

Deceptive Defensive Play

By Brian Gunnell

♠ 6 5 2

♠ Q 10 9 8 7

**How many losers
in this trump suit?**

♠ 6 5 2

♠ A J 4 ♠ K 3

♠ Q 10 9 8 7

♠ 6 5 2

♠ A 4 ♠ K J 3

♠ Q 10 9 8 7

♠ 6 5 2
 ♥ 8 7 4
 ♦ A 6 5 4
 ♣ A 6 4

Dummy

West

East

Declarer

♠ Q 10 9 8 7
 ♥ A K J
 ♦ K 2
 ♣ K Q 2

Cont: 4♠ Lead: ♦J

How many Club losers?

How many Diamond losers?

How many Heart losers?

How many Spade losers?

How many total losers?

How do you play the hand?

♠ 6 5 2
 ♥ 8 7 4
 ♦ A 6 5 4
 ♣ A 6 4

Dummy

West

East

Declarer

♠ Q 10 9 8 7
 ♥ A K J
 ♦ K 2
 ♣ K Q 2

You want to finesse against the ♠J and also against ♥Q, and you have two Dummy entries to make those finesses possible.

Here's a sensible line of play:

Win Diamond lead in Dummy
Finesse the ♠10

It will be your lucky day if the ♠10 forces out West's Ace! That would mean that the ♠J is with East, and you can take another Spade finesse, holding your trump losses to just two.

Eventually, you will make 10 tricks, losing just two trumps and a Heart.

Cont: 4♠ Lead: ♦J	♠ 6 5 2 ♥ 8 7 4 ♦ A 6 5 4 ♣ A 6 4		That was easy! All you needed to make your game was to take the trump finesse twice.
♠ A 3 ♥ 6 5 3 2 ♦ J 10 9 3 ♣ 9 8 7	Dummy West East Declarer	♠ K J 4 ♥ Q 10 9 ♦ Q 8 7 ♣ J 10 5 3	The full hand might look something like this:
	♠ Q 10 9 8 7 ♥ A K J ♦ K 2 ♣ K Q 2		But that's not what happened! West is a tricky fellow and has bamboozled Declarer with a brilliant false card. Look at the real hand ...

Cont: 4♠ Lead: ♦J	♠ 6 5 2 ♥ 8 7 4 ♦ A 6 5 4 ♣ A 6 4	
♠ A K J ♥ 6 5 3 2 ♦ J 10 9 ♣ 9 8 7	Dummy West East Declarer	♠ 4 3 ♥ Q 10 9 ♦ Q 8 7 3 ♣ J 10 5 3
	♠ Q 10 9 8 7 ♥ A K J ♦ K 2 ♣ K Q 2	

**You see what happened?
 On the first Spade, West
 squandered his Ace on
 the first round of trumps.
 This false card did not
 cost anything, West
 would still score his
 three trump tricks.**

So what did that false card achieve? It tricked Declarer into using his last Dummy entry to re-take the trump finesse. As this seemed to be a proven finesse it was safer than the 50% Heart finesse. So Declarer lost his three trump tricks and a Heart!

If West had won the first Spade with the Jack, Declarer would know he had three trump losers, and would use that last Dummy entry to take the winning Heart finesse, thus bringing home his contract. Sneaky play, Mr. West!

♠ 5 2
 ♥ 9 8 3
 ♦ K Q 4
 ♣ A Q J 6 2

Next we'll watch as Declarer gets hoodwinked in a 3NT contract.

West leads the Spade Three, to East's Queen and Declarer's Ace. Declarer can count 8 top tricks, and if the Clubs oblige there are 12 tricks no less.

	Dummy	
West		East
	Declarer	

♠ A J 7
 ♥ A K 6
 ♦ A J 7 3
 ♣ 9 5 4

There's no reason not to take the Club finesse right away and, lo and behold, the King pops out of West's hand on the first round! That's good news and bad news.

♠ 5 2
♥ 9 8 3
♦ K Q 4
♣ A Q J 6 2

West	Dummy	East
	Declarer	

♠ A J 7
♥ A K 6
♦ A J 7 3
♣ 9 5 4

The good news is that Declarer now has three Club tricks in the bank, and 10 altogether.

The bad news is that the Clubs don't run. Does that mean 10 tricks are the limit? No! Declarer can let West win that ♣K. Now the defense can score the ♣K and ♠K, but that's all, and Declarer reels in 11 tricks. Yes, clever play by Declarer, except for one tiny insignificant detail ...

Cont: 3NT Lead: ♠3	♠ 5 2 ♥ 9 8 3 ♦ K Q 4 ♣ A Q J 6 2	
♠ K 10 8 3 ♥ J 5 4 ♦ 10 8 5 2 ♣ K 7	Dummy West East Declarer	♠ Q 9 6 4 ♥ Q 10 7 2 ♦ 9 6 ♣ 10 8 3
	♠ A J 7 ♥ A K 6 ♦ A J 7 3 ♣ 9 5 4	

Declarer played it well enough, but he was outwitted by West's brilliant false card in Clubs.

Was that false card dangerous in any way? No. West saw Dummy and asked himself the question “How useful is my ♣K?” The answer was “It is absolutely useless!” The best thing to do with useless cards is to throw them away, which is exactly what West did!

Thus, Declarer's 12 easy tricks became 11 embarrassing tricks.

Cont: 5♣ Lead: ♠Q	♠ A 4 2 ♥ 8 6 5 ♦ 9 6 4 3 ♣ 10 3 2	
♠ Q J 7 ♥ K Q J 8 7 ♦ 8 7 5 ♣ 8 5	Dummy West East Declarer	♠ 10 9 8 5 ♥ A 10 4 3 2 ♦ K 2 ♣ K J
	♠ K 6 3 ♥ -- ♦ A Q J 10 ♣ A Q 9 7 6 4	

Here’s another example of the Useless King Syndrome:

Against 5♣, West leads the ♠Q won by Dummy’s Ace.

Now a Club finesse, then draw the second round of trumps, cross to Dummy’s ♣10, Diamond finesse, making 12 tricks!

But East can do better! On the first round of trumps, look what happens if East pops up with the King! Declarer will assume it is singleton, so West started with ♣J85. Declarer attempts to cross to Dummy’s ♣10, but gets the shock of his life when it is East who has the missing Jack. Down one because Dummy now has no entry for the Diamond finesse.

♠ K 8 6
 ♥ K Q 6
 ♦ K Q J 10 6
 ♣ 7 6

Dummy

West

East

Declarer

♠ 9 7 3 2
 ♥ 10 9 8 2
 ♦ A 8
 ♣ 8 4 3

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♣	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

West starts by cashing the AK♣. East has a Diamond trick. That's three tricks, but we need one more if we are to beat 4♥. Where is that trick?

Cont: 4♥ Lead: A♣	♠ K 8 6 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ K Q J 10 6 ♣ 7 6		Beating this 4♥ contract looks like a hopeless proposition. The winning play requires that you fool Partner and Declarer into thinking you have a Club doubleton.
♠ Q J 10 5 ♥ -- ♦ 7 4 3 2 ♣ A K 10 9 5	Dummy West East Declarer	♠ 9 7 3 2 ♥ 10 9 8 2 ♦ A 8 ♣ 8 4 3	Normally, after the ♣A opening lead, East would signal with the low Three, a discouraging card. This suggests no doubleton. But East must lie! He plays the encouraging Eight, suggesting a doubleton. West continues with the ♣K and a third Club. Declarer will surely ruff high in Dummy and that promotes a trump trick for East. Down one!
	♠ A 4 ♥ A J 7 5 4 3 ♦ 9 5 ♣ Q J 2		

Points to Remember

In general:

- **Defenders play the lowest card which will get the job done, all the better to help Partner understand the layout.**
- **Declarer plays the highest card she can afford, all the better to conceal information from the defenders.**

A good rule of thumb for Declarer after opening lead:

- **If you like the opening lead, and want West to continue the suit, play a higher spot than is necessary**
- **If you don't like the opening lead, and want West to shift, play your lowest spot.**
- **If you have no particular opinion of the opening lead, play a random spot card.**

Warning: These suggestions are not infallible, handle with care!