

Article 17 Counting for Beginners in Defence – 3

These articles are based on lessons of Andrew Robson, one of the UKs best teachers and players.

1. Counting trumps

Counting is also useful in defence, particularly before you lead. Your opponents bidding gives you a clue about the point and card distribution. If a declarer has rebid a suit that becomes trump you have a fair assumption that he/she has 6 cards in that suit. It is then possible to have a good idea of how many trump your own partner has and as the suit is lead you can determine how many trump declare and dummy have left

Take Hand 1 below: (again if you don't find it easy to understand from the lay-out, take out a pack of cards and try that technique)

♠ 95		
♥ KJ32		
♦ KJ43		
♣ J96		
♠ A86	♠ 73	
♥ Q76	♥ A10954	
♦ 107	♦ 9852	
♣ KQ732	♣ 104	
	♠ KQJ1042	
	♥ 8	
	♦ AQ6	
	♣ A85	

Bidding			
S	W	N	E
1♠	p	1NT	p
3♠	p	4♠	p

Lead ♣K

Partner encourages with the ♣10 (With your long clubs it infers that partner is a doubleton and will win the 3rd club).

Declarer takes the trick with the ♣A and leads the ♠2. (Declarer would have been better not taking the trick)

You must take the ♠A and return the ♣Q and then the third club, ♣2 while your partner has another trump to ruff.

East should now count. Defence have now made 3 tricks and opponents must make the remainder. He/she must play the ♥A, “use it or lose it” and put the contract down one trick.

Any other lead and the contract makes as declarer will take out the last trump and discard the losing ♥8 on the fourth diamond.

Easy!!! You don't need to count to 13, you only need to count to 4.

Too often we try to be greedy and make an extra trick and in the process allow contracts to make.

Hand 2

♠ K2
♥ K2
♦ AJ543
♣ 8752

♠ 86
♥ A865
♦ Q986
♣ AK10

♠ 9753
♥ 97
♦ K10
♣ J9643

♠ AQJ104
♥ QJ1043
♦ 72
♣ Q

Bidding

S	W	N	E
1♠	Dbl	2♦	p
2♥	p	2NT	p
3♥ (1)	p	4♠ (2)	All Pass

(1) Shows a 5♥-5♠ shape. If 4-4 then declarer would open 1♥, whereas with 5-4 he would not have rebid 4♥.

(2) N cannot bid 3NT without a ♣ stop

Lead: ♣A

After taking the first trick W continues with the ♣K which declarer, S, ruffed with the ♥4 and led the ♥3 towards the ♥K which West ducked but won the second heart, the ♥2 to the ♥Q and west's ♥A.

West could be tempted to lead ♥6 for E to ruff. However; count the trumps! Declarer has 5 from the bidding, N has 2 in dummy so his partner has 4♠ trumps. If West can get declarer to have to ruff again then his trumps are down to 3 and therefore east has control of the longest trumps.

So ♣10 which East overtakes with the ♣J and S has to ruff. Hoping that the trumps are 3-3 south takes out trump and gets the bad news and East ruffs the ♥J and makes the last two clubs. **Two down.**

2. Counting in Defence during Play

When opponents bid they not only describe their hands to their partner; however, they also provide information to defenders **so watch** (bidding boxes) **and listen.**

The more suits they bid the better the picture you can get of the shape and strength of the respective hands before you even lead. This information can help you in your best lead.

This bidding option illustrates the point:

Bidding			
S	W	N	E
		1♠	p
2♣	p	2♥	p
2NT	p	3♣	p
3NT	All Pass		

As west you have to decide what to lead from the hand below. Before reading further think trough you lead.

♠ Q92

♥ J10

♦ A432

♣ J962

From North's bidding you have can be pretty certain that he holds 5♠, 4♥, 1♦ and 3♣. If N had cover in diamonds then they would have been in 3NT.

You are less certain about South's hand but his lack of support for North's suits infers he does not have 5 spades or 4 hearts and his diamonds must be particularly good to have bid 3NT knowing his partner has only a singleton. His hand looks something like 2♠, 3♥, 4♦, 5♣.

From your assessment of South's hand it looks as if partner has at most 2♣ so that doesn't look a good lead. He has at most 3♠s and dummy has 5♠s so that doesn't look a good lead and finally although diamonds look reasonably attractive with only the ♦A and very small cards it looks as if all you will do is help declarer who has good diamonds behind any strength your partner has.

Although ♥s is a short suit you to lead ♥J which together with the ♥10 as well provides a good sequence to lead through dummy recognising that your partner has a 4 card suit behind whatever strength dummy has in hearts.

This strategy of assessing declarer's shape is best illustrated in the following hand:

	♠ A3		
	♥ AJ3		
	♦ J74		
	♣ K8642		
♠ 9542		♠ Q8	
♥ 876		♥ Q95	
♦ A83		♦ 10965	
♣ Q95		♣ A1073	
	♠ KJ1076		
	♥ K1042		
	♦ KQ2		
	♣ J		
Bidding			
S	W	N	E
1♠	p	2♣	p
2♥	p	3♦ (1)	p
3NT	All Pass		Lead: ♣Q

(1) Fourth suit forcing, saying bid again but if you have ♦s stopped bid 3NT.

Before leading west needs to assess declarer's shape which sounds like 5♠, 4♥, 3♦ and 1♣. Declarer has certainly shown 5♠ and 5♥ and while he has shown a ♦ stop

for 3NT it is unlikely he would do so with a doubleton. Hence S has a singleton club. *What is it?*

West really has such poor spot cards there is nothing to promote and it sounds as if dummy is sitting behind west's ♣ honour. Hence. It is best to try to anticipate how best to help partner. Recognising that S may have a singleton ♣J or 10♣ west by intuition leads the ♣Q.

Great intuition! S loses his/her singleton ♣J. Then ♣9 lead covering the ♣K with the ♣A and switches to the ♦10 winning in west with the ♦A and led the ♣5 through ♣864 allowing east to win the ♣10 and 7 to put the **contract 1 back**.

Yes, it is a pre-set hand but you must think it through. If there seems only one way of putting a contract back then play on the presumption that the cards are where they need to be. Any other way will make the contract anyway.