

BEGINNING BRIDGE - SPRING 2018 - WEEK 7  
**PLAYING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS**

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**PLAYING NO TRUMP CONTRACTS**

**DECLARER STRATEGIES AND TACTICS**

After a defender makes the opening lead and the dummy is tabled, an effective declarer will pause, count the sure winners in the combined hands, and then formulate a plan to create any additional winners that are needed to make the no trump contract. Declarer will then use some combination of the following tactics to implement the plan:

- ✓ Promote cards in a solid sequence by driving out a defender's higher cards in the suit.
- ✓ Develop winners in a long suit by continuing to lead the suit until the defenders are powerless or void in the suit.
- ✓ Finesse against a defender's higher cards.

Because the declarer must lose tricks to implement the first two tactics and may lose a trick if a finesse fails, the declarer will also try to maintain a stopper in each suit to guard against the defense running a long suit of their own.

**DEFENDER STRATEGIES AND TACTICS**

Since it is rare for the defenders to have enough sure winners to defeat a no trump contract, the defenders must also develop a plan to create the setting tricks. The two most effective strategies that defenders can use to defeat declarer's plan to make a no trump contract are:

- ✓ Promote lower cards in the defending partnerships longest suit by driving out declarer's stoppers in the suit.
- ✓ Block declarer's attempts to promote lower cards in declarer's long suit.

This means that there is often a race between the declarer and the defender to develop extra winning tricks.

### DECLARER HOLDUP PLAY

There are many situations in which you must give up the lead to make a no trump contract. When one defender on lead can set you but the other cannot, you must keep the *dangerous opponent* from getting the lead if possible. One way to do this is to **holdup** a stopper to prevent the other opponent from leading a suit back to the dangerous opponent.

COUNTING WINNERS • PROMOTING HIGH CARDS • DECLARER HOLDUP PLAY													
<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>OPENING LEAD: ♦ 6</b></p> <p><b>Listen:</b> The bidding is no help.</p> <p><b>Observe:</b> The ♦ 6 is probably fourth highest in longest and strongest suit. West should have at least three more diamonds including an honor. By the rule of eleven, East has two diamonds higher than the six. Opponents will probably try to establish their diamonds.</p> <p><b>Pause:</b> Must take 9 tricks.</p> <p><b>Look:</b> 6 winners (2 ♠ + 3 ♥ + 1 ♦ + 0 ♣).</p> <p><b>Analyze:</b> Can promote four clubs but must lose one trick. If West has five diamonds and regains the lead after you play the ♦ A, you will be set. But if East has the ♣ A you can make an overtrick if you can prevent East from leading a diamond back to West.</p> <p><b>Execute:</b> Holdup the ♦ A to exhaust East's diamonds. When gain the lead on the third trick, lead the ♣ K (high card from the short side) and continue leading clubs until the Ace falls. When regain the lead run the clubs and the remaining winners.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px; text-align: center;"> <b>NORTH - DUMMY</b> </div> <p style="margin: 0;">♠ A 6 5</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♥ K 4 2</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♦ 9 4</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♣ Q J T 8 3</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin: 10px 0;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px;">South</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">West</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">North</th> <th style="padding: 2px;">East</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">1NT</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">3NT</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px; text-align: center;"> <b>SOUTH - DECLARER</b> </div> <p style="margin: 0;">♠ K 7 3</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♥ A Q 9</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♦ A T 5</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♣ K 9 6 2</p>	South	West	North	East	1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass		
South	West	North	East										
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass										
Pass	Pass												

In this example, the opening lead tells you that West is the dangerous opponent because West has at least three more diamonds. Since eight missing cards are most likely split 5-3 (47%) instead of 4-4 (33%), West probably has four more diamonds and can set the contract if West regains the lead after you play the ♦ A.

- If the missing diamonds divide 4-4 (33%) you make the contract no matter when you play the ♦ A.
- If the missing diamonds divide 5-3 (47%) and West also has the ♣ A, you will be set no matter when you play the ♦ A.
- If the missing diamonds divide 5-3 (47%) and East has the ♣ A, you will be set only if you play the ♦ A on the first or second trick.

By holding up the ♦ A until the third diamond trick, you exhaust East's diamonds so that East can not lead a diamond back to West.

### DEFENDER HOLDUP PLAY

A good no trump declarer will formulate a plan and if the plan requires the loss of some tricks, declarer will try to take the losses early without losing control of any of the suits. Since declarer's plan often includes establishing extra winners in a long suit by driving out your stoppers in the suit, you may be able to ruin declarer's plan by refusing to take a trick as long as feasible. This is called a *holdup play*.

THIRD HAND HIGH • DEFENDER HOLDUP PLAY															
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">NORTH</div> <p style="text-align: center;">♠</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♥ 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♦ 9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♣</p>														
↶		↷													
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">WEST</div> <p style="text-align: center;">♠</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♥ A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♦ 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♣</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> <span>W</span> <span>N</span> <span>E</span> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; margin: 5px 0;"></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> <span></span> <span>S</span> <span></span> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">EAST - DUMMY</div> <p style="text-align: center;">♠ T 9 5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♥ 5 4 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♦ K Q J T 8</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♣ Q 2</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; font-size: small;"> <tr> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">West</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">North</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">East</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">South</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1NT</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3NT</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	West	North	East	South	1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT			
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	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;">SOUTH - YOU</div> <p style="text-align: center;">♠ Q 6 4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♥ Q T 7</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♦ A 6 4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♣ K 9 7 6</p>	↵													

Your partner's opening lead was the ♥2 and the cards played so far are:

*Trick 1:* N→♥2    E→♥3    S→♥Q    W→♥A

*Trick 2:* W→♦2    N→♦9    E→♦K    S→♦4

- **Why did you play the ♥Q on the first trick?**

Partner's lead should have been fourth highest from longest and strongest suit which promises at least one honor. You played *third hand high* to help establish partner's suit.

- **Why did you play the ♦4 on the second trick?**

Declarer is trying to drive out the ♦A in order to run the long diamonds in the dummy. Because you have the ♣K, declarer's only sure entry to the dummy is in diamonds. If you *holdup* the ♦A and declarer only has two or three diamonds, you can limit declarer to two diamond tricks. If you play the ♦A now, declarer will get four diamond tricks!

## PLAYING SUIT CONTRACTS

### DECLARER STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

After your partnership makes the opening lead and the dummy is tabled, an effective declarer will pause and count the losers in the *master hand*, the hand with the longer trump suit (usually declarer's hand). The loser count will include losses that are required to promote high cards in a sequence or develop a long suit. Then declarer will analyze ways to use the cards in the *support hand*, the hand with the shorter trump suit (usually the dummy) to eliminate any extra losers.

There are three tactics that declarer can use to eliminate the losers in the master hand:

- ✓ Ruff losers from the master hand using trump in the support hand.
- ✓ Discard losers from the master hand on extra winners in the support hand.
- ✓ Finesse against defenders high cards.

Unless the trump in the support hand is needed to ruff losers, one of the first things the declarer will do is draw all of defenders trump so that the defense can not interfere with declarer's plan.

### DEFENDER STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

If your partnership has a long suit, either the declarer or the dummy will be short in that suit. Because of the power of declarer's trump, developing a long suit is not a good defensive strategy. Instead, your partnership should use some combination of the following strategies and tactics:

- ✓ Take winners in your long suit(s) early to prevent declarer from discarding losers in the suit on extra winners in some other suit.
- ✓ Play your short suit(s) early to allow your partnership to ruff one or more tricks before declarer draws all of your trump.
- ✓ Lead trump to reduce declarer's ruffing power against your long suit(s).

## ATTITUDE SIGNALS

When your partner leads a suit your first obligation is to play third hand high and/or unblock the suit. If you can do neither, you can play a card that will signal your partner about your attitude toward the suit.

An *attitude signal*, the most commonly used defensive signal, is used when you are:

- ✓ following a suit led by your partner
- ✓ discarding regardless of who led the suit

Attitude signals do not apply when you are following a suit led by the declarer.

To telegraph your attitude:

- ✓ Play a **high** spot card followed by a low spot card **to encourage** your partner to lead the suit.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ Play a **low** spot card followed by a high spot card **to discourage** your partner from leading the suit.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, your partner will need to read the signal based on the first card that you play and whether a card is high or low is relative to the cards in view. The lowest card in your hand might appear to be a high card if none of the lower cards are visible in the dummy or partner's hand.

ATTITUDE SIGNAL • EXAMPLE 1 • ENCOURAGE				
♣ <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">5</span>	♣ <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">4</span>	PARTNER DECLARER      DUMMY YOU	♣ <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Q</span> 8	West   North   East   South
↶	♣ <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">J</span> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">7</span> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">2</span>		↷	1♦ Pass    1♠ Pass 2NT Pass    3NT Pass Pass    Pass

In the first example, your partner leads fourth highest and the dummy plays the Queen. You can not play third hand high and you do not need to unblock. But you can signal that you have an honor by playing the ♣7, a relatively high card, to encourage your partner to continue clubs.

Since you did not play third hand high, partner knows you do not have the ♣A or the ♣K. So, the encouraging signal must mean you have the ♣J.

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<sup>1</sup> Some partnerships prefer *reverse (or upside down)* signals so that a low card followed by a high card encourages and a high card followed by a low card discourages.

**ATTITUDE SIGNAL • EXAMPLE 2 • DISCOURAGE**

	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">East</th> <th style="width: 25%;">South</th> <th style="width: 25%;">West</th> <th style="width: 25%;">North</th> </tr> <tr> <td>1♦</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </table>	East	South	West	North	1♦	Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
East	South	West	North										
1♦	Pass	2NT	Pass										
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass										

In the second example, your partner leads top of connecting honors and the dummy plays the Ace. You should play the ♥4 to tell your partner you have no help in hearts. Since partner can see the ♥2 in the dummy, partner can be reasonably sure you played low and declarer must have the ♥K.

*Partner knows that if you had started with a ♥K4 doubleton you would have played the King to unblock the suit.*

**ATTITUDE SIGNAL • EXAMPLE 3 • DISCOURAGE**

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West	North	East	South										
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass										
Pass	Pass												

In the third example, partner leads the ♦6, fourth highest, in your void suit. You should discard the ♣2 to discourage a club lead. The next time diamonds are led, discard the ♥2 to discourage a heart lead. Then, if your partner gains the lead, partner, who has been paying careful attention to your signals, will surely lead a spade and you can take four spade tricks.

*You could decide to play the ♥2 and then the ♣2 with the same result.*

Attitude signals that encourage partner in a no trump contract are given when you have high card strength in the suit that partner led. But if you have trump against a suit contract it is sometimes right to give an encouraging signal with a doubleton or a worthless three card suit. If you have a doubleton, your goal is to void yourself in the suit so you can get a ruff before declarer takes your trump.

**ATTITUDE SIGNAL • EXAMPLE 4 • ENCOURAGE**

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West	North	East	South										
1♠	2♥	3♠	Pass										
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass										

In this example, your partner led the ♥A, top of a leading sequence. From the bidding you know partner has at least five hearts and you see two in the dummy and two in your hand. That means declarer has at least three hearts even if partner started with six. Although you have no high card strength in hearts, you should play the ♥9 to encourage partner to follow with the ♥K and a third heart to give you an over ruff with the ♠Q.

*When you play high-low on the first two tricks in the suit that partner led, you are telling your partner that you have a doubleton in the suit.*

**ATTITUDE SIGNAL • EXAMPLE 5 • DISCOURAGE**

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

In the fifth example, you should discourage your partner because:

- You do not have the ♠K and do not want to give the impression that you do in the remote case where partner does not have the King.
- You do not have a doubleton and even if you did, you would not be able to overruff the dummy on the third lead because the dummy will be void and can ruff with a higher trump.

Note that there is some danger that your signal will discourage your partner from leading the ♠K on the next trick because partner might assume you want a suit switch. Even if partner thinks you want a suit switch, partner should lead the ♠K before making the switch.

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