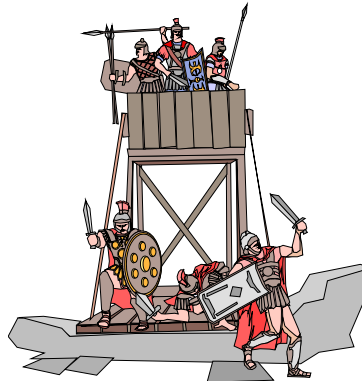


# DEFENSIVE SIGNALS

Questionnaire for  
Serious and Experienced Partnerships

by

Karen Thomas McCallum



## STYLE

12) How does your partnership approach defense? Pick One:

- a) Our defensive signals are primarily a) Attitude b) Count c) Suit-preference (pick one)
- b) We try to tell partner what he needs to know; otherwise, our primary emphasis is on a) Attitude b) Count c) Suit-preference (pick one)
- c) We try to tell partner what he needs to know - there is no "primary" signal.
- d) We don't agree. Clarify:

13) Pick One:

- a) We rarely signal - we don't like to help declarer.
- b) We signal occasionally - only when we need it.
- c) We give partner a lot of information
- d) We signal a lot early in the hand, primarily at trick-one, then don't tell partner much more.
- e) We don't agree. Clarify:

14) Count Signals:

- a) We don't give much count - we don't like to help declarer.
- b) We give count only when partner needs it for his play in the suit
- c) We give a lot of count signals
- d) Most of our signals are count.
- e) We don't agree. Clarify:

15) Answer individually: Do you consider yourself more of an aggressive-attacking defender? Or, would you say you are you more cautious, less likely to take chances without good cause?

- 16) See #4 above: How would you characterize your partner's defensive style?
- 17) How does each member of your partnership feel (in general) about the following:
- a) Underleading Aces
  - b) Leading from a random Jack?
  - c) Underleading a random King vs. a slam
  - d) Leading random singletons?
  - e) Leading random small doubletons?
  - f) Leading from xxx?
  - g) Leading unsupported honors from Hx? Hxx?
- 18) With which of the following statements do you agree? (Circle all that apply)
- a) Our leads and signals are always honest
  - b) Our leads and signals are usually honest
  - c) Our leads and signals are occasionally intentionally deceptive.
  - d) Our leads and signals are frequently deceptive
  - e) Our early signals are believable, but later ones are not.
  - f) We are capable of the occasional judicious lie, but only when we have a specific purpose in mind.
  - g) We don't lie.
  - h) Our signals are deceptive only in the standard false-card situations.
  - i) We don't agree. Clarify:

## SIGNALS

- 1) What is the usual meaning of your signal at trick-one? Attitude? Attitude revolving around "Obvious Shift?" Count? Suit-preference?

List all Exceptions

- 2) What signals do you give in the trump suit?
- a) Count (hi-lo means?)
  - b) Trump Echo when we want a ruff
  - c) Suit-preference
  - d) Smith Echo
  - e) None
- 3) Is there a difference between your primary (i.e., first priority) signal and your most frequent signal? Or are they the same?
- 4) If your partnership uses Upside-Down Signals, are the following signals standard or upside-down:
- a) Trump Signals
  - b) Suit-preference
  - c) Present Count
  - d) Smith Echo
- 5) If your partnership signals attitude revolving around the "Obvious Shift," define your rules clearly. Answer the following:
- a) Give a simple definition of the term "Obvious Shift."
  - b) When do you make an exception, and give count at trick-one?
  - c) When (if ever) do you make an exception and give suit-preference at trick-one?
  - d) If your choice is between the following holdings in dummy, which suit is the obvious shift. (circle)
 

(1)	xxxx	or	Qxx,
(2)	xx	or	Kxx,
(3)	xx	or	xxx
(4)	x	or	KQJ
(5)	Axx	or	Kxx
(6)	Xxx	or	Jxx
(7)	Kxx	or	Kxx (no, it's not a typo)

- 6) If your partnership uses Odd-Even signals, clarify your understandings in the following areas:
- a) The hand is pretty well-known and no signal is necessary. Do we still use odd/even? Or, do we agree that the odd/even signal is used only if we need it?
  - b) We want to discourage a shift, but have no even card in the suit, but must discard from this suit... Is a high-odd-card less encouraging than a low-odd-card?
  - c) We want to request a specific shift, but have no even card in the suit, but must discard from this suit... Is a high-even-card less/more discouraging than a low-even-card? Or is an even card always suit-preference? That is, is there no solution?
- 7) If your normal signal is "Attitude" do you make an exception, and give count, in any/all of the following situations? (Circle all where you would normally give count - and hope that partner circles the same ones.)
- a) Attitude is already known, or irrelevant.
  - b) Partner leads a King (normally from AK or KQ) vs. a 5-level contract (or higher)
  - c) Our side is known to hold, or likely to hold, 10 or more cards in the suit, and there is a danger of giving declarer a ruff and discard.
  - d) Defending a suit contract: A Jack (or lower card) wins the trick in dummy.
  - e) Defending a no-trump contract: A Jack (or lower card) wins the trick in dummy.
  - f) Partner leads the Queen (standard leads) and you can see the Jack.
  - g) Partner leads the Jack and you can see the ten.
  - h) Partner is known to hold a solid suit.
  - i) Others? Clarify:

- 8) Dummy has a singleton in the suit led; partner is (or may be) holding the opening lead. Is your signal...
- a) Attitude?
  - b) Attitude revolving around the "Obvious Shift"?
  - c) Attitude only if a continuation could be the right defense?
  - d) Always Count?
  - e) Always Suit-Preference?
  - f) Suit-preference if relevant, otherwise count?
  - g) Varies, depending upon other circumstances? Clarify:
- 9) In what specific/unusual situations do we:
- a) Always give Count?
  - b) Always give Attitude?:
  - c) Always give Suit-preference?
- 10) Your partnership normally signals Count/Attitude/Suit Preference first (choose one). When do you make an exception and signal differently?
- 11) Your partnership normally signals either Attitude or Count. Do you make an exception, and give suit preference when partner leads an "obvious singleton?" If yes, define "obvious singleton." (Circle all that apply):
- a) We bid and raise a suit, then lead a different suit.
  - b) Partner preempts at the three-level or higher, and leads a different suit
  - c) We make a preemptive raise to the three-level or higher, then lead a different suit.
  - d) We bid cooperatively to the five-level or higher and lead a different suit
  - e) Partner makes an unexpected double of the opponents' game contract, then leads a low card in a side-suit.

- 12) At trick-one vs. a no-trump contract your partner leads the King (or Q if that is your partnership style), defined as "asking for Attitude." xx is in dummy, you have xxxx. Which card do you play? Do you play differently with Jxxx? How do you distinguish the two holdings?
- 13) Partner makes the opening lead of a Queen vs. a suit contract, you have no honor and you can't see the Jack. Your normal signal is? Does your signal vary depending upon the length in the dummy.
- 14) The emphasis in your partnership signaling, after trick-one, is on Attitude? Suit-Preference? Count? (Circle One)
- 15) If you play standard carding, how does your partnership normally give count from a four-card holding? Are your agreements clear?

Suggestion: Play the highest card you can spare. Avoid the ambiguous, unreadable, 3<sup>rd</sup> best spot-card.

(Circle all that apply)

- a) Highest from an even number?
- b) Highest you can spare?
- c) Second high?
- d) Second lowest from an even number? (*THE WORST!!!*)
- e) The play of the 9 denies the 10, etc.?
- f) The play of the 10 denies the 9, etc.?
- g) Highest, followed by lowest, from four (present count)?
- h) Highest you can spare, followed by lowest (present count)?
- i) Second highest, followed by original 3<sup>rd</sup> best? (Hard to read sometimes, but playable)
- j) Highest followed by suit-preference.
- k) Highest you can spare, followed by suit-preference?
- l) Second highest, followed by suit-preference?
- m) Other?
- n) Clarify if necessary:

- 16) If you play UDCA, how does your partnership normally give count from a four-card holding? Are your agreements clear?

Suggestion: *Play the lowest card you hold. Avoid the ambiguous, unreadable, 3<sup>rd</sup> best spot-card.*

(Circle all that apply)

- a) Lowest from an even number?
- b) Second lowest from an even number? (*THE WORST!!!*)
- c) The play of the 9 denies the 10, etc.?
- d) The play of the 10 denies the 9, etc.?
- e) Lowest, followed by highest? (present count)
- f) Lowest, followed by highest you can spare? (present count)
- g) Lowest, followed by suit-preference.
- h) Second lowest, followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> highest, (Hard to read sometimes, but perhaps playable)
- i) Second lowest, followed by suit-preference?
- j) Other?
- k) Clarify if necessary.

- 17) If you play UDCA, how does your partnership normally give count from a three-card holding? Are your agreements clear?

Suggestion: *If possible, play your highest spot-card. Avoid the ambiguous, and unreadable, middle spot-card.*

(Circle all that apply)

- a) Highest from an odd number?
- b) Highest you can spare from an odd number?
- c) Middle from three (often the worst)
- d) The play of the 9 denies the 10, etc.?
- e) The play of the 10 denies the 9, etc.?
- f) Highest, followed by lowest? (present count)
- g) Highest, followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> high?
- h) Highest, followed by suit-preference.
- i) Middle, followed by lowest.
- j) Middle, followed by suit-preference?
- k) Other?
- l) Clarify if necessary.



18) Your partner leads a King on opening lead (you lead Ace from AK), then follows with the Ace, apparently showing AK doubleton. How do you signal at trick-two? Suit preference? Assuming that you normally signal either count or attitude on a King-lead at trick-one, does the meaning of your signal change if you can see the Queen in dummy?

19) What is your normal trick-two signal, when following suit to declarer's lead? Does the sense of the hand dictate its meaning? Do you and partner agree?

*Suggestion: Consider Smith Echo at trick-two (vs. both suits and no-trump). Second choice: Suit-Preference.*

## LEADS

1) If you use the leading system often referred to as "3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>" do you really lead "3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>?" or do you actually lead 3<sup>rd</sup> best from even & low from odd?" Or, do you lead "3<sup>rd</sup> best from even, 5<sup>th</sup> best from odd?" In other words:

- a) which card do you lead from a six-card suit? 3<sup>rd</sup> best, or 5<sup>th</sup> best?
- b) which card from a seven-card suit? 5<sup>th</sup> best, lowest?

2) Assuming that you lead 4<sup>th</sup> best against 3NT, are there situations where you would NOT lead 4<sup>th</sup> best from a four or five-card suit? That is, are there some "attitude" inferences in the lead of a low card? For example:

- a) From xxxx do you normally lead high, or second-high? Or 4<sup>th</sup> best?
- b) Does the lead of a low card promise an honor?
- c) From Jxxx, Txxxx? Which card is normal?
- d) Would you perhaps lead a high spot-card from, say, Q863 in order to get partner to shift to your strong suit through declarer? Which card?

- 3) What is your normal lead from suits headed by the AKQ? What about AKQJ? Does partner know to signal count so that you know how many are cashing?
- 4) What is your normal lead from known solid suits? Are there suit-preference inferences when you lead a different honor?
- 5) Does the lead of a low card usually promise, or at least suggest, an honor in the suit? Or is there no such inference available?
- 6) You are defending 4♠. You lead a ♥ (♥'s are unbid). Which card do you lead (assuming no knowledge about the location of the ♥K)?
  - a) QJ9xx
  - b) QJ8xx
  - c) QJ7xx
  - d) QJ6xx
  - e) QJ5xx
- 7) Do you lead differently when a suit has been bid by your side than when it has not? If so, clarify all situations in which your leads vary:
  - a) e.g., A from AK except in partner's suit
  - b) Low from xxx except when leading partner's suit which you've raised

#### LEADS AFTER TRICK-ONE

- 1) When we break a suit in the middle of the hand, we tend to (pick one):
  - c) lead "Attitude" (lowest from suits we like, top (or highest we can spare) from suits we don't like)
  - d) lead a count card (3<sup>rd</sup> best, 4<sup>th</sup> best, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, other)
  - e) Combine count and attitude in one card (e.g., lead 3<sup>rd</sup> best from suits we like, high from suits we don't like)
  - f) Lead 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> through declarer
  - g) Other
  - h) We don't agree. Clarify:

- 2) In situations where partner needs information about your honor holding in the suit you're breaking, do you lead J,10 or 9 = 0 or 2 higher cards?
- 3) You know that partner can ruff the card you lead, but declarer is over-ruffing. Both of you know the position and all of your cards are high. Is your choice of cards when you lead...
  - i) Suit-preference?
  - j) Informative about the trump position?
  - k) A combination of both of the above?

In other words, how do you tell partner that you want a trump promotion (i.e., that he should ruff high)? How do you tell him that you don't have anything to promote? Be exact.

*Suggestion: RESERVE YOUR LOWEST CARD TO ASK FOR AN UPPERCUT - other cards are suit-preference ONLY if you have more than two remaining - otherwise, no suit-preference exists.*

- 4) You know that partner can ruff the card you lead, but declarer is over-ruffing (this time partner doesn't know the count, and so doesn't know that declarer is over-ruffing). Do you have a way to tell partner that declarer is also void in the suit? Do you have a way to suggest to partner that she should either a) not ruff, or b) ruff high for a potential trump promotion? Be exact.

*Suggestion: LEAD YOUR HIGHEST REMAINING CARD (WINNER OR NON-WINNER) TO TELL PARTNER THAT DECLARER IS OVER-RUFFING. Other spot-cards are reserved for suit-preference. There is no way to say, with any certainty, that you want (or don't want) an uppercut, when partner doesn't know the position. Leading low is ambiguous, since partner won't know that declarer isn't following. When partner knows you have a winner - leading a non-winner will suggest the uppercut, but it may also suggest that you need to find an entry in his hand (via a ruff) for some other purpose.*

- 5) If your partnership normally leads "Attitude" in the middle of the hand, and you find yourself in a situation where partner needs count more than attitude, how do you give count in the suit you are leading:
- a) from two cards
  - b) from three cards
  - c) from four cards
  - d) from five cards

Suggestions:

1. When leading a count card, lead the card with which you would normally signal count if following suit or discarding.
2. When leading count, lead the highest card you can spare from an even number, and the lowest card you hold from an odd number.
3. Avoid leading (or giving) count with unreadable 3<sup>rd</sup> best spot-cards from four-card holdings.

FOLLOWING SUIT

- 1) What is your normal play when following suit with JT doubleton or QJ doubleton. Does your play vary if you are 2<sup>nd</sup> to play, 3<sup>rd</sup> to play, or last to play to the trick? Does it vary if your side may be winning the trick at the point where you play?
- e.g., if declarer leads the Ace, and your partner follows in 4<sup>th</sup> seat with the Jack, does he show or deny the Queen? Show or deny the ten?

- 2) Splitting Honors: What is your normal play from touching honors when you are in a splitting situation, i.e., you may win the trick, or may need to force declarer's honor.
- a) Lowest of touching honors?
  - b) 2nd highest?
  - c) The card you would have led?
  - d) The card you would have led if playing T or 9 = 0 or 2?
  - e) Other?

Do you play differently with equal honors in 3rd Seat after partner's lead? Perhaps 2<sup>nd</sup> highest?

#### ETHICS, & TAKING CARE OF PARTNER

- 1) Do you always pause at trick-one? How long is a normal pause? Do you try to take the same amount of time on all hands in order to avoid giving away information to declarer, and/or partner?
- 2) Do you always pause before making the opening lead? Even when you have a fairly automatic lead? If you don't, declarers (and partner), will be able to read you and draw inferences to which they are not entitled.
- 3) How do you feel about marked hesitations during the play:
- a) When deciding whether to win a trick, e.g. to duck your Ace or not?
  - b) When you are known to be giving a suit-preference signal?

*This is a sticky "gray" area in defensive ethics. There is no universal agreement as to what is ethically "correct" although there is certainly a general feeling among top players that you ought to strive to play in tempo. Discuss it with your partner so that you are aware of one another's opinions on the*

*subject, and if you don't agree, can be prepared to respect those differences.*

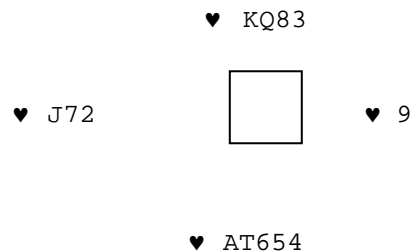
SOME SIGNALLING PROBLEMS FOR YOU TO SOLVE  
WITH YOUR PARTNER.

*Try these problems independently of your partner and see if you agree upon the solution.*

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- 1) Partner leads your unbid 5-card suit vs. a 1NT-3NT auction, and you win the 1st trick. From partner's point of view you could have only three cards in the suit. Which card do you return?

Billy Eisenberg and Ira Rubin had the following sort of disaster many years ago in a World Championship:



After 1NT-3NT, North led the ♥3

Trick 1: ♥3, 9, A, 4

Trick 2: ♥5, 7, 8!, ♠x

With ♥'s now blocked, declarer gratefully took his nine top tricks and made his contract.

North, of course, was rightly concerned about ♥AT65 in partner's hand with declarer having ♥J742. It was not clear to him that he could afford to win the Queen on the second round.

Could your partnership do any better?

---

2) Here's a well-known deal from the Bermuda Bowl/Venice Cup in Santiago, Chile, 1993.

EW bid ♠'s to the 4-level at favorable vulnerability, while North and South fought it out in ♣'s and ♥'s, with South finally becoming declarer in 6♥.

♠ T		
♥ ---		
♦ Q52		
♣ AKQJ86542		
♠ AQJ987	□	♠ 6542
♥ 852		♥ Q4
♦ 43		♦ KJ986
♣ T3		♣ 97
♠ K3		
♥ AKJT9763		
♦ AT7		
♣ ---		

West led the ♠A, and all but one of the many South's who declared 6♥ made the contract after a very thoughtful and reasonable ♣ shift at trick-two.

Assuming that you cannot tell anything definite from the bidding about the lie in the ♣ suit, how does your partnership solve this problem? Can East stop his partner from shifting to a ♣?

---



3) A deal from a recent USA Vanderbilt match:

♠ J62	
♥ A864	
♦ A	
♣ KT986	

♠ T8754  
♥ 5  
♦ 8654  
♣ 743

North	East	South	West
P	1♥	3NT	1♣ All Pass

West leads a low ♥ to the ten and King. South plays the K♦ and partner follows with the 6 (Smith Echo). How does West continue? At the table, a world-class player went wrong. What would you do? Would you play for a layout something like:

♠ J62		♠ K93
♥ A864		♥ QJT72
♦ A		♦ 62
♣ KT986		♣ J652

♠ T8754  
♥ 5  
♦ 8543  
♣ 743

♠ AQ  
♥ K93  
♦ KQJT97  
♣ AQ

or, perhaps something like this...

♠ J62		♠ KQ9
♥ A864		♥ JT732
♦ A		♦ 76
♣ KT986		♣ J652

♠ T8754  
♥ 5  
♦ 8543  
♣ 743

♠ A3  
♥ KQ9  
♦ KQJT52  
♣ AQ

Can your partnership distinguish these two situations?  
 Would you be guessing? In one case West must shift to a ♠ or give declarer his 9<sup>th</sup> trick. In the other he must continue ♥'s. How does he know what to do? Could your partnership solve it?

---

4) The following mishap occurs daily in club games around the world. Hopefully it never happens to expert players (like yourselves)...

You lead the K♦ against 4♠ and partner encourages:

♠ T854		
♥ 5		
♦ 862		
♣ KJTxx		
♠ 62	□	♠ Q9
♥ A864		♥ JT732
♦ KQ4		♦ A976
♣ T986		♣ 52
	♠ AKJ73	
	♥ KQ9	
	♦ JT5	
	♣ AQ	

You duly continue with the ♦Q at trick-two, and partner goes into a long huddle, eventually overtakes with the Ace and tries to give you a ♦ ruff. Declarer says thanks as he claims his unmakeable contract (with an overtrick).

Once you get past thinking that your partner is a lunatic who should give up the game, you realize that this may be your own fault? Don't you?

---

5) Partner leads the ♥A vs. 4♠ (A from AK). Nothing is known from the bidding about the lie of the ♥ suit. Dummy has ♥QT86 and you hold ♥9752.

Which card do you play at trick-one? If your agreement requires that you play any card other than the ♥2 (or ♥9 if you play UDCA), how do you tell partner that you are not ruffing the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of ♥'s?

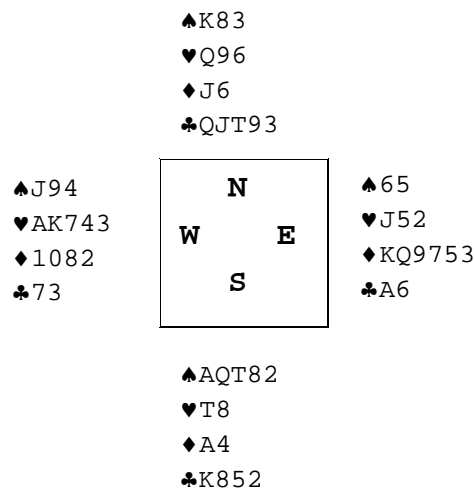
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- 6) Partner opens with 1♦ and leads the ♦A against 4♠ (your lead agreements are A from AK, and you play standard signals). Dummy has ♦JT doubleton, and ♠754.
- a) You hold ♦Q953 (you didn't raise). Which ♦ do you play at trick-one? Trick-two? If you start with any card other than the ♦3 (discouraging), how do you tell partner that you are not over-ruffing dummy on the 3<sup>rd</sup> round?
- b) Your ♦'s are ♦95 and your ♠'s are ♠32. Which diamond do you play at trick-one? If your agreement is that you give count, does partner know that you may not be over-ruffing the dummy at trick three?

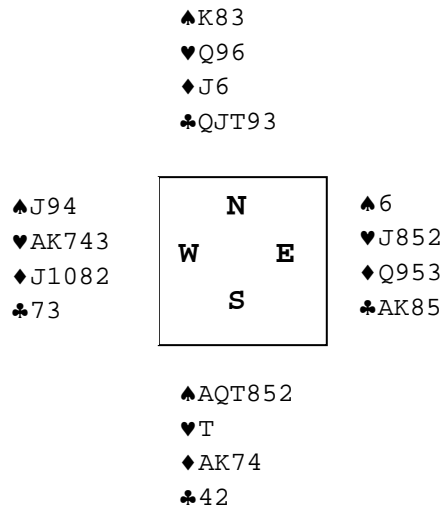
- 7) At unfavorable, you are West with ♠ J94 ♥AK743 ♦T82 ♣73, and the bidding is:

N	E	S	W
		1♠	P
3♠!	P	4♠	P
P	P		

You lead the A♥ against 4♠ and partner plays the deuce suggesting that you shift. What do you play at trick-two? Is this the layout?



Or perhaps this?

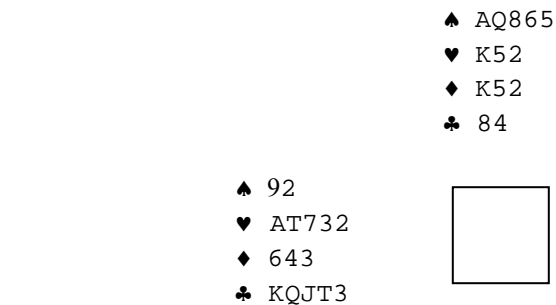


In the first case you must play a ♦ immediately or 4♠ will be made - but in the second you must play a ♣ at trick-two and get an uppercut to beat the contract.

Is there any way to tell the difference?

8) I (ktm) had the following problem in the 2000 USA Team Trials in Raleigh, N.C.

You lead the K♣ against 4♠, partner plays the ♠2 (standard signals)



N	E	S	W
		1♠	P
2NT*	P	3♠	P
4♠			

How do you continue?

9) Dummy has  $\spadesuit$ QJ53. You hold  $\spadesuit$ T942 behind the dummy. Declarer in  $3\clubsuit$  leads the  $\spadesuit$ K from his hand at trick-two, before drawing trumps. (Assume that partner is known to hold  $\spadesuit$ A, but nothing is known about anyone's  $\spadesuit$  length.)

- a) Partner wins the  $\spadesuit$ A. Which card do you play? Is your card defined as showing count, or suit preference? If count, how do you help partner distinguish this holding from a doubleton?
- b) Partner ducks, which card do you play? Is your card count? Or suit preference? If count, how do you continue when partner plays his Ace on the next round of the suit? Do you have a clear way to give count from a four-card holding to help partner distinguish it from a doubleton?

10) From the Bermuda Bowl/Venice Cup in Beijing in 1995:

Partner leads the  $A\heartsuit$  against  $4\spadesuit$ .

$\spadesuit$  QT76  
 $\heartsuit$  65  
 $\diamond$  T85  
 $\clubsuit$  AK43



$\spadesuit$  954  
 $\heartsuit$  KJT987  
 $\diamond$  Q432  
 $\clubsuit$  ---

N	E	S	W
		P	$3\heartsuit$
$3\spadesuit$	P	$4\spadesuit$	P
P	P		

How do you (East) signal at trick-one? Can you tell your partner to give you a  $\clubsuit$  ruff?

11)

Partner leads the  $\diamond K$  against 3NT (asking for attitude).  
Dummy has a singleton  $\diamond$ . What card do you play from Txxx?  
What card from Jxx? How does partner know the difference?

Take a look at this common situation:

You lead the  $K\diamond$ , and see the following:

$\spadesuit$  KQ4  
 $\heartsuit$  642  
 $\diamond$  5  
 $\clubsuit$  QJT975

$\spadesuit$  T72  
 $\heartsuit$  873  
 $\diamond$  KQ986  
 $\clubsuit$  A6

--

 $\diamond 7$ 

$\diamond$  2

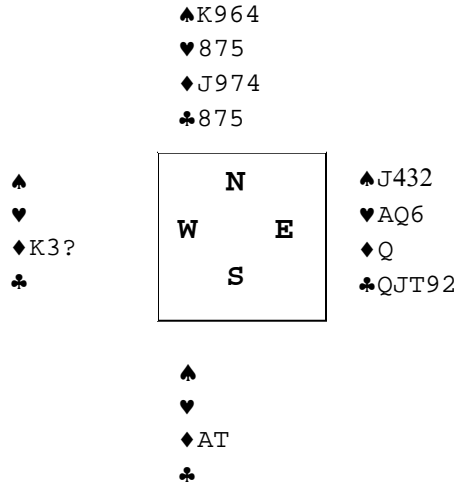
N	E	S	W
		1NT	P
3NT	P	P	P
P			

Should you continue  $\diamond$ 's or not? If partner has  $\diamond J73$  you want to continue - if he has T743 you want to shift. You would probably like to know which it is.

Suppose you decide that you don't know, and elect to shift to  $\spadesuit$ 's because of the danger of  $\diamond AJx$  in declarer's hand. Suppose that partner plays the  $\spadesuit 3$  under dummy's King, then follows with the  $8\clubsuit$  to declarer's King. Declarer continues a second  $\clubsuit$  and partner plays the  $\clubsuit 3$ . Now what?

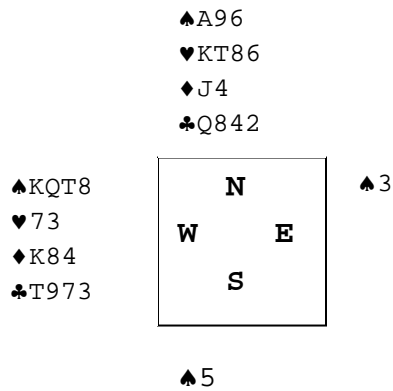
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12) You are East, defending 2NT with 4315 distribution, and partner (of course) leads a  $\spadesuit$ . Declarer wins, and (of course), continues  $\spadesuit$ 's, forcing you to discard.



Mercifully, partner wins the 2nd  $\spadesuit$  saving you from another early discard. How do you get partner to play a  $\clubsuit$ ?

11) After 1NT-3NT, you lead the  $\spadesuit$ K and see the following:



What now? Does partner have the  $\spadesuit$ 2 or does declarer have it? Is partner trying to encourage with J32? Or perhaps discourage with 743? Is there any way to know?

*KTM SUGGESTIONS FOR SOLVING THESE PROBLEMS.*

- 1) **WHEN PARTNER LEADS YOUR UNBID 5-CARD SUIT VS. NT, DO NOT RETURN YOUR ORIGINAL 4<sup>TH</sup> BEST.** The spot-card is completely unreadable and partner will be guessing. From his point of view, either you, or declarer, may have 3, or 4, or 5 cards in the suit, and your poor partner has no clue which. Give him a break.

There are two schools of thought here - both have problems, but each is an improvement over the standard "original 4<sup>th</sup> best."

- a) **RETURN YOUR LOWEST CARD**, which will look like you started with four, so that partner knows the suit may be running. Don't leave him wondering if you may have only 3, with declarer holding a 5-card suit. This is especially a problem when dummy has a singleton. He may still not get it right, but at least he has a chance. He has more information, and has a better shot. Leave it to him to unblock in case you started with five - he will if he can. He's still guessing, of course, but he has more information - he now **KNOWS** that declarer has at most four cards in the suit. If you return your original fourth best, he will often be stuck with an insoluble "5-or-3" problem. Take him off the hook.

- b) **RETURN YOUR ORIGINAL 3<sup>RD</sup> BEST.** Partner will notice that there are two lower missing spot-cards and will be suspicious that they may both be in your hand - especially if you have discussed the problem. And sometimes he will know they **MUST** be in your hand. Again, this is not infallible - sometimes declarer can fool you, depending upon the spot-cards, but again partner has more information and has a better shot at going right. (In fact, sometimes he will have a 100% play, when he knows from the opponents' methods, or their auction, or declarer's play, that declarer **CANNOT** hold five cards in the suit. Then he will know that you **DO**.)

My opinion is that you must do both, depending upon the



circumstances at the time. You have to think out each situation and do what will work. Returning the original 3<sup>rd</sup> best works out better more often, perhaps, but it's not so simple. For example:

- o You usually don't want to return 3<sup>rd</sup> best when you are in the "5-or-3" situation - partner will think that you may have 3 and declarer may have 5.
- o However, you can usually afford to return original 3<sup>rd</sup> best when you hold the Jack or 10, and sometimes with the 9, since partner will be able to tell from declarer's failure to play that card that he cannot hold it. In this case, 3<sup>rd</sup> best is clearly superior because it is totally readable.
- o And, of course, it is sometimes clear from the bidding that declarer cannot hold five cards in the suit, in which case it is just plain silly to return the original 5<sup>th</sup> best (or 4<sup>th</sup> best!) and leave partner wondering if declarer holds 4 cards in the suit. In such a case original 3<sup>rd</sup> best is clearly superior - partner will know for certain that you hold 5.
- o When there is a doubleton in dummy it is clearly better to return the lowest - partner will automatically unblock because declarer CANNOT hold 4 - so he will cater to the possibility that you may have 5.
- o Sometimes you'll simply have to return the lowest (original 5<sup>th</sup> best) and hope for the best - any other card will give partner the impossible "5-or-3" problem. But, keep in mind that returning lowest gives partner a problem in thinking that the suit may be 4441 - you'll have to gauge each hand and decide which is best based on the spot-cards you can see and what you know partner will be able to figure out for himself.

In the case above, South should simply return the ♥6 at trick-two. Looking at the ten - he knows that partner will be able to read the position when declarer fails to play the ten. Of course declarer should play the Jack at Trick 2, to give the defense a genuine problem (JTxx) - but this world class declarer failed to do so. If all your opponents play perfectly you will have some insoluble problems. But you can give yourself a head-start here.

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2) **WHEN DUMMY HAS A LONG, SOLID AND POSSIBLY ENTRYLESS SUIT, GIVE COUNT IN THAT SUIT AT TRICK-ONE.**

In this case, East must play the ♠6 at trick-one to show an even number of **CLUBS**. West will know from the bidding that East does not have a ♣ void (no double of 6♥, no splinter, no jump in ♠'s, no save), and will avoid the catastrophic club shift made at most tables in Santiago. (Of course, you can guess that one reason I include this hand is that we got it right at our table!)

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3) **SPLIT SECOND-HIGH FROM EQUAL HONORS WHEN FOLLOWING SUIT IN 3<sup>RD</sup> SEAT.**

When you play the Jack, partner knows you don't hold both the King AND Queen (you'd play the Queen), and can place the King in declarer's hand if he can't see it himself.

If you have such an agreement, then, in this case, East must play the ♥J at trick-one; the play of the ten can only be from JT, or KJT, or AJT, and therefore denies the Queen. The play of the Jack is from Jack alone, or, QJ or AQJ. In most cases (as in the one above) partner will know what to do.

(Our expert, who doesn't want to be named in order to protect his partner, played for the second layout and was wrong. He had to continue ♥'s.)

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4) This one is easy.

**WHENEVER PARTNER MAY PLAY YOU FOR KQ DOUBLETION, AND YOU DON'T WANT HIM TO, DON'T GIVE HIM A CHANCE.**

Lead a low ♦ at trick-two. Partner will win the Ace and try to give you a ♦ ruff, of course, but neither of you will be miserable when you win your ♦Q.

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5) **SIGNAL ATTITUDE AT TRICK-ONE - NOT COUNT.**

In a potential ruffing situation, don't encourage if you are not ruffing the third round. Partner can't get it right if you do. This situation is a crucial one and will cost you a lot of IMPs if your agreements are not clear. **WHEN PARTNER LEADS AN ACE (OR K) AND QXX OR LONGER APPEARS IN DUMMY, DON'T ENCOURAGE IF YOU AREN'T THE ONE WHO IS RUFFING.** Discourage at trick-one, and then give present count the next time you play the suit.

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6) a & b. (See #5). Discourage in both cases. These are both potential ruffing situations. **SIGNAL ATTITUDE AT TRICK-ONE - NOT COUNT.** You are not ruffing the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of the suit, so don't encourage ♦'s.

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7) This is a very difficult hand to solve, but the only possibility lies in using **"OBVIOUS SHIFT" PRINCIPLES WHEN SIGNALING ATTITUDE AT TRICK-ONE.**

Using Obvious Shift principles, partner's ♥2 at trick-one says, "Please don't play a ♥, AND I can stand the obvious shift" - which is clearly ♦'s.

In the second layout 3<sup>rd</sup> hand has a big problem. He wants a ♣ shift, not a ♦ shift. But a low heart will suggest the obvious shift, which is ♦'s. So, in theory, he would encourage ♥'s, suggesting that he cannot stand the obvious shift, and may or may not want a ♣ shift. And partner will have to guess which.

However, in this particular situation it is extremely dangerous to encourage ♥'s, as we've already seen above (#5 & #6). Partner may very well play you to be ruffing a heart and go wrong. But still, you can see that it is the only chance, so perhaps you will take the risk this time.

Perhaps the hand is unsolvable as it is because of the risk in encouraging ♥'s. But, of course, had EW bid and raised ♥'s it would be an easy defense using "Obvious Shift" principles. 3<sup>rd</sup> hand cannot want a

heart continuation. Therefore, a low heart says, "I can stand the obvious shift (♦'s) and a high ♥ says, "Please don't make the obvious shift." Opening leader will have no choice but to play a ♣ at trick-two and hope for the existing layout.

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8) I played a ♦ at trick-two, because my partner told me to! It was a good idea...



We use Obvious Shift principles at trick-one: The 2♣ discouraged ♣'s and said, "I can stand the Obvious Shift." But, of course, there is nothing obvious about which red suit to play.

**WHEN THERE IS NO OBVIOUS PLAY, THEN, BY DEFAULT, WE ARBITRARILY DEFINE THE LOWER-RANKING ALTERNATIVE AS THE "OBVIOUS SHIFT."**

In this case, then, ♦'s were defined as the obvious shift and I merely followed orders, having nothing better to do. Most tables continued ♣'s rather than break a red suit for declarer and 4♠ was unbeatable. We won 11 IMPs (but we still lost the trials...)

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9) Make clear agreements on how, and when, you give count from four cards. (There are many ways to do this and most are equally good, so long as you avoid the ambiguous 3<sup>rd</sup> best card from a four-card holding, which is too often unreadable whatever your signaling methods may be.)

*KTM Suggestions (assuming Standard Signals):*

- **GIVE COUNT ONLY WHEN PARTNER NEEDS IT FOR HIS PLAY IN THE SUIT.**
- **ALWAYS GIVE COUNT WHEN IT MAY MATTER TO PARTNER AND CAN'T HELP DECLARER.**
- **WHEN GIVING COUNT FROM A FOUR-CARD HOLDING, PLAY THE HIGHEST CARD YOU CAN SPARE.**
- **WHEN GIVING PRESENT COUNT FROM A REMAINDER OF THREE, PLAY THE LOWEST CARD IN YOUR HAND.**
- **IF YOU SIGNAL WITH AN HONOR CARD, OR A HIGH SPOT-CARD, YOU DENY POSSESSION OF THE TOUCHING HONOR OR SPOT-CARD IMMEDIATELY ABOVE THE CARD YOU PLAY. (JACK DENIES THE QUEEN, 9 DENIES THE TEN, ETC.)**

*Applying these rules to the problem hand above...*

- *Whether or not you give count when partner wins his ♦A will depend upon the sense of the hand. If partner may need to play a second ♦ to cut declarer off from dummy, you'll give count. Otherwise your card should be suit-preference.*
  - *If the sense of the hand determined that this was a suit-preference situation, then you will give present count on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round (with the deuce, your lowest card)*
  - *If you determined that this was a count situation, you will give suit-preference on the second round.*
- *Give count if partner ducks his ♦A (give count with the ten - the highest card you can spare - if you play the nine you will deny the ten and partner will play you for a doubleton)*
  - *When the suit is continued, give suit-preference - partner presumably knows the count.*
  - *If there may be still be any ambiguity between 2-cds and 4-cds, give present count on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round (with the deuce - the lowest in your hand).*

*Use this deal to clarify your own partnership rules if they are not 100% clear:*

- *Do you agree that the sense of the hand will determine whether this is a count situation or a suit-preference situation?*

- Assuming that the sense of the hand dictates that this is a count situation, you play (circle all that apply):
    - a) Highest from an even number?
    - b) Second high from an even number?
    - c) Lowest from an even number?
    - d) Second lowest from an even number?
    - e) The play of the 9 denies the 10?
    - f) The play of the 10 denies the 9?
    - g) Highest followed by lowest from four (i.e., present count)?
    - h) Second highest, followed by original 3<sup>rd</sup> best?
    - i) Lowest, followed by highest? (i.e., UDCA present count)
    - j) Highest followed by suit-preference?
    - k) Lowest followed by suit-preference? (UDCA)
    - l) Other?
- 

10) Perhaps you play 3-way signals when you're known to hold unusual length in the suit. A middle card encourages, while both high and low cards are suit-preference signals. That's a good scheme, and a popular one among top players, but it won't always solve your problem.

On this deal, are you confident that partner will be able to read your ♥7 as a low card? Perhaps he has a singleton A♥ and it will look like a middle card to him (i.e., encouraging). Even if he has a doubleton ♥, the 7 is pretty high.

A better signaling scheme is Attitude at trick-one at all times (using obvious shift principles), even when you are known to hold unusual length in the suit led. But, in addition,

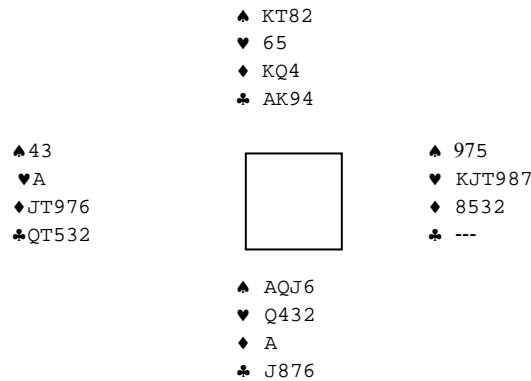
**USE AN "ALARM CLOCK" SIGNAL TO TELL PARTNER TO THINK TWICE ABOUT HIS PLAY BECAUSE THERE IS SOMETHING UNUSUAL ABOUT THE HAND.**

It's called an ALARM CLOCK because the card you play is so unusual and unexpected that it is supposed to "wake him up."

Any unusual honor can function as an ALARM CLOCK signal, but it's practical to reserve the Jack exclusively for this purpose. When you signal with the Jack you are saying, "Wake up and do something unusual." If you don't hold the Jack, you will usually be able to spare the King or Queen.

In this case, if you play any ♥ other than the Jack, partner may read it as encouraging. If you play the ♥7, even assuming partner can read it correctly as discouraging, he will still interpret it as suggesting ♦'s (the obvious shift). In order to get a ♣ shift, you must play the J♥ - an ALARM CLOCK. Partner will scratch his head and think, "He could have gotten a heart continuation with any high ♥; he could have gotten a ♦ shift with any low ♥; he MUST want a ♣ shift pretty badly - he must be ruffing a ♣."

It was good to have an agreement this time:



Most tables made 4♠ after a ♥ lead and a ♦ shift, but there were two pairs in the field with agreements good enough to cover this situation, and 4♠ was one down.

- 11) If you encourage with both Txxx and Jxx, how can partner know which you hold. How can he know whether to continue ♦'s or shift? How can he know if declarer holds AJx?

Obviously, you must discourage with Txxx in order to prevent the ignominy of the Bath Coup. In most cases, the opening leader's problems at trick-two will revolve around the location of the Jack. Therefore, a

simple, and logical way to signal in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat is to agree that

**YOUR ATTITUDE SIGNAL AT TRICK-ONE ALWAYS REVOLVES AROUND THE JACK.**

If you can't see it (and partner didn't promise it with his lead) then you *MUST* discourage at trick-one.

But then how can you tell partner that you have four cards in his suit (i.e., that declarer may have AJ doubleton). Of course, you can tell him when you get an opportunity to discard. But that may be too late.

The obvious answer is to **USE SMITH ECHO** - the ♣8 followed by the ♣3 - suggesting that you like the opening lead. If you discourage at trick-one, then give a positive Smith Echo at trick-two, partner will be able to tell that you do not have the ♦J. He will also know, from your Smith Echo, that you still like the suit. That can only be a four-card holding. He will know the entire position. So, when it is wrong to continue from his side he'll avoid a disastrous play. And, when it is right to do so, he will be able to continue when he gains the lead (and perhaps drop declarer's now singleton Jack).

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- 12) Of course you could discard the ♣Q (or the deuce if you use UDCA), but throwing away a winner is not appealing.

If you use standard signals, you will probably try the ♠2, or the ♥6, and hope that partner guesses well.

A better method is Lavinthal discards, where you discard only from suits you don't want led. A high discard asks for the higher-ranking of the other two suits - a low one for the lower-ranking. You could discard the ♥6 and hope partner can read it as low. Or you could risk the ♠2 which is clearly suit-preference for ♣'s. But there is a downside to Lavinthal. If you are dealt the wrong spot-cards (all high, or all low) in the suit you don't like, you are stuck. In addition, you have no way to play a neutral card - you are virtually commanding a shift when you



discard. And you cannot ask for a shift by playing a card in the suit you do like, which you will sometimes want to do. The scheme is good, but fairly inflexible. Still, it is a great improvement over standard signaling.

An even better, more flexible, discarding scheme is **ODD-EVEN, OR ROMAN, DISCARDS**. An odd spot-card says "I like this suit. An even spot-card says "I don't like this suit," and may be suit-preference for the other two suits. If you are dealt the wrong spot cards for your message in one suit, you may be able to turn to another. If you have all odd spot-cards in all suits (rare), you can play a high one to discourage (low odd cards are more encouraging). If you have all even spot-cards you can send conflicting messages, and partner will notice that your cards are all even and may figure out your problem. You have great flexibility and will very rarely encounter any difficulty in sending your message.

In this case, either Lavinthal or Odd-Even will work out just fine. Using odd-even you will play the ♠2 (or the ♥6) just as you would using Lavinthal, and partner will have the same information. But in the long run you will find that Odd-Even discards are superior because of their flexibility.

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13) If you use standard signaling there is no solution to this sort of dilemma. You had better guess well!

You may continue ♠'s and find declarer with something like ♠J52 ♥AQ92 ♦Q52 ♣AK5 (your defense just gave him his 9<sup>th</sup> trick) Or, you may shift and find that partner held ♠J32 and that a ♠ continuation at trick-two was necessary to beat the contract.

The solution is to use

**UDCA (UPSIDE DOWN COUNT AND ATTITUDE) SIGNALS.**

UDCA will solve the problem easily, and is clearly superior to Standard signaling in this sort of situation. When you want to encourage you play low (in this case the

♠2) and partner cannot misread your intentions. When you want to discourage you signal with the highest spot-card you can spare and partner notices that there are several lower ones missing, thus making your card more readable.

The advantages of UDCA are fairly clear.

- a) When you want to discourage in a suit, you can usually afford to throw away your high spot-cards. But, when you want to encourage, often you cannot spare one of your high ones without costing a trick in the suit.
- b) Your high cards are more readable to partner because you can spare the highest one you hold more often in suits where you have no interest.
- c) Declarer can't false-card effectively nearly so often as he can when you play standard signals. In this case, he can try the deuce, from J52, but partner's high spot-card will defeat him.

In this case, from ♠743 East would play his highest spot-card(♠7) and West would have no difficulty in reading it as discouraging.

Of course, as in all signaling methods, there will be times when you wish you weren't playing UDCA. When you are dealt all high spot-cards, and you want to encourage, you will occasionally run into some difficulty. But the problem is not nearly so serious as that presented by standard signals where you will sometimes have to risk blowing a trick in the suit in order to get partner to continue.

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