

Ultimate Defence 12

Here we have a recent deal where both sides made some atrocious decisions from the opening lead onwards.

Dealer East All Vul

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

The possible bidding:

W	N	E	S
		1S	3C
4S	5C	5S	NB
NB	6C	?	

Some Easts doubled as they could not be guaranteed of making 6S, but some Easts, expecting West to have some values outside spades for the direct raise to 4S, decided to have a crack at slam and duly bid 6S. This time it was South's turn to double. As you can see, both slams are a trick short, but what happened in some cases was that both slams made! 6S made twice when South led the ace of clubs, and 6C made twice when West led the ten of spades (the FOUR would have been a more sensible lead).

Where did both defences go wrong? Against 6S it was the opening lead. South might have been hoping to make both aces, but with North's bid of 6C, what guarantee was there that either East or West did not have a club void? Such bizarre distributions do occur in a normal deal and not just goulash. South could be 99% certain that the ace of diamonds was NOT going to be ruffed. I know that some players simply refuse to lead the ace from such a holding, but you will see later why I have incorporated the lead of an ace specifically from AQx into my standard repertoire of opening leads.

Anyway, South MUST lead the ace of diamonds rather than the ace of clubs against a 6S contract that has been bid the way it would have been. When dummy goes down with the club void, and North signals as strongly as possible, it is not difficult to carry on with the diamond attack, South cashing the queen and then being disappointed when declarer ruffs the third round. But at least the slam has been defeated, unlike in the other cases where the Souths made what was, simply, a poorly (or not at all) thought out opening lead.

Worse defensive ineptitude was witnessed at two other tables where South was doubled in 6C and West dutifully led the ten of spades ('highest of partner's suit', though the fourth highest would have been more meaningful). Then, inexplicably, the defence went awry. After seeing dummy, all East had to do was overtake the spade lead and cash the ace of hearts. That was certain to defeat the slam unless West had seven hearts and declarer a void, hardly likely. But the two unthinking Easts that let 6C make, simply followed with the seven or nine! West now had to find the right continuation. That SHOULD have been easy enough in any case, but both Wests chose to switch to a diamond! Why was that the wrong thing to do? The answer is fairly simple if you are a thinking defender: the diamond suit, with its length, might have presented declarer with a possible discard, whereas the heart suit could be of no use to declarer whatever declarer had. Perhaps the only reason why West switched to a diamond was in the hope that East was void in diamonds and wanted West to lead the suit, why else allow West to keep the lead? West's conclusion can to some extent be excused, but for East not to take charge by overtaking the opening lead and ensuring the defeat of the club slam, that is certainly inexcusable, and this happened in the top grade of a well know club!

I hope that by the time the reader has arrived at the end of "Ultimate Defence", such disastrous things simply don't happen to THEM!