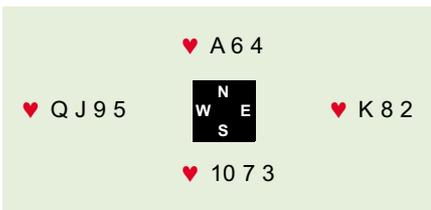


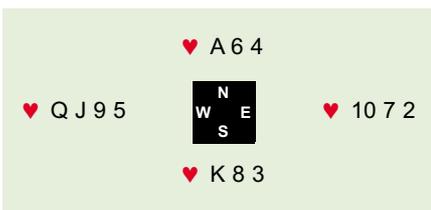
# Signals at Trick One



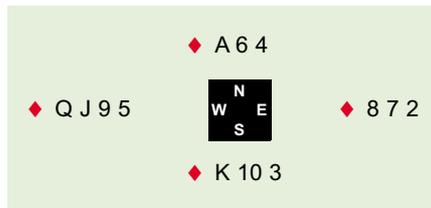
If partner makes an opening lead and you are not trying to win the first trick, you usually want to indicate whether you would like partner to lead the suit again. You do this by means of an attitude signal: you play a high card to encourage (the highest card you can afford) and your lowest card to discourage. Normally your holding in the suit led determines your correct course of action.



West leads the queen; say that declarer plays the ace from dummy. Holding the king, East should encourage with the eight – if West gets in again, the defence have two tricks to take. Similarly:



Again West leads the queen and the ace goes up from dummy. Holding the ten, East knows that West can safely continue the suit, so encourages with the seven. As the lead of the queen promises the jack, both the king (the card above) and the ten (the card below) are useful cards for the leader's partner to hold.



Here East has no reason to suppose that a further heart lead will work and rightly plays the two under the ace. This warns West that declarer has the king and ten. Knowing this, West will, after regaining the lead, switch to a different suit.

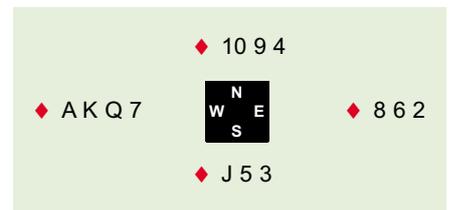
## Further Considerations

Everything I have said up until now applies equally to suit and no-trump contracts. However, in a suit contract, the prospect of scoring a ruff means that you may wish to encourage a continuation without any honours.



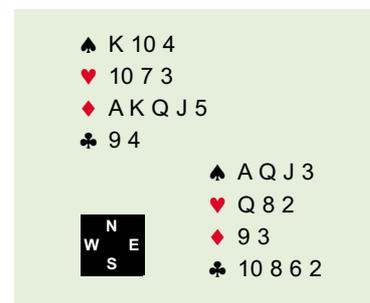
When West leads the ace (showing the king), East envisages a third-round ruff. Accordingly East plays the six and South follows with the three. West cannot be sure that the six is a high card (declarer might be concealing the two) but it is safe enough

to continue with the king. When East plays the two next, completing a 'high-low' signal, West knows to try a third round.



Of course, the leader may continue a suit whatever partner does. Your holding needs to be sufficiently robust to cope with the possibility that declarer has any missing high cards. Here West has no need of help and may continue with a second and third round (and a fourth at no-trumps) even though East plays the two on the first.

Equally, you must take care not to encourage just because you have something useful in the suit led. An encouraging signal tells partner that in your opinion, based on the information available to you, that it is probably best to continue the suit.



North	South
1♦	2♣
2♦	3♣
End	

West leads the ace of hearts. Do you play the eight or the two?

*Continued on page 33 ►*

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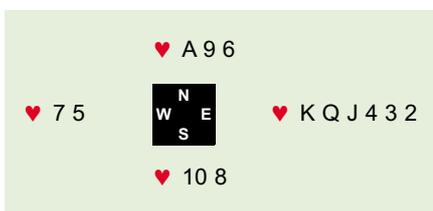
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## POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 32

Normally you would encourage holding the queen, but here you are keen to have a spade switch. The presence of the ten of spades in dummy means that partner will need to lead the suit twice for you to stand a chance of collecting three spade tricks, so you want an immediate switch and play the two of hearts. You intend to win the first spade cheaply, put partner back in with the king of hearts and have another spade lead through dummy.

So far, all your signals have been with spot cards, and normally these are all you can afford. If, however, you have a sequence of honours, you may be able to share the good news with partner.

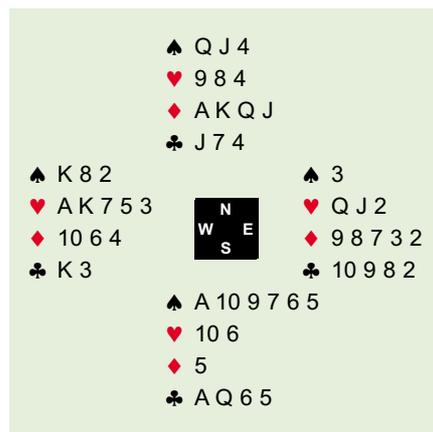


West leads the seven and the ace goes up from dummy. You could play the four, hoping partner will notice that the two and three are missing, but you should issue a much clearer signal: throw the king under the ace. Partner will know you must have a great holding in the suit if you can afford to part with the king.

You are more likely to be able to signal with an honour when partner has already shown strength in the suit:



West leads the ace and what card do you think East should play? Playing the two would discourage hearts and playing the jack would be misleading. The jack would deny the queen and suggest J-x (it cannot be showing the ten as this is in dummy). The correct card is the queen, which shows the jack (unless the queen is a singleton). West can then underlead the king on the second round to put East in. Would you like to see this in the context of a full hand?



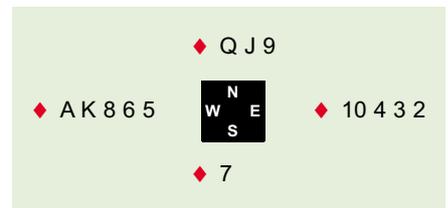
<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>
1NT	4♠
Pass	

West leads the ace of hearts and if East mistakenly plays the two or the jack, then the contract will make. If East plays the two, West will probably cash the heart king next and then switch to the king of clubs, playing East for the queen of clubs (counting South for five spade tricks, four diamonds and the club ace, West would not defend passively). If instead East played the jack, West would continue with the king and another heart expecting East to ruff.

The way to beat the contract is for West to lead a low heart at trick *two*, allowing East to play a club before trumps are drawn. Underleading the king of hearts may seem brave but if East has played the queen, promising the jack, there is nothing to it. If East unexpectedly has a singleton heart, this is not a problem: the heart ruff will be the setting trick.

### Different Messages

If you really want to, you can use only attitude signals on partner's lead, but you will be missing a wealth of opportunities if you do. The objective of any communication is to convey information that is not already available, so if partner can work out whether you like the suit anyway, it makes sense for a signal to convey a different message:



West leads the ace (against a suit contract); assuming West would rarely (if ever) lead an unsupported ace, it is clear that East can have no useful high diamonds. What West really wants to know is whether East has three diamonds, when the king will stand up, or four, when South will ruff the second round. Accordingly, East should give a *count* signal, playing *high* from an *even* number and *low* from an *odd*. Accepted wisdom is to play second highest from a four- or six-card suit, here the four, and highest from a doubleton. To show an odd number you play your lowest card.

*Continued on page 34* ►

**Caspari**

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# POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 33

♦ A 10 4  
 ♦ Q J 8 6 5     N     ♦ K 9 3  
                          W     S  
 ♦ 7 2

West leads the queen and dummy's ace wins. If you think about it, the position of the king is obvious. With the king in hand, declarer would capture the queen with the king, preserving the ace-ten in dummy as a tenace over the jack. Therefore again East should give a count signal, this time the three to denote an odd number.

♦ Q 8  
 ♦ A J 10 7 6     N     ♦ 9 5 4 3  
                          W     S  
 ♦ K 2

We return to no-trumps and West leads the jack, dummy playing the queen. East would cover with the ace or king if able so to do, thus West will know the location of all the cards down to at least the ten whatever low card East plays. What West cannot easily figure out (in the absence of a signal) is whether declarer's king will drop under the ace. So East plays the five, second-highest from a four-card suit.

Finally, if you can live with one more complexity, the layout of the suit led may be such that the defenders evidently cannot score any more tricks in the suit (perhaps dummy is void). In this situation, neither an attitude nor a count signal will serve much purpose. The opening leader is likely to want to switch, so will want to know which suit to switch to.

In this situation the player in third seat should play a *high* card to ask for the *higher-ranking* non-trump suit and a *low* card to ask for the *lower-ranking* non-trump suit.

      ♣ 5  
 ♣ K Q 9 6     N     ♣ A 10 8 7 4 3  
                          W     S  
       ♣ J 2

West leads the king of clubs and spades are trumps. East can play the three to signal strength in diamonds (or possibly the ability to ruff the suit), the ten to ask for a heart and the seven with no particular preference. East might also play the neutral seven to request a club continuation, but with this particular layout overtaking with the ace would be a surer way of ensuring this.

It may take a while for all this to sink in, but do not worry. When you first learn to drive, changing gear and turning a corner seem complicated manoeuvres, but because you do them every time you go out in the car, you soon become familiar with them. It is just like this with defence in bridge. You defend every second hand, so the opportunity to give and look for the signals I have described will come up regularly.

## A Short Quiz

It might help if we end with a short quiz. In each of the examples below, think what card to play at trick one and why.

**Problem 1**

♠ A Q 8 5  
 ♥ 9 8 7 2  
 ♦ A 6  
 ♣ 7 6 5

♠ 10 7 4 2  
 ♥ 5 3  
 ♦ K 10 5 4 3  
 ♣ Q 2

      N  
 W     E  
       S

North	South
3♥	1♥
End	4♥

West leads the two of diamonds and dummy's ace wins.

**Problem 2**

♠ K 10 7 5  
 ♥ K 9 7  
 ♦ K 7 6  
 ♣ K 7 6

♠ A Q 2  
 ♥ 5  
 ♦ Q J 5 4  
 ♣ A 10 9 5 2

      N  
 W     E  
       S

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	1♥
Pass	4♥	End	3♥

<sup>1</sup> Shows heart support and defensive values

West leads the queen of clubs and dummy plays low.

**Problem 3**

♠ A 10 7 5  
 ♥ K Q 10  
 ♦ 8 7 6  
 ♣ 8 7 6

♠ 3 2  
 ♥ J 5 3 2  
 ♦ A J 9 4  
 ♣ 9 5 2

      N  
 W     E  
       S

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♥	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
End			

West leads the ace of hearts and dummy plays low.

## Quiz Answers

### Answer 1

You should play the ten of diamonds, to encourage a diamond continuation. Since West has led the two, you know declarer has another diamond and you would like to have partner put you in so that you can attack clubs from your side of the table. If you failed to make a clear encouraging signal, then partner might, after gaining the lead with the king of hearts, switch to the jack of clubs: if you had the doubleton king of clubs and no diamond entry, that would be the right thing to do. This is the full deal:

♠ A Q 8 5  
 ♥ 9 8 7 2  
 ♦ A 6  
 ♣ 7 6 5

♠ 6 3  
 ♥ K 6  
 ♦ Q 9 7 2  
 ♣ A J 10 9 3

♠ 10 7 4 2  
 ♥ 5 3  
 ♦ K 10 5 4 3  
 ♣ Q 2

♠ K J 9  
 ♥ A Q J 10 4  
 ♦ J 8  
 ♣ K 8 4

      N  
 W     E  
       S

Continued on page 35 ►

## POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 34

### Answer 2

You will be marked with the ace of clubs when declarer fails to win the trick and the position of the ten of clubs is almost certainly irrelevant (if declarer had it, it would be singleton or at most doubleton), so this is a situation where you want to give count. Therefore, you play the two. You hope partner will continue the suit with only three, and perhaps switch to a diamond if declarer has a singleton. This is the full deal:

♠ 8 6 3	♠ K 10 7 5	♠ A Q 2
♥ 8 6 4	♥ K 9 7	♥ 5
♦ 10 9 2	♦ K 7 6	♦ Q J 5 4
♣ Q J 8 3	♣ K 7 6	♣ A 10 9 5 2

♠ J 9 4	♠ A Q 2	♠ A Q 2
♥ A Q J 10 3 2	♥ A Q J 10 3 2	♥ 5
♦ A 8 3	♦ A 8 3	♦ Q J 5 4
♣ 4	♣ 4	♣ A 10 9 5 2

N	E
W	S

### Answer 3

The defending side cannot make any more heart tricks, so East should give a suit-preference signal. An observant partner might read the five of hearts as a high card but there is no need to take any chances. To justify leading an unsupported ace (albeit in a suit you raised) West must have an awkward holding in the minors. So, with the king and queen of hearts set up to provide declarer with discards, it is vital to ensure partner knows that you want a diamond switch, and you should play the jack of hearts.

The full deal is shown below.

♠ A 10 7 5	♠ A 10 7 5	♠ 3 2
♥ K Q 10	♥ K Q 10	♥ J 5 3 2
♦ 8 7 6	♦ 8 7 6	♦ A J 9 4
♣ 8 7 6	♣ 8 7 6	♣ 9 5 2

♠ Q	♠ A 10 7 5	♠ 3 2
♥ A 9 8 7 4	♥ K Q 10	♥ J 5 3 2
♦ K 10 2	♦ 8 7 6	♦ A J 9 4
♣ K 10 4 3	♣ 8 7 6	♣ 9 5 2

N	E
W	S

♠ K J 9 8 6 4	♠ A 10 7 5	♠ 3 2
♥ 6	♥ K Q 10	♥ J 5 3 2
♦ Q 5 3	♦ 8 7 6	♦ A J 9 4
♣ A Q J	♣ 8 7 6	♣ 9 5 2

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