

Ultimate Defence 24

Dealer East All Vul

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

The possible bidding:

W	N	E	S
		1NT	NB
3NT	NB	NB	NB

The bidding has, once again, been short and sweet. South has to decide on the opening lead. That should not be difficult. Longest and strongest is hearts, but should South lead the six, or the KING? It is too hopeful to lead the six and it might well give a trick away, as well as the tempo. South should lead the KING. Now it is up to North to help out by signalling discouragement by following with the TWO, whether declarer wins the ace in dummy immediately, or ducks in dummy. That is normal signalling practice, but we'll talk about alternatives shortly. In the meantime, when North follows with the two after declarer has ducked in dummy, South should start thinking, take notice of North's two spot, and not be tempted to continue with another heart. Ducking in such a situation is one of the oldest tricks that declarers have learnt, it is known as the Bath Coup. And no, not discovered by Archimedes, but in the town of Bath. The main thing here is that South must switch at trick two. Which suit to switch to? The normal rule of thumb is 'lead through strength'. Dummy has strength in both black suits, but South should anticipate that declarer will finesse diamonds and lose to his king. Therefore, tempting declarer to take a losing club finesse will not only give the defence the timing but also the means to defeat 3NT. So, a CLUB switch is in order. As you can see, if declarer is tempted to finesse the club on South's switch at trick two, North will win, return a heart which will set up hearts, and South will later win the king of diamonds to defeat 3NT. Did you notice that if declarer refuses the club finesse, he will make 3NT, but that may not be such a great match point score anyway if other defenders either lead a low heart or fall for the Bath Coup.

Now briefly back to the alternative leading arrangement: best to lead ACE for Attitude and KING for COUNT or unblock. We will talk about that later.