

# Watch the Early Discards

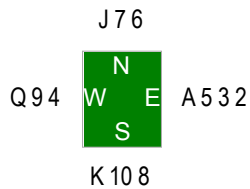
by Terence Reese

*From 1974-1994 many of the world's leading bridge experts submitted tips to **BOLS**, the Dutch Distillers, and each year a panel of eminent International Bridge Press Association members voted on the very best of these tips. This article by Terence Reese was the winning entry in the first **BOLS** competition in 1974.*

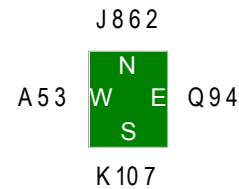
My advice, says Terence Reese, is to study the early discards and consider this point: from what holding would the defender most readily have made those' discards? The answer will often resolve a critical guess.

For example, a defender who holds A-5-3-2 or K-5-3-2 will discard from that suit more readily than if he had held Q-5-3-2 or J-5-3-2. That will give you a clue in situations of this kind:

[1]

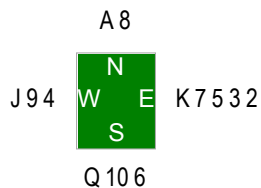


[2]

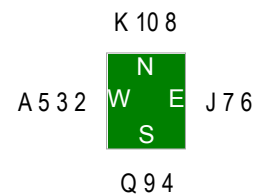


This is a side suit in a trump contract and declarer needs to establish one fast trick. In [1] East has made two early discards. Conclusion: he is more likely to hold A-x-x-x than Q-x-x-x. In [2] West makes an early discard. Conclusion: he is more likely to have discarded from A-x-x than from Q-x-x.

[3]



[4]



In [3] East makes two early discards. When you play ace and 8 he follows with 5 and 7. Play him for

K-x-x-x-x rather than J-x-x-x-x. In [4] West discards twice. He is more likely to have come down to A-x than to Jx; but if a low card to the king is headed by the ace, be inclined to play East for A-J-x.

Such inferences are especially strong when dummy has what may seem to a defender to be an establishable suit, as here:

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**Board 11**  
South Deals  
None Vul

	♠ 10 5 2 ♥ K J 6 3 ♦ A 7 3 ♣ 8 6 4					
♠ 9 3 ♥ Q 10 8 ♦ 10 9 5 4 ♣ K J 7 3	<table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W    E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W    E	S	♠ J 7 ♥ A 9 5 2 ♦ J 8 6 ♣ A 10 9 5	
N						
W    E						
S						
	♠ A K Q 8 6 4 ♥ 7 4 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ Q 2					
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>			
Pass	1 NT	Pass	1 ♠			
Pass	4 ♠	All pass	3 ♠			
Lead: ♣ 3						

South plays in four spades. West leads ♣3 and South ruffs the third round. There is something to be said for leading a heart at once, putting West under some pressure if he holds the ace, but instead declarer plays four rounds of trumps, discarding a diamond from dummy. (It is good play to keep the heart holding intact.) West throws a club and a diamond, East a club and a heart.

After cashing three diamonds South leads a heart and West play the 8. South should finesse the jack. Why? Because of East's heart discard. With A-9-x-x. East, expecting the contract to depend on the heart guess, would not think it necessary to keep all four. But with Q-9-x-x he would not let go a heart, in case declarer held A-x.

As so often, the discard tells the story.

***BOLS tip: Study the early discards and consider this point: from what holding would the defender most readily have made those' discards? The answer will often resolve a critical guess.***