

Ultimate Defence 40

Counsel for the Defence

Having read the foregoing chapters on defence, have you decided that it IS possible to improve YOUR defence to as close to 'the ultimate' as possible? Yes, you will never achieve perfection, and it is very important to remember that defence is a PARTNERSHIP thing. Both partners must be on the same wavelength and be doing their utmost to understand what the other is trying to tell them and what the objective is. I am going to offer as my final contribution to this series a deal which I took part in where I consider the defence needed to be absolutely perfect, from the beginning to the end. The readers can draw their own conclusion as to whether such perfect defence is something THEY should aspire to.

Dealer West All Vul; Teams

♠ 9 8 2

♥ A 8 5 2

♦ 2

♣ Q 10 6 5 3

♠ 5

♥ 6

♦ A Q J 10 7 5

♣ A K J 9 4

♠ K Q 10 6 3

♥ Q J 10 7

♦ K 9 6

♣ 2

♠ A J 7 2

♥ K 9 4 3

♦ 8 4 3

♣ 8 7

This was the bidding in a teams match:

W	N	E	S
1D	NB	1S	NB
3C	NB	3H	NB
4C	NB	4D	NB
5D	NB	NB	NB

Can you see what the only defence is against what looks like a pretty good 5D contract? Yes, 3NT was a doddle but West had hopes of a slam when he forced to game and showed his values and shape. The unfortunate thing for West was that both North AND South were taking a great interest in the bidding.

(hands repeated for convenience)

Dealer West All Vul; Teams

♠ 9 8 2

♥ A 8 5 2

♦ 2

♣ Q 10 6 5 3

♠ 5

♥ 6

♦ A Q J 10 7 5

♣ A K J 9 4

♠ K Q 10 6 3

♥ Q J 10 7

♦ K 9 6

♣ 2

♠ A J 7 2

♥ K 9 4 3

♦ 8 4 3

♣ 8 7

North had to make the crucial opening lead. Singleton trump leads are definitely not in the recommended category against any contract, but North had taken note of the bidding. West was clearly at least 5-5 in the minor suits and North had five clubs. That suggested that West would need club ruffs unless dummy's major suits provided enough tricks. If dummy did provide the required tricks, then there was little that North could do to prevent it, but because of the danger of club ruffs in dummy, North started with a trump, the only one he had, the two! Normally a horrible lead. Declarer ducked this to hand and immediately tried a spade towards dummy. When dummy's queen was played, South won the ace and, being well aware of the fact that partner had led a singleton trump, took stock and asked why. The only reason partner would lead a trump was clear enough: he had some hold in clubs and wanted to prevent ruffs in dummy if they were required by declarer.

North had followed in spades with the TWO, confirming declarer's count in that suit: singleton. Therefore declarer had either a singleton heart if 6511 or a doubleton heart if 5521. In either case, the defence seemed in need of a heart trick before it ran away on a spade. If declarer had the heart ace, South's king was a dead duck, so South did what seemed to be the unthinkable: he laid down the KING at trick three! When declarer followed with the six, it was up to North to tell partner what HE wanted to know. North followed to the king of hearts with the EIGHT. Was that to encourage another heart because North had the ace? No. North KNEW that SOUTH knew that North had the ace, so why the need to encourage? There could be need for only one thing, and that was for South to know how many hearts declarer held. Hence North followed with the EIGHT, which showed an even number of hearts. Encouragement was not necessary, was it? South got the message loud and clear and returned, not another heart, but a trump! Declarer now had no way of ruffing out the last club loser, hence decided to 'believe' South's king of hearts switch. Who would switch to the king without the ace when he saw those hearts in dummy. Declarer ran the queen of hearts and North took the setting trick with the heart ace when declarer discarded his losing club. The defence needed to be card perfect from trick one to trick four: a trump, ace of spades, king of hearts, a second trump. Now, you might say this is highly improbable, but, friends, this story IS true even though it is over 20 years old. Why should things be any different today?