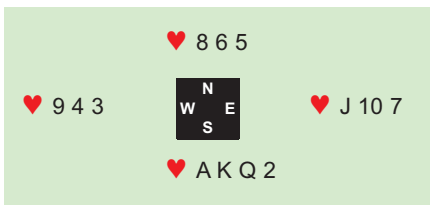


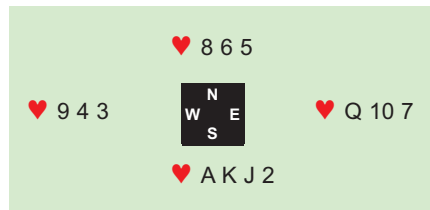
Weakness in dummy (Part II)



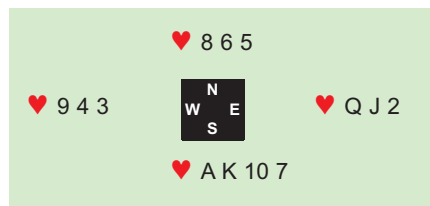
In the last issue of BRIDGE, we considered the position where dummy had a weak suit and you could lead round to it. You may recall that leading the suit was often safe and frequently attacking. This time we will study the complimentary position in which dummy has a weak suit but you sit to its left. As you will see, this new situation tends to be less productive and involves more risk. All the same, it can be a good idea to lead a suit in which at least one opponent is weak. If you and your partner hold the bulk of the strength, you can surround declarer's high cards. We begin, however, with when you have a worthless holding in the key suit.



This suit is safe for you, West, to lead. Declarer can score nothing other than what is due.



The same probably applies on this second layout. Declarer's normal play in the suit is to finesse East for the queen. So, assuming dummy has an entry to spare, leading the suit does nothing that your opponent could not do anyway.



Partner's holding is stronger still and, again, your side has no obvious tricks due in the suit.

In this layout declarer would, if you did not lead the suit, require two entries to dummy to finesse twice (assuming East split honours on the first round). This requirement for two entries makes it more likely that your leading it will prove costly. Dummy does not always have two entries readily available. You will notice, too, that even though your partner has two honours, leading the suit achieves nothing positive. Partner would need three honours or the king-queen for leading the suit to get you anywhere.



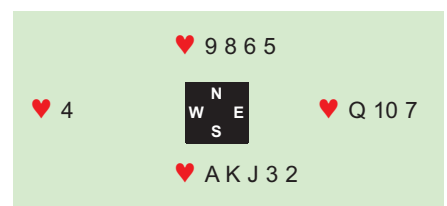
Probably the best time to lead from weakness through weakness is when you suspect declarer holds a doubleton. In this situation, the shortness of declarer's holding partly negates any positional advantage. Here, you can set up one trick (four in a no-trump contract) by leading the suit. Although the defenders are at a disadvantage in many areas of the play, one thing at which they should excel is felling unguarded honours. For example, there is no question here that partner will finesse the ten and lose to the bare jack.

★★★★★

Why do I say that a doubleton is the target to attack rather than a singleton? In a suit contract, you can only ever take one trick if declarer has a singleton. If it is the ace, leading the suit achieves little (except maybe setting up a forcing game). If it is not the ace, you can only take one trick in the suit in any event. I guess it might still be a good idea to cash the ace quickly if declarer threatens to discard the singleton on dummy's long suit. In a no-trump contract, assuming that the opponents bid soundly, it will be rare for declarer to hold a singleton facing a weak suit in dummy. So, while it would be good to attack the suit if that were the situation, in practice the chance will seldom arise.

★★★★★

Can it ever cost more than an entry to lead from weakness?



If you hit the main opposing suit, you may spare declarer a guess. Other things being equal, with this holding declarer would normally cash the ace and king rather than finesse East for the queen.



Continued on page 23 ►

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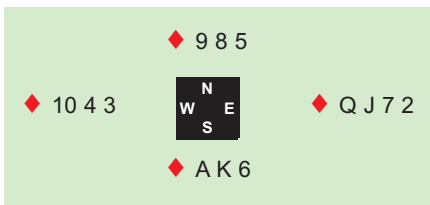
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POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 22

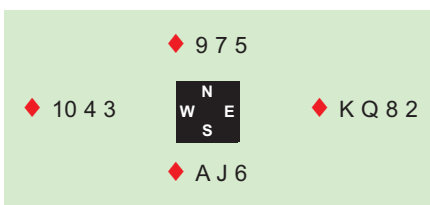
This position carries a similar danger. Left to play the suit, declarer is most unlikely to finesse East for the jack and ten, but if you broach the suit, the position becomes marked on the second round.

★★★★★

Of course, you will usually have some clue from the bidding when declarer has a suit as strong as those shown in these last two examples. Typically, such a suit will be trumps. So, just as one generally does not lead a singleton trump, one needs to think twice about switching round to declarer when holding only one trump.



A lead from the ten is generally better than a lead from all low cards. For the lead to be productive, any two honours with partner should now do the trick.



A lead from the ten is also less likely to be leading into a suit in which declarer needs two finesses. The danger remains, however, as you see here. To score a trick with the jack of diamonds declarer would (assuming partner splits honours) require two leads from dummy. If you lead the suit, dummy needs just one entry.



A lead from the jack is very nearly as safe as a lead from the ten and stands a

better chance of generating a trick. Here partner has only one honour but there is a chance of setting up a trick. If you lead the suit once and partner leads it the next time, your jack will become good.



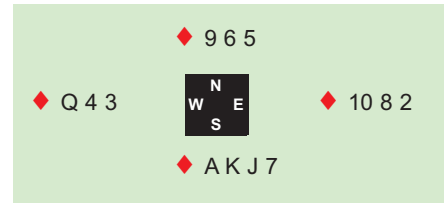
Sometimes a lead from the jack can spare declarer a guess as well as solving an entry problem. With this layout, if you lead the suit, the king and queen are bound to score. If you do not lead the suit, two good things might happen. If dummy has only one entry, declarer may well finesse the ten on the first round as the best chance for two tricks. Even if dummy has two entries, declarer has to consider the possibility that you would smoothly duck the first round (when holding A-x-x), in which case finessing the ten on the second round would be the winning move.



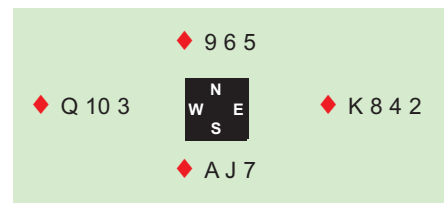
When you hold a doubleton jack, leading the suit becomes riskier. If you lead the jack on this layout, declarer is likely to win and later finesse the ten to make the first three tricks in the suit. Even if you lead low, partner has to put up the queen and declarer can make three tricks in a variety of ways – something that would not be possible if you left the suit alone.

In general, when making a switch, you want to lead a suit that partner has signalled for or bid, or at any rate, one that declarer has not shown. In all these circumstances, there must be a fair chance that partner has a decent holding in the suit.

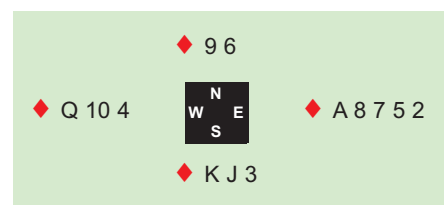
Leads from length with the jack, ten or a low card at the top are all relatively passive and comparatively safe. When you hold the queen or higher, you have to consider more seriously the possibility of leading into a tenace. If you hold an honour that ranks immediately above one of declarer's, a lead may cost not just an entry or tempo but a trick.



If you lead a diamond and catch this layout, you can wave goodbye to the queen.



Of course, unless the bidding marks declarer with all the missing high cards, it is a little unlucky to lead from the queen and find that you have led into the ace-king-jack. Much of the time partner will hold one of the three missing honours and your switch will not cost and may do some good. Moreover, the fact that you hold the ten to support the queen increases the chance of setting up winners. If partner has an entry as well as the king, you can make two tricks despite declarer's A-J-x.

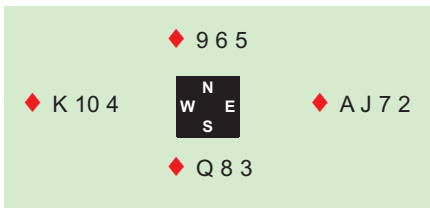


In a suit contract, whether this is a good suit to lead depends on whether the defenders want one trick or two. If one will suffice then you (West) can happily lead it. If partner has the king, you can set up a winner. If partner has the ace, it makes at once. When, however, you need two tricks, it may be better to leave

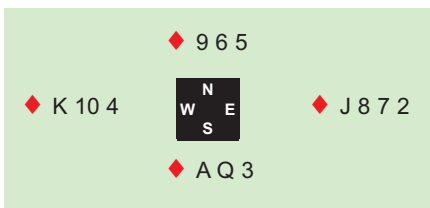
Continued on page 24 ►

POTTAGE ON DEFENCE continued from page 23

the suit alone. If declarer holds the king-jack and either North or East leads the suit, declarer is on a guess.



A lead from the king, especially if you have the ten or jack in support, ups the stakes further. If the layout is like this, a switch to the four works very well. Partner wins with the ace and returns the suit, allowing you to finesse the ten and make three quick winners in the suit. The lead would also work well if partner had the queen and South the ace-jack.



Unfortunately, a lead from K-10 or K-J carries the risk of hitting a suit like this.



A lead from the king tends to be safer, but also less attacking, either if your intermediates are poor or the opponents

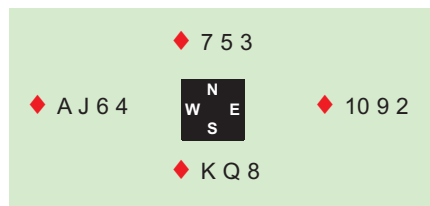
have length in the suit. With a layout like this, a single lead from the West seat probably does no harm: declarer makes three tricks in any event.

★★★★★

A lead from the ace is the most daring of all. Whether it succeeds tends to depend on whether partner has the king.



In a no-trump contract, or if neither opponent appears to be short in the suit, it is generally better to lead low rather than the ace. You want to save the ace to capture declarer's possible queen. With this layout, leading low gives you three tricks (four in no-trumps).



Leading low also caters to this type of layout. Again, you want your ace to capture a high card.

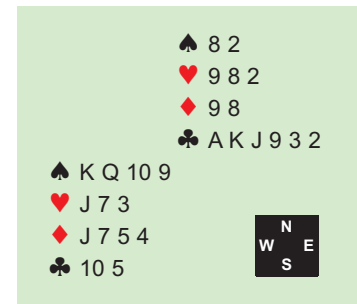
★★★★★

You may have wondered why none of the layouts has included an attractive sequence from which to lead. The reason is that you would probably have led the

suit initially. If you are lucky enough to hold two juicy sequences, a switch to the second is unlikely to cost when dummy holds small cards in it.

★★★★★

The time has come to consider some full deals.



West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣	Pass	1♦
End			3NT

You lead the king of spades, on which go the two, three and five. Assuming partner would encourage vigorously, overtake or maybe unblock if holding an honour, you place South with the A-J of spades and want to switch. Which suit should you try?

Intuitively you probably say to a heart because South has bid diamonds. Logic confirms that the intuitive answer is also the correct one. To beat the contract you probably need to find partner with the queen of clubs and a red ace. There is then a chance of scoring three spades, a club and the red ace. The point here is that a switch to the wrong suit will not necessarily be fatal if declarer has only two winners in the suit. Since it is clearly more likely that declarer has A-K-Q-x-x of diamonds than A-K-Q alone in hearts, a heart switch is in order. Assuming the opponents are playing Acol (i.e. four-card majors), it is also more likely that declarer has A-K-Q-x of diamonds than A-K-Q-x of hearts. If one does not open one heart when holding A-K-Q-x of the suit, then there is little point in playing four-card majors. A further reason to prefer a heart switch is that partner may have started with only three spades but A-Q in one of the red suits. Again, it is a bit more likely that partner has A-Q-x-x of hearts (six possible holdings) than A-Q-x of diamonds (four possible holdings). This is the full deal:

Continued on page 25 ►



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

Partner wins with the heart ace and returns the four of spades to indicate an original four-card holding. Declarer probably ducks again, so you win the second spade and persevere with the suit. Declarer probably tests the diamonds next but partner discards a heart on the third round. Declarer eventually takes the club finesse but again has no luck.

six (your methods are to give count when attitude is obvious) and ace. Declarer pleases you by leading not the ace of hearts but the three. You win with the king. It looks like the ace of clubs was a singleton and declarer is trying to get to dummy in trumps by knocking out the ace-king. What do you lead next?

There is nothing in the bidding or the early play to tell you whether declarer's weak spot is in spades or diamonds. Your own holding needs to guide you. If your side makes two trump tricks, you will need two more tricks. Which is more likely, two spade tricks or two diamond tricks? Since your spades are jack high but you hold the diamond queen, it must be the latter. For a low spade switch to set up two tricks, partner would need two picture cards. In diamonds, though, so long as it is the ace or king, one will do.

This is the full deal:

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

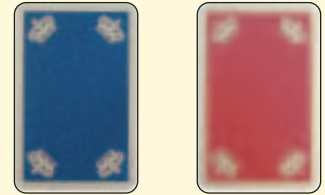
♠ 8 6 2		♠ 8 6 2
♥ 10 9 2		♥ 10 9 2
♦ 9 8 2		♦ 9 8 2
♣ K Q J 3		♣ K Q J 3
♠ J 9 7 3		♠ K 10 5 4
♥ K		♥ A 6
♦ Q 10 5 4		♦ K 6 3
♣ 10 9 8 5		♣ 7 6 4 2

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	4♥
End			

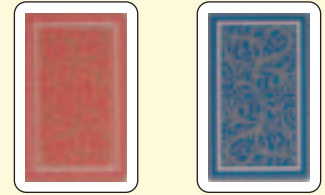
You lead the ten of clubs to the three,

After the king of diamonds drives out the ace (it does not help declarer to hold up), your side scores two tricks in each red suit to beat the contract. ■

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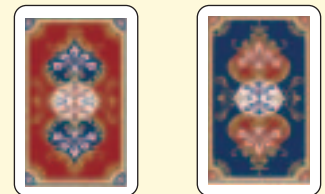
Royal Crowns



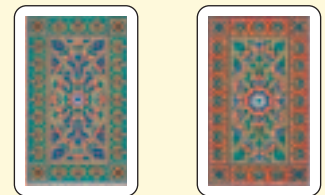
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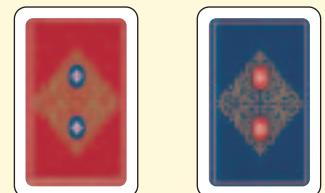
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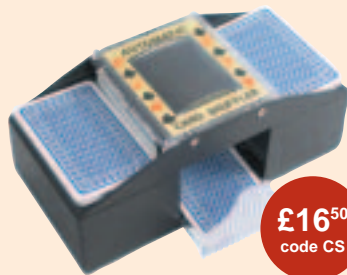
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