

Ultimate Defence 17

Defence needs to be planned, right from the opening lead, as I have stated before. Here is a very good illustration of how and what you should be thinking from the time you have to make the opening lead. Put yourself in the SOUTH seat on this deal.

Dealer East EW Vul

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

East opened 1S and South bid 2NT. This is the “Unusual No Trump” jump overcall and shows a hand with both minor suits (over a major suit opening). West, after recovering from the shock of partner's opening in his six card spade suit, jumped to 4S but that did not stop North who bid 4NT, asking partner to choose his better minor. East doubled but when South bid 5C which was passed round to East, decided to push on to 5S, a very reasonable decision despite the dictum that “the five level belongs to opponents”.

As it happens, NS had found a very cheap sacrifice, down one against a laydown 4S but now it was up to South to find a way to defeat the 5S to which EW had been pushed.

This was South's thinking:

“This could well be one of those freakish deals with wild distribution. I don't know if a lead in either of my minors will help, and I can at least set up a sure heart trick by leading the king.”

That is exactly what he did. In such distributional deals, unblocking high honours is often a good idea, and as you will see later, that is exactly what was necessary. South's king of hearts was won by declarer's ace and declarer now proceeded to eliminate as many cards in the minor suits as he could.

Let's look at the full deal again so you can follow what happened:

Dealer East EW Vul

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

Ace of clubs, trump to dummy, club ruff, and another trump to dummy for another club ruff. That eliminated the clubs. Next, declarer tried the three of diamonds. This was South's thinking now:

“I'm pretty sure partner has a high diamond, but should I let him win it? What if declarer by some chance has QJ3? Then he will lead the queen through my ace and ruff it out to provide a heart pitch on the jack. But as long as I win my ace, ruffing out the king in partner's hand won't be possible in one more round, so I can protect it by winning the ace, cashing my heart and exiting with another diamond. Partner can then wait for his heart trick if there is one”.

Do you see why South needed to think the hand right through all the possibilities from the opening lead? Yes, if declarer is able to eliminate all cards in the minors, as in the case of a minor suit opening lead, then after ace and another heart, South will be thrown in and with only minor suit cards left will have to surrender a ruff and discard to declarer.

A lot of lessons to be learnt from this deal, even lessons for declarer play if you happen to be lucky enough to meet up with non 'ultimate' defence!