

Do You See What I See?

West Deals
None Vul

	♠ —		
	♥ K J 9 6 5 3		
	♦ Q 10 9 8		
	♣ A Q 9		
♠ Q J 8 7 5 2	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 10 9 4	
♥ 7 4		♥ A 10 8	
♦ A 5		♦ K 7 6 3	
♣ K 10 3		♣ 8 7 5	
	♠ A K 6 3		
	♥ Q 2		
	♦ J 4 2		
	♣ J 6 4 2		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♠	2 ♥	2 ♠	3 ♥
3 ♠	4 ♥	All pass	

4 ♥ by North

While not as pretty as the PowerPoint presentations of the past two weeks, shifting gears away from the X's and O's of detailed advanced bidding techniques will be a welcome change for most of you today. Defense is, without question, the toughest part of the game, and that's what we are going to talk about today. Our theme is "Do You See What I See?" Double-dummy problems allow us to see all four hands. Even seeing all hands some defenses are tough. All too often the winning defense is much clearer from one side of the table than the other, and helping partner better "see what you see" - the cards in front of you- is key to winning bridge.

Looking at all four hands of this deal, it is clear that 4 hearts can be set with the AK of diamonds, a diamond ruff, and the Ace of hearts. Unfortunately, when you are defending a hand, you are not given the advantage of seeing all four hands before planning your defense. There are many things you can and should do, however, and this hand highlights many. There are frequently a lot of clues available - so long as you take the time to work it out. Patience is so important!

I like to think of the Railroad crossing signs that say, "Stop, Look, and Listen".

Stop - Take a few seconds before playing to trick 1, to try to pull together as much info as possible to help you defend.

Look - Does the dummy look like opponents are gambling, or is this a rock solid contract? In other words, if the auction was 1N-3N and dummy has 13 high card points, you're apt to be a little less interested than if the dummy has 8 or 9 points. What do you think the distribution is?

Listen - What was the bidding? Were there any bids that could have been made? How many points does declarer have and how many does my partner hold? What's a likely model of the hand? Let's dig into these one step at a time.

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None Vul

♠ —			
♥ K J 9 6 5 3			
♦ Q 10 9 8			
♣ A Q 9			
♠ Q J 8 7 5 2	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 10 9 4	
♥ 7 4		♥ A 10 8	
♦ A 5		♦ K 7 6 3	
♣ K 10 3		♣ 8 7 5	
		♠ A K 6 3	
		♥ Q 2	
		♦ J 4 2	
		♣ J 6 4 2	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♠	2 ♥	2 ♠	3 ♥
3 ♠	4 ♥	All pass	

4 ♥ by North

Stop - Declarer is obviously void in spades. Partner raised, I have 6, and dummy 4. We are in trouble! Hope it's not too late! Declarer is going to get 2 quick pitches. This is not the time to sit back and wait.

Look - It looks like declarer has a six card heart suit. I have to follow to trick one. But I don't have to do it immediately. Partner has to have 6-9 pts outside of spades for his raise. If he has a heart honor and the K of diamonds, we may be able to get a ruff. Perhaps I should play the Q of spades to direct a diamond shift? But what if partner, in addition to a high heart, has the Q of clubs, the Q of diamonds, and not the K of diamonds? In that case, might I want a club shift? If I play the Q of spades, will partner read it as suit preference, or just the rote play from two touching honors?

Listen - Sounds like he has 6 hearts. Declarer bid 2H - not 2S. If he was 0-6-5-2 or 0-6-2-5, he probably would have made a Michaels bid. So, let's assume he is 0-6-4-3, or 0-6-3-4. He'll still get two pitches. If partner has Kxxx of diamonds, or Qxxx of diamonds and the Q of clubs, as well as a high heart, we can beat the hand. In the first case, we need a diamond shift immediately, however. So, let's strongly suggest a diamond shift. My preference is the J of spades. This is high enough to send a signal for a diamond shift, and somewhat unusual. It certainly should provoke some thought by partner.

So let's see what happens! Declarer wins the spade lead in dummy, pitching the 9 of clubs. He assumes the opening bidder has the club finesse, so he doesn't cash as second spade, instead he plays a heart to his K. East can't delay! He must immediately win the heart A, and heeding his partner's J of S, lead a low diamond - to suggest possession of an honor. This - and only this defense - will set this hand!

Do You See What I See?

South Deals
None Vul


	♠ Q 8 6		
	♥ J 9 8		
	♦ K Q 10 6		
	♣ K Q J		
♠ 5 2	N	♠ K J 10 7 4	
♥ K 10 5 3 2	W	♥ 7	
♦ A 7	E	♦ J 5 4 3	
♣ 10 8 4 3	S	♣ 7 5 2	
	♠ A 9 3		
	♥ A Q 6 4		
	♦ 9 8 2		
	♣ A 9 6		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♣
1 ♥	2 ♦	2 ♠	2 N
Pass	3 N	All pass	

3 N by South

Defending is tough, so the best way to help your partner know how to defend is to get in lead directional bids at low enough level to make going for a huge number unlikely. Here's a good example in which both defenders bid aggressively not vulnerable at matchpoints to get a very good score. West started things off by throwing in a heart overcall at the 1 level with a measly 7 hcp, and after North showed 10+ points, East got partner off to a spade lead by bidding 2S on his 5 points. A spade lead had to be ducked, now a heart back and a second spade ensure EW got as many tricks as they were entitled to get in a contract pretty much bid by all.

Do You See What I See?

Board 2
 South Deals
 N-S Vul

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


<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
Pass	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
Dbl	1 N	Pass	2 N
All pass			

2 N by North

Here's another extreme example of aggressive bidding resulting in a great result. After having passed, West trotted out a takeout double showing spades and clubs. This might appear to many to be nuts, and it is not without risk on such a flat hand, but it certainly can help partner on lead or perhaps find a way to push the opponents too high. It still might be EW's hand for a partial in one of the black suits. As it turns out, it worked like magic. East started by leading the A and J of clubs. When declarer ducked the second club, West overtook with the Q. Now he stopped to think. Declarer showed a weak hand by passing 2N. He must be limited to 12-13 pts. There are 10 in the dummy and 5 in his hand. So partner must have about 13 pts. Why did she pass 1D? The bidding suggests she doesn't have 5 hearts. She must not have 4 clubs or 4 spades or she would have bid over 1N. Declarer must have 2 hearts, and probably not 4 clubs, more likely 3 clubs. Declarer is not likely to have started with 6 diamonds, so partner must have 4 or 5 diamonds. So the risk is that partner will get endplayed at some point. Declarer is likely to have 4 heart tricks 1 club, 1 diamond and at least 1 spade. Timing is very important on hands like these. West worked all this out and shifted to the 9 of diamonds. Declarer finessed, West won and exited with her 3rd club - knowing partner had started with at least 4 clubs. Now there was nothing declarer could do. He tried a spade to his Q, but East won and passively exited with a heart. Declarer won and tried leading a second spade, but West won and cashed the 9 of clubs for the setting trick. EW scored 3 clubs, 2 spades and 1 diamond. But they could have even done better! Do you see how? If West assumes that declarer has AQ of diamonds and A of hearts, he may very well play his partner to have started with Ax of spades! If West rises with the K of spades on the first round of this suit, he can cash a club and lead his second diamond. Now the defense sets the contract by 2 tricks!!!

Do You See What I See?

North Deals
None Vul

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥
1 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2 N
All pass			

2 N by South

Here's a much more difficult situation that highlights the value of lead-directional bids - and shows how to best use that info to your advantage - not detriment as declarer.

NS were playing support X's so, North pass of 1N suggested fewer than 3 hearts and probably denied a spade stopper - or showed a very weak minimum opening bid. So when South doubled to show extra values, North made a smart choice of bidding 2H - knowing partner would assume she didn't have 3 hearts or she would have made a support double. Now South made an excellent, disciplined game try of 2N that North was happy to pass. This got the hand played from the right side! After the lead of the K of spades, South had no problem scoring up 8 tricks for a great result!

So, to recap, today's Shark's Pointers was about highlighting the need to visualize partner's and the opponents hands so as to get the best result. Part of this is assisted by aggressive lead-directional bidding. But be careful - don't go for 1100 just to get partner off to the right lead!