

2ND EDITION REVISED & EXPANDED

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a playing card. The card is held between the thumb and index finger, showing its face. In the background, several other playing cards are scattered on a green surface, some overlapping. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the hand and the edges of the cards.

CLUES FROM THE BIDDING at bridge

JULIAN POTTAGE

2ND EDITION REVISED & EXPANDED

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at bridge

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Introduction

Defenders invariably base their strategy on declarer's bidding. Yet so often declarers fail to return the compliment, bashing on without a thought of what the defenders have or have not done.

Just one bid from a defender may tip you off to the winning play — perhaps warning of a bad break or that a finesse is doomed. When the defenders have made several bids you may be able to make spectacular double-dummy plays.

A corollary is that it is advisable to enter the auction only if (i) a genuine chance exists that your side will secure the contract, or (ii) your action might well stop the opponents from reaching their right contract or (iii) doing so will help partner in the play or with the opening lead. Players who bid on a weak hand without first weighing up the pros and cons are asking for trouble.

The bidding in this book generally assumes a UK rubber-bridge style with a variable notrump, theoretically with four-card major openings. For the benefit of readers unfamiliar with these methods, I have given the range for each 1NT opening as it occurs and explained anything out of the ordinary.

As you read the book, you may find that your ability to draw inferences from the opponents' bidding — or non-bidding — gets sharper. However, as the majority of the more difficult problems come in the second half, do not feel disappointed if your tally of correct answers fails to improve noticeably.

May I say that you will be missing an opportunity if you only take enough time to form a rough idea of what you would like to do before turning the page. You will learn more (and, just as important, get more answers right) if you study each deal conscientiously and form a detailed plan.

Julian Pottage 2005

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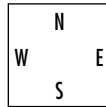
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Defensive Points

♠ 10 5
 ♥ J 10 6
 ♦ A 7 3
 ♣ A Q 10 7 6

♠6 led



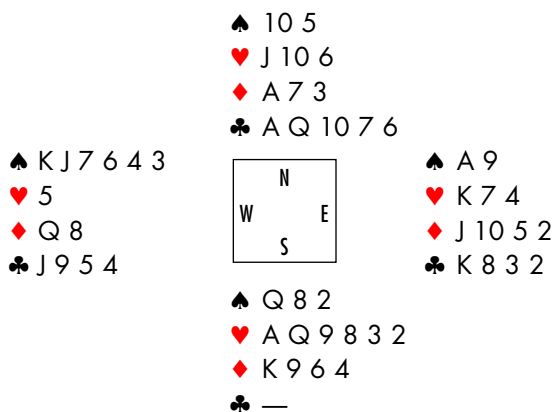
♠ Q 8 2
 ♥ A Q 9 8 3 2
 ♦ K 9 6 4
 ♣ —

Dealer West
Both vul.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠ ¹	pass	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

1. Weak.

West leads a presumably fourth-best ♠6 and East wins the first trick with the ♠A before returning the nine. West wins with the jack and continues with the king. What do you play from dummy?



You are playing in 4♥. In view of West's vulnerable weak two opening you can feel fairly confident that the spades are 6-2. The danger of ruffing the third round of spades with the jack of hearts is that East may overruff with the king, leaving you with an almost certain diamond loser.

There can be no overruff if West has the king of hearts, but that would not help you very much anyway. Unless it was a singleton, you would lose a trump and a diamond.

On the third spade, you should discard a diamond from dummy, planning later to ruff a diamond. Naturally, you will draw two rounds of trumps, finessing East for the king, before taking the diamond ruff (in case West holds a 6-2-1-4 shape).

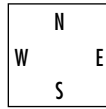
An interesting defensive point arises if declarer mistakenly ruffs the third spade in dummy. After overruffing with the king, East must return a diamond to break up the impending simple squeeze in the minors.

A different instructive point would arise if you correctly threw a diamond from dummy on the third spade but East held a club more and a diamond fewer than shown in the diagram. In that case, that defender could discard a diamond and later overruff the third round of diamonds.

Stop in Time

♠ 8 7 6 3
 ♥ J 7
 ♦ A 5 3
 ♣ A Q 10 8

♠ J led



♠ A 5
 ♥ A K 4
 ♦ Q 8 4 2
 ♣ K J 7 2

Dealer South
 E-W vul.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠ all pass	3♣	pass	1♣ 3NT

You are playing a weak notrump at this vulnerability; in your methods the 1♣ opening guarantees a club suit. Partner might have cuebid 2♠ (the standard way to show a raise based on high-card values in competition play), but the partnership would surely have reached the same final contract.

West leads the jack of spades (consistent with a suit headed by the K-J-10) and East follows with the two. How do you intend to play?

LISTEN TO THE BIDDING!

Defenders invariably base their strategy on declarer's bidding. Yet so often declarers fail to return the compliment: they flail away without a thought of what the defenders have or have not done. Just one bid from an opponent may tip off declarer to the winning play — perhaps warning of a bad break or that a finesse is doomed. The problems in this book all contain situations where an astute declarer can listen to the bidding, or lack of it, and derive information critical to the success of the contract.

JULIAN POTTAGE is known as one of the world's best creators of bridge problems, and his *Play or Defend?* was the winner of the 2004 IBPA Book of the Year award. He lives in Wales.



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