

## Ultimate Defence 04

Now that we have, very briefly, discussed opening leads, let me show you a deal which will illustrate not only the reasons why I am recommending certain opening leads from different combinations of cards, but an example that will also lead you into a further look at defence, and the importance of being able to follow up the defence after a good lead, and how to avoid bad leads.

*Dealer East All Vul*

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

The bidding:

W	N	E	S
		3H	3S
NB	4S	NB	NB
DBL	NB	NB	NB

East was a frisky fellow and, without the benefit of a weak 2H opening (they play 2H as weak in both majors), decided to open 3H. South had a perfectly good 3S bid and North decided that he had enough to raise to game, since his spade support and minor suit holdings were expected to be of use to partner. Little did he know that there were two unavoidable heart losers! But West came to the rescue. He decided that partner would not be preempting vulnerable with a load of rubbish, and also that NS would not make 4S simply by virtue of having a trump fit. Tricks in the off suits would also be needed, and he had diamonds and clubs well covered. He was, of course, quite right, but the execution of the defence left a lot to be desired.

The first major error West made was to jump to a conclusion, which is the first lesson for good defenders: don't jump to conclusions. West led the nine of hearts, hoping for a very quick ruff. Not totally unreasonable but very much misguided. We discussed earlier that if you had a suit headed by the ace and king, thanks be to the Lord, your best lead was LIKELY to to the ace of THAT suit. In this instance, West had no reason not to follow that precept.

Had West led the ace of diamonds, he would have had the advantage of seeing dummy, as well as seeing what card partner played. He would have noticed that partner played high-low and would have been able to lead a third round for a ruff. Later, the inevitable heart tricks would have come to East. But, West started with the nine of hearts, on which East played the ten, telling West that he did have a good heart suit, but clearly not the ace. Declarer won the ace immediately, then drew three rounds of trumps, East discarding the two and three of hearts. Then, declarer led a club to dummy and returned the four, ruffing it. Next followed the five of diamonds towards dummy. West considered playing low but that would have been just as bad as what he in fact he did do. He rose with the king and, not wanting to set up the diamonds immediately, exited a club, which allowed declarer to discard a heart from either hand while ruffing in the other. A doubled contract was made, one that SHOULD have been down two!

What lessons, apart from the need to make the correct opening lead, can we learn from this? Apart from not jumping to conclusions, it is most important to try and work out how the defence is to continue AFTER the opening lead, and to learn things as the play progresses. West should have, even after the poor heart lead, been able to recover at least to some extent, and counted the distributions of declarer's and dummy's hands. Had he done so, he would have worked out that, with a singleton club in declarer's hand, declarer would either have a fifth diamond and two hearts, or only four diamonds. In either case he wouldn't be able avoid a heart loser if West cashed the ace of diamonds and exited with his last diamond.

Note that West did have to take the two top diamonds when one was led towards dummy, because otherwise West would have been put in with the next diamond and after cashing the second diamond the inevitable ruff and slough would have given declarer the doubled contract. The lesson of the 'ruff and slough' is one that defenders need to learn: there may be times when a ruff and slough is the only way to defend, but mostly it will result in disaster for the defence.