

Ultimate Defence 27

Thinking a hand through from the beginning is very much a crucial element of the defence. Here is another example of that in action.

Dealer West All Vul

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

With EW playing ACOL, the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
1H	NB	1S	NB
2NT	NB	3H	NB
4H	NB	NB	NB

The bidding was excellent. East's 3H was not a sign off but told West that East had three card heart support. Those who have what I call "Notrump Obsessiveness" will note that, yes, 3NT does make but only just and hearts is a better game contract and will make an overtrick unless the defence is perfect.

Our defenders did find the perfect defence. North led the nine of spades, through dummy's bid suit, seemingly safe enough but also constructive in that he was looking for a possible ruff. That is normally why you lead singletons or doubletons.

South's initial inclination was to win the ace and return a spade, but South stopped to think. Partner had clearly led either a singleton or a doubleton, but which? If it was a singleton then declarer had four, and if so, why did he not support East immediately when East responded 1S? It was clear that declarer had only three spades and North had therefore led from a doubleton. A third round ruff was therefore possible, but if South won the ace and immediately returned another, how was South going to be able to lead a third one?

The minor suit queens did not look like early entries. South then thought a bit further and asked another question: would North have led a doubleton spade with no real hope of a ruff? Trusting that North did have a reasonable expectation of a spade ruff, South followed with the EIGHT of spades at trick one. North got the message, and when in with the ace of trumps, followed the attack with the four of spades. South won the ace this time and gave North the desired third round ruff.

But there were two winners this time: NS because they were in the better game contract since those in 3NT made three only for a worse score, and EW because at least they had the satisfaction of having found a perfect defence.