

Defence 2

Consider if you can enlist partners help to rescue the defence after an unsuccessful opening lead:

	West	North	East	South
♠ 7 6 5 3				
♥ 10 9			Pass	1NT (15-17)
♦ A 9 8	Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
♣ A J 8 6	Pass	3NT	all pass	
				you (East)
				♠ Q 9 8 2
				♥ Q J 7 2
				♦ K 7 3 2
				♣ 9

Lead 3♣

Partners 4th best lead goes to the ♣6, ♣9, and ♣Q.

At trick two declarer plays the ♦Q around to you. Do you win? And if so what do you switch to – hearts or spades?

It appears you will need partner to have one of the major suit aces to have any chance of defeating this contract. Of the two suits, hearts appear to be the better chance, requiring only A 8 x x or better with partner. If you try spades you will need at least ♠A J x with partner or maybe a miss guess from declarer.

Is there any clue before you make your decision which suit to return?

Solution:

Counting the hand we know that partner has at least 4 hearts but did not lead one.

This points to partner having 4 hearts and 5 clubs. If we were to guess declarers shape, our first guess would be 2-3-5-3.

Continuing with the clues from the auction, declarer is short in the majors and will therefore be relying on clubs and diamonds for the bulk of their tricks. There is little danger in ducking the diamond king at trick two. You may deceive declarer as to the position of the king of diamonds, or you may see a valuable signal from partner if they have to find a discard.

After ducking trick two, declarer continues with a second diamond and partner discards the discouraging ♥8.

Now the defence is simple; partner can see your predicament and is indicating that spades is the suit that has promise. After declarer ducks in dummy, you can win and have an easy spade switch.

Your decision decides the success or defeat of the contract, for this is the full deal:

	♠ 7 6 5 3	
	♥ 10 9	
	♦ A 9 8	
	♣ A J 8 6	
♠ A J 4		♠ Q 9 8 2
♥ 8 6 4 3		♥ Q J 7 2
♦ 6		♦ K 7 3 2
♣ K 10 7 3 2		♣ 9
	♠ K 10	
	♥ A K 5	
	♦ Q J 10 5 4	
	♣ Q 5 4	

This should have been an easy hand. Partner makes an unsuccessful lead, but you have a second chance and can defeat the contract by taking four spade tricks. Unfortunately, at the table several defenders fell from grace by winning the first round of diamonds – thereby subjecting themselves to an uncomfortable guess.

If you ducked trick two, well done. The appearance of dummy and the auction suggested that this was not a hand where you needed to take the king of diamonds as soon as it was offered to you. Partners unlucky lead should not distract you from the task of finding the winning play.

Point to remember: Ducking early on in the hand is a strategy worth considerable study. Many

contracts are defeated by an astute early defensive duck.

