

DEFENCE 16 – IMPROVING DEFENSIVE SIGNALS III

	♠ 9		
	♥ Q108765		
	♦ K43		
	♣ Q32		
♠ AKJ1087		♠ 65432	
♥ J		♥ 9	
♦ 9872		♦ AQ65	
♣ 76		♣ J54	
	♠ Q		
	♥ AK432		
	♦ J10		
	♣ AK1098		
S	W	N	E
1H	2S	4H (1)	4S
5H	P	P	P

- (1) Where I have support for my partner's major suit opening, and a defensive pre-empt forces me to the 3 level (ie I lose a level of bidding), I like to stretch the bidding by ONE ie
- (a) 3H is 6-10 (what 2H would have been)
 - (b) 4H is 11-12 invite strength (what 3H would have been)
 - (c) 3S (cuing their pre-empt) is a game going hand

West leads SA and East plays S6 and South SQ. What now?

When you lead an ace and dummy turns up with a singleton, it's clear most of the time that you are going to have to switch to another suit. It makes no sense for partner to give an attitude signal here. Partner should give a SUIT PREFERENCE signal. A high card says partner prefers the higher non-trump suit. A low card says partner prefers the lower non-trump suit.

Here, partner's 6, their highest card, asks for a diamond rather than a club. If West switches to a diamond, the defence get DAQ with the spade and put the contract down. If West doesn't switch to a diamond, declarer will draw trumps and throw 2 diamonds on the clubs and only lose one spade and one diamond and make their contract.

TREAT THIS SIGNAL WITH GREAT CAUTION. Partner is forced to give you a signal and might not want either suit. You might be able to tell on the bidding that partner has very little and that the suit partner is suggesting is unlikely to achieve much. Partner might have a jack in the suit they are signalling and 10 or less in the other suit.

Also be aware that given the singleton in dummy, the best defence might be to lead a trump to cut down on the ruffs declarer can get in dummy.

ONE EXCEPTION: If dummy has the markedly longer trumps (eg due to a transfer), I would still play attitude rather than suit preference to the ace lead. Often the correct defence on a hand is to make the hand with the long trumps (usually declarer) ruff repeatedly. It makes sense to retain this defence where dummy has the long trumps rather than declarer.