

Using the Bidding on Defense

[Link](#) to the slides

Key points:

- The bidding tells a story. “Eavesdrop” into your opponents’ conversation.
- There is always a lot of information in the bidding when defending. Bids specify point ranges and shape.
- Try to picture the whole hand and continually update your picture.
- Pay special attention to signs of weakness or strength in a suit and bids indicating the shape. These are especially useful. There are also high card point inferences.

Below, I include the links to the hands instead of the hands themselves. To practice the hands, I recommend clicking on where it says “South,” which will hide all the other hands.

Hand #1

[Link](#)

Note on the auction: Assume here that E/W play that 2♠ is natural showing 4+ spades and an invitational or better hand.

Solution:

- Looking at the bidding, we know that partner is short in hearts.
- As such, we lead the ♥A.
- When dummy comes down and partner follows to trick 1, we know that East has 5 hearts, meaning that they have exactly 4 spades. As such, partner is 31 in the majors.
- We give partner a ruff at trick 2.
- The second decision point in the hand is that we need to fly ♠A on the first round of spades in order to give partner a second ruff. Since we know partner started with 3 trumps, we know they’ll be able to ruff a second time.

Hand #2

[Link](#)

Notes on the auction: 2NT shows invitational values (good 10–12) and denies a 4 card major. (West’s bidding is aggressive and off-beat on this hand.)

Solution:

- Counting tricks:
 - When dummy comes down, we do not know that diamonds will run for sure, but it seems likely. If that is the case, declarer has 6 diamonds and the heart from trick 1.
 - Counting the points, declarer must have at least one of the ♠A and the ♣A, which makes 8 tricks.
 - Additionally, if they have time, declarer could set up a heart.

- This means that when we get on lead with the $\spadesuit A$, we need to find 3 more tricks in addition to the $\spadesuit A$ and the $\heartsuit A$ off the top. We need to choose which black suit to switch to.
- Since East has at most 3 spades, partner has at least 5. Declarer is also usually long in clubs, so we should switch to a spade.

Hand #3

[Link](#)

Notes on the auction: 2NT is Jacoby, showing 4+ spades and a game forcing hand. $3\clubsuit$ shows club shortness. $3\heartsuit$ is a control bid.

Solution:

- This auction is very telling:
 - $3\heartsuit$ denies a diamond control (show controls up the line).
 - Bidding $4\spadesuit$ wastes a lot of bidding room, so East would almost never bid $4\spadesuit$ with a diamond control.
 - Without a diamond control, East bids $4\spadesuit$ because they know that they don't have slam (two diamonds are cashing).
- We know that two diamonds are cashing, so we want to lead a diamond before declarer can pitch diamonds.
- We know that partner has the $\spadesuit K$.
- If partner only has 2 diamonds, $\spadesuit Kx$, if we lead the $\spadesuit A$, diamonds will get blocked and we will not be able to play a 3rd round if it is cashing. This means we want to lead a *low* diamond.

Advanced Note: Leading the $\spadesuit A$ would be correct if partner has $\spadesuit K$ singleton because then we could cash two rounds and give partner a ruff. This means that to decide between leading a low diamond and the $\spadesuit A$, we need to determine which is more likely: partner has the stiff $\spadesuit K$ and both defenders have 3+ diamonds or partner has $\spadesuit Kx$ and each opponent has 3 diamonds.

Hand #4

[Link](#)

Notes on the auction: EW are playing a normal 2/1 (or Standard American) system. $2\heartsuit$ is inverted minors, showing invitational+ diamond support. 2NT and $3\heartsuit$ are non-forcing for this partnership. 4NT is keycard Blackwood, and $5\heartsuit$ shows 0 or 3 keycards.

Solution:

- The key point in this hand is what we discard on the 4th round of diamonds. We need to choose between keeping 4 spades or 4 clubs.
- After seeing partner follow to 3 rounds of diamonds, we know declarer started with only 3 diamonds. Under a standard system, this means that West is exactly 4432.
- Therefore, the 4th club is useless since neither declarer nor dummy has 4 clubs, so we should pitch our clubs.