

Be Bold When You Are Defending

By P-O Sundelin

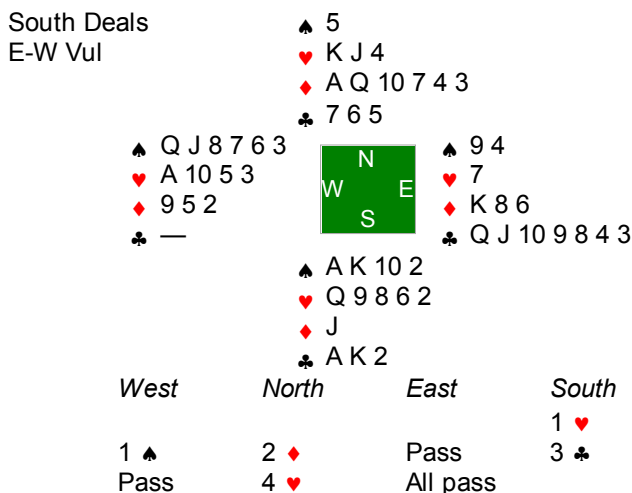
P-O Sundelin is a computer analyst and consultant. He is Sweden's best known player, having won two European Championships and been placed third in three Bermuda Bowls. He has won the Sunday Times twice, in 1978 and 1981, both times in partnership with Tjolpe Flodqvist. He lives in Stockholm and is married to Jill Mellstrom, a frequent member of the Swedish women's team.

You are all familiar with the situation where you sit over dummy's K-Q-10 with A-x-x. When declarer leads up to the king, you play low smoothly. On the next round, declarer may go wrong, and at least you have spread uncertainty.

Some of you have even fooled declarer by ducking with the king behind the A-Q-J-x-x the first time the suit is led. Perhaps the declarer then wasted an entry or a stopper in order to re-enter his hand and finesse again.

These are valuable, indeed essential, stratagems. But they are seldom very risky or unexpected. In this field you haven't really 'arrived' until you are willing actually to sacrifice a winner; you have to be prepared deliberately to give away a trick just for the possibility of leading declarer astray.

This type of play is exclusively for the bold and courageous. In this diagram you are East:



West leads the queen of spades and South's problem is to take care of his losers in the black suits. West's overcall makes ruffing spades in dummy look a trifle risky, so South naturally thinks about the diamond finesse. If the jack loses to the king, it should still be possible to hold the trump losers to two. As East you ought to have a perfect picture of the hands. South surely has the three missing clubs – think of his bidding. Your partner's lead of the queen of spades marks South with the ace and king, and South surely has one or two small spades in addition, as West did not pre-empt. Finally, you should assume that South has Q-x-x-x-x in hearts. With the ace and queen he would have bid more strongly; with the ace the contract is unbeatable; with no honor West's bidding is impossible. (Note that the declarer himself seldom has the privilege of working out the unseen hands as accurately as this.)

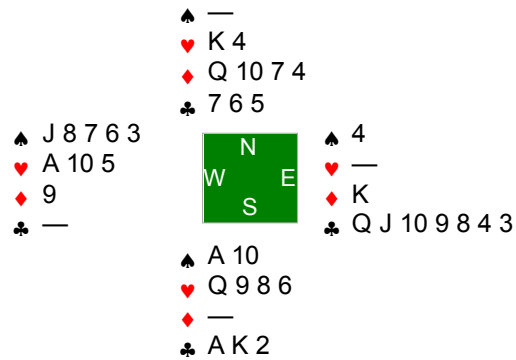
To resume: South wins the first trick and leads the jack of diamonds. West plays the two, showing three cards or one, and dummy the three. Your count is confirmed. You rightly decide, quickly and without a flicker, that declarer will wrap up his ten tricks if you take the king and give your partner a club ruff. The defense will then score the trump ace only.

So you duck. You don't know what will happen next – but you do know that with normal defense the declarer would make his contract.

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South now plays a trump to the jack, and cashes the diamond ace, shedding a spade. The position:



South now wants to enter his hand for a spade ruff. As the cards lie, he can play a diamond, but this could be risky. South 'knows' that West has the king of diamonds, and he doesn't want to give East a possible spade discard. South therefore tries a club. This turns out to be fatal when West ruffs and continues with ace and another trump. As the diamonds are not established, South is left with two black losers.

TIP: *Be bold when you are defending. If you can't see yourself beating the contract by winning the trick, duck it – even at the cost of a trick.*

By deceiving declarer you may yet cause his house of cards to collapse.