

Ultimate Defence 26

Continuing with the theme of cooperation on defence, here we have a very interesting deal, in fact quite an unusual one, because despite the fact that EW can make 4H, the hand was invariably played by NS in some number of spades, with EW never entering the bidding at all! Such weird hands do crop up in bridge from time to time, but the other significant thing about this deal as it was played in an average match point session is that, even when you have failed to find your game, you can defend a part score and still score a top by knowing how to defend better than the other pairs sitting the same way.

Dealer East EW Vul

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

At most tables South opened 1S and North raised to 2S. Some Norths raised to 3S and a number of NS pairs ended up in a spade game, but our particular pair were defending against 2S. The first question is: what should West lead? “Fourth highest of longest and strongest”? That would be the five of hearts. But wait a minute! While it may work out well, the danger is that if declarer and dummy have both the ace and queen, the heart lead will give a trick away that may never be recovered. West simply has one heart too many! While an attacking lead is called for, especially against a low level part score, the heart lead stands to lose too much compared to the other attacking lead of a low CLUB. That is the way our West reasoned, and when he led the four of clubs, it was then East's turn to follow up on the good work.

East won the ace and, thinking about things carefully, did not return West's lead despite the fact that he was reasonably sure that West had the king. It was more important to try and set up another trick before it ran away, and that was in hearts. Hence, East won the ace of clubs and returned the ten of hearts. There was another very good reason why East could afford to do that. East had CONTROL of the trump suit and knew that even if the diamond suit was to provide tricks for declarer, it could not do so before trumps were removed from the defence, and East had the ace.

The immediate return of a heart ensured a heart trick for the defence, and along with the second club and ace of trumps, the contract was held to nine tricks. This, surprisingly, turned out to be a top score for EW because most Wests had started with a heart lead or East had failed to switch to a heart at trick two.