

Partnership Defense

It's often said that defense is the toughest part of the game. But sound partnership agreements are a big help, and on this board East-West work together like a well-oiled machine to get a ruff and defeat the contract.

A part-score battle lands North-South in three diamonds. West leads a club and this is where the partnership agreement comes in. On opening lead against a suit contract, with three small in a suit, common practice is to lead a low one. But an exception occurs when the opening leader has bid the suit, as she did in the auction above. In such a case, it is customary to lead the top card, denying an honor, safe in the knowledge that partner won't misread the lead as a doubleton.

Alert readers will have noticed that West does not actually have three small. Precisely! So her opening lead is a *low* club, promising an honor.

East wins that with the queen and tries to figure out where the defense might be getting their five tricks. The $\heartsuit K$ is one ... two club tricks hopefully ... surely not more than one heart (West would no doubt have led a high heart holding AK) ... and no spades. That's only four, and a spade ruff is needed to get to five. So, at trick two, East shifts to a spade, leading into dummy's imposing suit. West plays low on this (otherwise declarer's heart losers will all disappear), and declarer now loses the trump finesse to East's king. East confidently underleads his $\clubsuit AK$ to West's jack, gets his spade ruff, and eventually the $\heartsuit K$ becomes the setting trick. Nicely done!

Board 17

North Deals
None Vul

\spadesuit K 6 5 3 2
 \heartsuit K 8 6
 \diamondsuit 9 2
 \clubsuit J 3 2

\spadesuit A Q J 10 7
 \heartsuit Q 3 2
 \diamondsuit A 7 6
 \clubsuit 7 4



\spadesuit 4
 \heartsuit 10 9 5
 \diamondsuit K 8 4
 \clubsuit A K Q 10 8 5

\spadesuit 9 8
 \heartsuit A J 7 4
 \diamondsuit Q J 10 5 3
 \clubsuit 9 6

West	North	East	South
3 \clubsuit	1 \spadesuit	2 \clubsuit	Dbl
All pass	Pass	Pass	3 \diamondsuit
3 \diamondsuit by South			
Lead: \clubsuit J			