

Dealer: W
Vul: ALL

♠ AK7
♥ J73
♦ 1063
♣ Q1097

♠ Q954
♥ 852
♦ KQ4
♣ K53

W	N	E	S
P	P	1C	P
1NT	P	3C	P
4C	P	5C	P
P	P		

Contract 5C by East. South leads S4. With NS playing low encourage, the first 3 tricks go:

1. S4, SA, S8, S6
2. CQ, D9, CA, C3
3. CJ, CK, C7, H4

What should South do now?

DEFENCE 17 – IMPROVING DEFENSIVE SIGNALS IV

Dealer: W
Vul: ALL

	♠ 10832		
	♥ K1064		
	♦ 98752		
	♣		
♠ AK7		♠ J6	
♥ J73		♥ AQ9	
♦ 1063		♦ AJ	
♣ Q1097		♣ AJ8642	
	♠ Q954		
	♥ 852		
	♦ KQ4		
	♣ K53		

W	N	E	S
P	P	1C	P
1NT	P	3C	P
4C?	P	5C	P
P	P		

South leads S4. With NS playing low encourage, the first 3 tricks go:

4. S4, SA, S8, S6
5. CQ, D9, CA, C3
6. CJ, CK, C7, H4

What should South do now?

In practice, South led H8. Dummy played low and North's H10 was captured by the HQ. The later lead of the HJ captured the HK and declarer made their contract only losing CK and a diamond.

The East declarer can play the hearts for no losers themselves but should be allowed to make a mistake. Like all bids are in the light of bids made earlier, all discards/signals are in the light of signals made earlier:

1. If you encourage on your first discard, it should be a fairly strong signal you want the suit or have something very nice in it.
2. If you discourage in a suit, then encourage in another, you are suggesting you have something in the second suit but it's not so great otherwise you would have encouraged straight away.

There are only 2 sorts of defence:

1. Aggressive defence - getting busy now, even if it is risky, to try to grab your tricks before declarer gets them away. The classic time you do this is when dummy has a long suit which looks like it is running or about to run.
2. Passive defence – sitting back and trying not to give anything away. The classic time you do this is when dummy is very flat and you think you and partner have all the suit covered.

On this hand, South should have been content to return the 3rd trump, taking 2 of declarer's trumps for one of the defence's. This is clearly a sit still defence - dummy is very flat (4333 shape), South has something in both spades and diamonds, and South has been told that their partner has something in hearts but not enough that they emphatically want it led.

Did you notice West's poor 4C bid?

	♠ 10832	
	♥ K1064	
	♦ 98752	
	♣	
♠ AK7		♠ J6
♥ J73		♥ AQ9
♦ 1063		♦ AJ
♣ Q1097		♣ AJ8642
	♠ Q954	
	♥ 852	
	♦ KQ4	
	♣ K53	

W	N	E	S
P	P	1C	P
1NT	P	3C	P
4C?	P	5C	P
P	P		

If 3NT is a half reasonable place to play, you should bid it, particularly in pairs. West was uncomfortable with not knowing the stopper position in hearts and diamonds, but is 4C or 5C likely to be any better with such a flat hand? In these sort of bidding sequences, partner has shown 16+ and could provide the stoppers. The defenders have to find the weak point (no assured thing) and the suit could well block or break benignly.

Even if the defenders find the diamond lead, the diamond suit blocks in the South hand and declarer gets 9 tricks (SAK, HA, DA, and 5 clubs) and can get an overtrick if they are brave enough to finesse the HQ.