

CARD PLAY FUNDAMENTALS: WEEK ONE

DEFENSE AGAINST NO TRUMP CONTRACTS

Quote of the week: "If you aren't in over your head, how do you know how tall you are?"

T. S. Eliot

Defense in bridge is the most difficult aspect of the game. To defend well you must do four things:

1. Listen to the bidding (partner's and the opponents').
2. Learn the standard leads and follow them regularly so that your partner will get accurate information about your hand.
3. Pay attention to your partner's leads, plays and signals.
4. Be patient and think logically.

As defenders, you must work cooperatively, trying to win tricks as a twosome seeing only your own holding. Conversely, declarer has the enormous advantage of playing 26 cards, all of which he can see. As defenders, you must work carefully together to transmit accurate information and then must think logically to achieve the best results. Defense at the table is both challenging and fun because every situation is unique and there is not always a clear course of action.

OPENING LEADS AGAINST NO TRUMP CONTRACTS

The defenders' goal when defending no trump contracts is usually to establish and win tricks with the "small" cards in their side's long suit. This objective greatly affects the opening lead strategy. You are willing to give up one or more tricks early in the play in order to develop "small" cards in your long suit into eventual winners.

There are two stages in choosing the opening lead against a no trump contract. They are:

- Choosing the suit.
- Choosing the card.

Choosing the suit: Over the next few weeks we will examine the list of leads in order of preference.

1. If your partner has bid a suit during the auction, always, always, lead his suit. Yes, the no trump declarer has stated he has a stopper in the suit...he should not bid no trump without one. But, your partner can never, never, fault you if you make his suit your opening lead. Advanced players will advise that there are exceptions but, for the time being, even if you have a singleton or a doubleton in your partner's suit, lead it!

Example One: Dealer = North. N/S = Vulnerable.

North

S: 875
H: 9865
D: 75
C: AT94

West

S: AT
H: 73
D: KT3
C: KQJ872

East

S: 632
H: AKQJT
D: A942
C: 5

South

S: KQJ94
H: 42
D: QJ86
C: 63

The bidding:

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
P	1H	1S	2C
P	2D	P	3NT

The play of the hand:

North, adhering to the "law" of always, always leading partner's suit, lays down the five of spades. South plays the Jack and declarer plays the ten. South continues with the Queen of Spades taken, per force, with West's Ace. West attacks the heart suit winning five tricks. Assume that East now takes the Ace and King of Diamonds bringing his total trick count to eight. Or, instead, assume East attacks the Club suit. In either case, North eventually wins the lead with his Ace of Clubs and returns his third spade to South who cashes his remaining three spades. The defense takes four spades and the Ace of Clubs holding declarer to eight tricks. E/W have 27 HCP but proper defense defeats the contract.

Note than any other lead, other than partner's spade suit, will not succeed in defeating West's 3NT contract.