

Ultimate Defence 25

Now that we have reached our cooperative stage of the defence, let's look at what happens further along the line. The opening leader has made the first play and partner has seen both the opening lead, and then dummy. There is much more to the play to come, and now both partners are responsible for getting the best ultimate result.

One of the best 'rules' that new players learn is "return partner's lead". However that is a total simplification of a basic lesson that really means "cooperate with partner". So, let's see some examples of defensive cooperation by the partner of the opening leader.

Dealer East All Vul

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

The bidding at the time, with EW playing Precision, was:

W	N	E	S
		NB	NB
1C	NB	1S	NB
4S	NB	NB	NB

South took careful note of the bidding, which basically said: West has 16+ HCP, East has 8+ HCP and 5+ spades, West has spade support but a minimum for a big club opener (these things you can always find out, and SHOULD if you just ask when it is your opening lead). South did not particularly want to open up any side suit, and the bidding told her that if anyone was sitting with the higher but shorter, trumps, it would be West, so there was no real danger in starting the defence with a trump lead, the JACK because South still wanted to retain the 10-8 as a possible tenace over the nine, which was, hopefully, with East. If declarer has all three top trumps then it mattered not which spade South led. But the lead of the jack reaped great benefits when declarer covered in dummy and North won the ace. North now noted the doubleton club in dummy, and anticipating a possible club ruff, instead of leading a club ("through strength round to weakness") North returned the second spade.

When declarer finessed the queen of clubs, South won the king and was able to cash the good spade and thus prevent the club ruff. Declarer did his best and tried to set up diamond tricks but that suit failed to break 3-3 and declarer ended up losing two spades and two clubs for down one, a great result for a well thought out defence.

But returning partner's lead is not always the best way to go, as we will see in the next issue.