

Ultimate Defence 28

When partner makes the opening lead and you win the ace, do you return the lead or not? As a rule that is a good idea, even when partner starts with a trump. Here is a very good example.

Dealer West All Vul

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

EW were playing very basic Precision and the bidding was as follows:

W	N	E	S
1C	NB	1D	NB
1H	NB	1S	NB
2S	NB	2NT	NB
3D	NB	3S	NB
NB	NB		

Aided by a few (quite legitimate) questions about the bidding, this is what South managed to learn about the EW hands: West had 16+ HCP, East had 0-7 given the negative response of 1D. West hand five hearts and closer to 16 HCP. East had 5+ spades. West had some spade support. East had a maximum for a negative response, hence 6-7 HCP. Not good spades, which was an inference because of East's 2NT bid.

West must have considered passing 2NT but the decision to bid 3S was a very good one. This was not the most elegant sequence but EW did in fact manage to find the best spot. It was now up to the defence to make the most of what chances they had.

(hands repeated for convenience)

Dealer West All Vul

♠ A 4
♥ J 10 8 4
♦ J 10 3 2
♣ Q 7 6

♠ K Q 7
♥ A K 5 3 2
♦ A 7 4
♣ 6 2

♠ 9 6 5 3 2
♥ 7 6
♦ K 8 6
♣ K J 5

♠ J 10 8
♥ Q 9
♦ Q 9 7
♣ A 10 9 4 3

South did not particularly want to open up any of the side suits and also thought that, with three card spade support in dummy, East might want to use dummy for ruffs. Dummy was also likely to have the spade honours, so South started with the lead of the JACK OF SPADES, a sensible lead as it kept the 10-8 as a possible hold over the nine. It did just that as it transpired. The jack of trumps was covered in dummy and North won the ace. North decided that South must have had a good reason to lead what he did, and returned his second trump, right round to dummy's K7 but South was able to insert the eight, as planned BEFORE the opening lead. When declarer led a club to the jack, South won the ace and cashed the ten of trumps, and declarer, despite trying to set up the hearts, had to lose two more tricks, a club and a diamond. Down one! The superbly thought out and executed defence earned NS a good percentage of the match points, unfortunately made worse by the EW pairs who bid on to game and also failed by one trick, some even by two through very poor play. Justice isn't always served at the bridge table!