

IF YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO, DO NOTHING!



How many boards when you are defending have you had no idea how you should be defending? If you are truthful, then the answer could be “quite often”! I would put two boards from this week’s Akarana play into this category along with one when the word “declarer” could be substituted for “defending” in the above statement. Let’s look at one from each category.

Firstly, then, the defensive problem.

<p><u>Board 14</u> East Deals None Vul</p> <p>♠ Q 6 4 ♥ A 7 ♦ K Q J 10 8 ♣ 9 8 2</p>	<p>♠ A 10 3 ♥ 5 ♦ 9 7 6 4 3 ♣ Q 10 7 6</p>	<p>West <i>DUMMY</i></p> <p>2♦ 3♠</p>	<p>North <i>YOU</i></p> <p>Pass Pass Pass</p>	<p>East</p> <p>1♥ 3♣ 3NT</p>	<p>South</p> <p>Pass Pass All pass</p>
--	---	--	---	--	--

3♠ was “4th suit” which partner duly led, ♠9. With dummy pretty imposing following a strongish bid from declarer, chances of a plus score did not seem great. What to do?

Well, I did too much! 3♣ had come after a decent pause. So, I took my ace and launched into an attack on what I could see, the club suit. The real answer was that short of scrambling a couple of club tricks, I had no real plan. Although it was a little hard to envisage it from my seat, I had let a contact make 9 tricks rather than 7 by my action at trick 1. Blissful ignorance rather than random thoughts would have worked much better.

These were the four hands:

<u>Board 14</u> East Deals None Vul	♠ A 10 3 ♥ 5 ♦ 9 7 6 4 3 ♣ Q 10 7 6	♠ J 7 5 2 ♥ K Q 9 6 4 ♦ — ♣ A K 5 3	♠ K 9 8 ♥ J 10 8 3 2 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ J 4	<i>West</i> 2 ♦ 3 ♠	<i>North</i> Pass Pass	<i>East</i> 1 ♥ 3 ♣ 3 NT	<i>South</i> Pass Pass All pass
--	--	--	---	---------------------------	------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--

I could see 10 diamonds. The bidding did indicate that East would be fairly short in diamonds. Maybe the only defensive hope was that the ♥A would provide the only entry to dummy, in which case diamond tricks would be hard to come by for the declarer. Let declarer work for his second entry.

Ducking at trick 1 would have reduced the defence's spade tricks to two (though partner's lead had done that anyway!) which along with the ♦A and probably one trick in each of the other two suits, maybe even two clubs and a heart, would have beaten what seemed like the unbeatable contract quite comfortably.

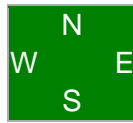
If I was not guilty of the sin of giving up, then perhaps I was guilty of another bridge sin, trying too hard! My trick 1 play set up the ♠Q as a second entry to dummy, giving East a comfortable route to 9 tricks.

A few boards later, I was in a similar cleft stick as declarer. Make a plan and unless there is contrary evidence, stick to it. However, there was some unusual contrary evidence, a kind of "Greek Gift", and not in the end a happy one.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A Q
♥ A J 8 7
♦ K Q J 5
♣ A 9 4



♠ 8 6 3
♥ K 2
♦ 10 8 6 3
♣ Q 5 3 2

You are in a pretty usual dilemma, in 3NT with only 8 tricks and seeking the ninth before they can set up their long suit:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 ♣
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

Partner bid 3♣ in case I had five spades but soon settled in 3NT when 3♦ showed just a four card major. I became the one worried about five spades when East led ♠J to my queen. The obvious plan was to knock out the ♦A and then decide whether to try the heart finesse, perhaps try for a favourable club position, in search of Trick 9. East won the first round of diamonds and knocked out my remaining spade hold.

However, East had to find two discards on the run of the diamonds and to my surprise, they were two little spades. West discarded a small heart... and I seemed little the wiser except that the defence could only cash two spades against me.

It seemed that East was guarding something, maybe everything! The heart finesse was not going to produce a ninth trick if it lost. I needed that same piece of advice as above ("do nothing") or else have Michael Cornell on my shoulder.

He was at a nearby table in nearly the same position...and found a good solution. His left hand opponent had thrown only one spade and the ♣8.

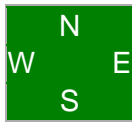
Take a look at all four hands:

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A Q
♥ A J 8 7
♦ K Q J 5
♣ A 9 4

♠ 9 7
♥ 10 9 6 4
♦ 9 7 4
♣ K 7 6

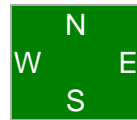


♠ K J 10 5 4
♥ Q 5
♦ A 2
♣ J 10 8

♠ 8 6 3
♥ K 2
♦ 10 8 6 3
♣ Q 5 3 2

♠ —
♥ A J 8 7
♦ —
♣ A 9 4

♠ —
♥ 10 9 6 4
♦ —
♣ K 7 6



♠ 10 5 4
♥ Q 5
♦ —
♣ J 10

♠ 8
♥ K 2
♦ —
♣ Q 5 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 ♣
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

Michael guessed that East had started with six spades. So after cashing his diamonds and finishing in dummy, he exited with ♠8 to see if West enjoyed finding three discards:

Michael threw two clubs from dummy and a heart and two clubs from his hand....and West?

They threw two hearts and club. East exited the ♣J and Michael guessed West was guarding the ♣K meaning that they only had two hearts....and that he could therefore play for the drop and make his nine tricks, one more than I did.

Had West held both ♥Q and ♣K, Michael would have needed no guess.

So, there are deals when you have to be positive in your outlook. There are others when you follow suit, watch and then work out what do. The opposition may well help you, not out of choice!

Richard Solomon