

DEFENCE 1 – DEFENDING A NO TRUMP HAND

Dealer: N

Vul: NS

	♠ 853		
	♥ AQJ63		
	♦ 75		
	♣ A72		
♠ K104		♠ J762	
♥ K10754		♥ 8	
♦ KQ83		♦ A1042	
♣ 3		♣ KJ94	
	♠ AQ9		
	♥ 92		
	♦ J96		
	♣ Q10865		

N	E	S	W
P	P	P	1H
P	1NT	P	P
P			

With the bidding, East should respond 1S. You should almost always bid a 4 card major if you can. One of your prime goals in bidding is to find an 8 card or longer major fit. Majors are worth more than minors and the major suit game is at one lower level than the minor suit game. While NTs is worth 10 points more than a same level major suit contract, you frequently get an extra trick or more in the major suit contract from trumping.

South led a 4th highest C6 and the trick went 6,3, A,4.

One of the most important things on defence is to study the cards to the first trick and try to work out what is going on in the suit. If you can, it frequently reveals the correct defence.

What does South know from the first trick?

By playing the CA, North is explicitly denying the CK. “Lead with a leader, follow with a follower”. This means when you are on lead, you lead the top of a sequence of cards headed by an honour (eg K from KQJ). But when you are following to partner’s lead, you play the lowest of the sequence (eg J from KQJ). This tells you partner you might have the higher cards but definitely don’t have the card one below your card.

Declarer played the C4. Players often simply follow suit from lowest to highest. This strongly suggests North has the C2.

Dealer: N
Vul: NS

	♠ 853	
	♥ AQJ63	
	♦ 75	
	♣ A72	
♠ K104		♠ J762
♥ K10754		♥ 8
♦ KQ83		♦ A1042
♣ 3		♣ KJ94
	♠ AQ9	
	♥ 92	
	♦ J96	
	♣ Q10865	

(hand repeated for convenience)

What does North know from the first trick?

South led the C6. North can see the C4,3 and 2 but not the C5. North had agreements with South that they would lead top of 3 small, and 2nd highest for 4 or more small. As South can only have one card below the C6, the lead wasn't from either of these holdings. Thus, the lead looks very much like 4th highest and South has 4 or 5 clubs to at least one honour. This means declarer has at least 4 clubs and possibly 5 on a bad day.

North returned the C7 and the trick went 7,9,10 and a heart discard.

When you are returning your partner's suit:

- 1. From 3 cards, you normally play the 2nd highest then the lowest**
- 2. From 4 or more cards, you normally return the 4th highest though you might return a higher card to finesse something in declarer's hand.**

In returning the C7, South knows North wouldn't lead this card from AJ72 or AJ7, so North must have had A72 and declarer is now clutching KJ. South must switch from clubs. South knows East must have 2 hearts or less (otherwise they would have supported the opening heart bid), so North has 4 or 5 hearts.

South switched to the H9 and the trick went 9, 10, J and 8.

Note North again "following with a follower" in playing the J from QJ. This told South North had the HAQ as declarer didn't win with either of these cards.

North now lead the C2 – 2, J, Q, another discard. South now led a club to the CK to remove the last stop. South will get in later with SA, cash their winning club and lead a heart for partner to take HAQ. Declarer will be 2 down (losing 4 clubs, HAQJ and SA).