a spade, once you take your two honors in the suit. These, along with 5 hearts and a probable ♦A will give them 11 tricks.

Your only hope is that partner's ♣A is singleton and if you can get the lead before declarer pulls trump, you can give him one or two ruffs. But how can you give him the message that the way to your hand is through spades, not diamonds?

The answer is in the club you play to the first trick. Normally, a low card says you don't like the suit and suggest a switch. A high card says you have an honor and want a continuation. But in this case, none of those options are relevant. The dummy has the rest of the clubs. So your attitude toward clubs is of no relevance. Therefore, you can now send a "suit preference" signal and play the card that give a preference for a suit that partner should lead to the next trick. A low club played on the first trick means you want a diamond lead (a low ranking suit); a high card says you want a spade lead (a high ranking suit). Therefore, you play the ♣10, signaling for a spade lead.

When partner dutifully leads the spade, which honor do you play? If you play the ♠A, your partner will not know who holds the ♠K. You want him to lead another spade so you want to make it clear that you hold both the ♠A and ♠K. Play the ♠K, the lower of equals. When this holds the trick partner will be positive that you have the ♠A; otherwise declarer would win the first spade and pull trump. After you win the ♠A you give partner another club ruff. Now you have not only set the contract, you have set it by 2 tricks.

This is the complete board:

14 ^b	N North	W N E S
	♠ 96532 ♥ 743 ♦ 5432 ♣ A	1♣ 1♦ 1♥ P 2♥ P 4♥ P P P
W West	E East	
♠ 874 ♥ KQ1098 ♦ AQ ♣ 743	♠ QJ10 ♥ AJ5 ♦ 87 ♣ KQJ95	
	S South	
	♠ AK ♥ 62 ♦ KJ1096 ♣ 10862	4♥ W NS: 0 EW: 0

Notice that with any other lead at Trick 2, declarer will win and pull trump, ending with an overtrick.

If you would like to see the whole hand played out, click on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/lsvaaw8>
Or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick.