



Pat Harrington

The bridge player with a bad attitude

Newer players sometimes consider their time on defense as a chance to relax and prepare for the next deal. How well you defend can determine whether you win or lose. Defense takes planning and teamwork. You can't be a good defender without help from your partner. Consider the defense from West's viewpoint after the following auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

You hold:

♠ 73 ♥ AK105 ♦ QJ84 ♣ 982,
so you start with the ♥A. This is the dummy:
♠ AJ92 ♥ 863 ♦ K6 ♣ KQ75.

Play & Learn

On your ♥A, partner follows with the 2, declarer the 4. What will you lead at trick two? More important, what is your plan for defending?

While the opening lead of an ace from ace-king in an unbid suit is common, it is by no means automatic to continue with the king at trick two. You have new information available to help you decide what to do next.

The bidding gave you clues before you made the opening lead. Declarer showed a hand of approximately opening strength, but not enough to explore for slam. Once you lead, the cards you see in dummy can give you more help. Dummy has a bare opener, so partner could have some strength. Partner is third to play, and he can provide a lot of help.

When you lead an ace against a suit contract, partner gives an attitude signal to help you know whether to continue. In standard signaling, a low card from partner discourages, a high card encourages. Therefore, East's ♥2 is a clue intended to help you defend. The 2 says that partner has nothing in his hand to suggest that continuing with the ♥K is a good

idea. Partner would probably encourage holding the ♥Q or a doubleton with the desire to gain a trick by ruffing.

Do you see any hope of defeating 4♠ given partner's discouraging card at trick one?

You have two heart tricks, so the partnership needs two more tricks to defeat 4♠. It's possible that by waiting to cash the ♥K you will get two more heart tricks. Your ♥10 is a powerful card. Imagine partner with the ♥J. If you can get partner in, he can lead through declarer's queen to provide that third heart trick.

The ♦Q looks like a reasonable switch. Partner could have the ♦A over dummy's king, or this might be the complete deal:

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

It turns out that partner doesn't have the ♦A, but he does have the ♣A, and 4♠ can still be defeated. Declarer's losers are three hearts and one club. If you hold off on cashing the ♥K, declarer will lose four tricks as long as partner goes back to your original heart suit when he wins the ♣A. □

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