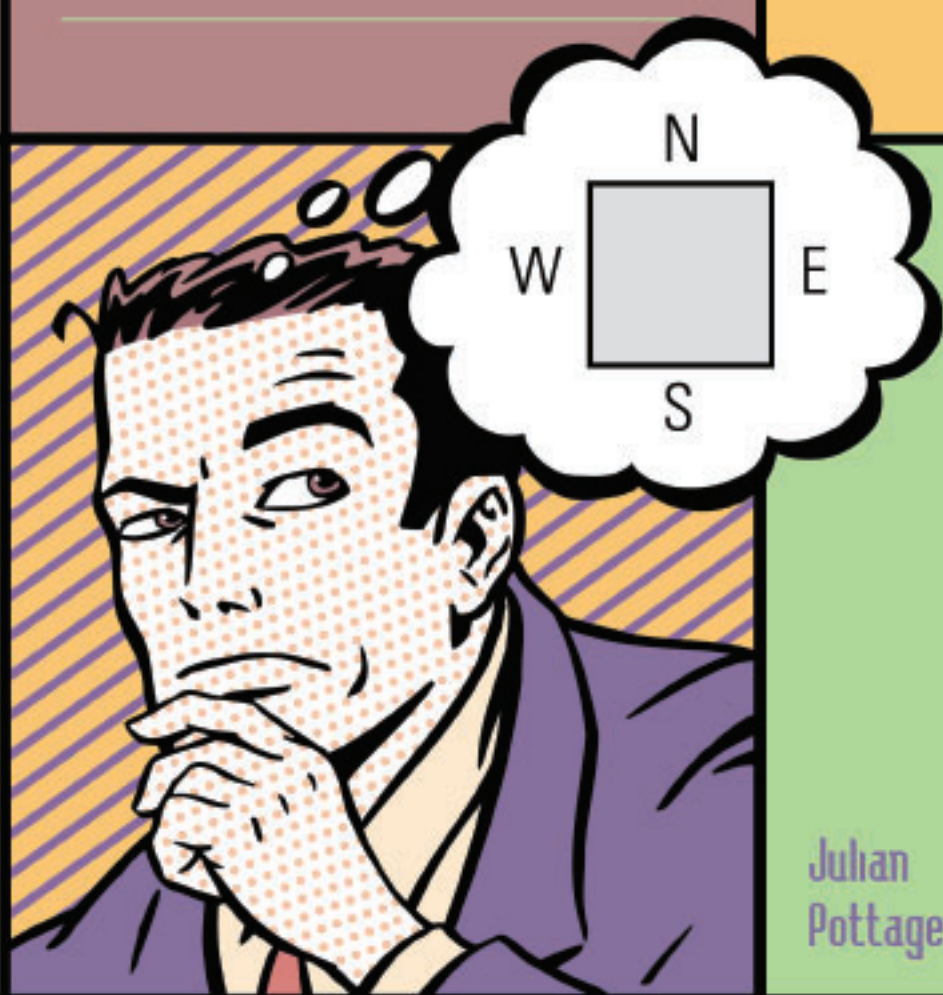


PLAY OR DEFEND?

68 Hands to Test
Your Bridge Skill



Julian
Pottage

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INTRODUCTION

Some seven or eight years ago, Andrew Diosy and the Lees came up with a novel and effective way to present interesting bridge problems. This was to display the four players' hands at the outset and to break the answer into halves. This not only means that more people can enjoy the problems, because exposing all four hands makes both declaring and defending easier, but it also gives readers a second chance to find the solution. Having observed that this format would suit many of my best deals, Ray and I discussed the possibility of a new book – and here you can see the result: 'Play or Defend?'

The book comes in three sections, arranged in increasing level of difficulty. Within each section, I have broadly followed the same principle, although with minor variations to avoid similar themes appearing in clusters. In the 'Fairly Easy' batch, you need not spend overly long searching for pretty squeeze endings. Similarly, with the 'Tougher Still' group, if you think that a simple hold-up at Trick 1 solves the problem, you have almost certainly overlooked something.

On more or less every hand, I have included a Standard American bidding sequence, with conventional bids explained. This provides the option, should you wish to challenge yourself, of initially studying only two players' hands. For someone with the right combination of technical and analytical skills, every hand is soluble with the sight of only two hands (plus, in some cases, knowing what happens on the first few tricks). As the declarer can succeed in over 70% of the contracts, I suggest that you start looking at the North-South cards. If you quickly decide that you would rather defend, I recommend taking the West seat on any odd-numbered deal and the East seat on the even numbers. Whilst defeating a contract tends to involve partnership cooperation, normally one of the defenders has a greater role than the other. I have arranged for the defeatable contracts to match this order. I have not stated the vulnerability on any deal. If you think that the bidding is only reasonable under the right conditions, assume they exist. The scoring is always teams or rubber, so forget about overtricks.

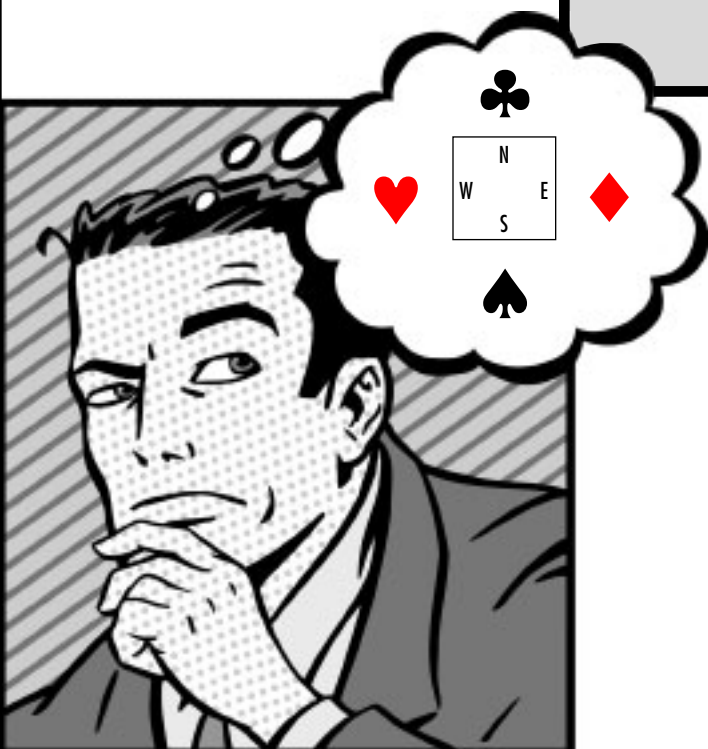
Several people have commented on how original they find my material. Without giving away too many trade secrets, I am happy to give a brief insight into how it is done. You will find that I have based roughly half the deals in this book on ideas that have come to me or on hands that I have played. Of the remainder, a third derive from themes that I have bumped into by accident, often by checking other ideas using Bill Bailey's *Deep Finesse* program. I make a point of only using subject matter from an external source if I believe that I can genuinely improve the original setting. Typically, I may adjust a few of the cards to make the bidding, contract, lead or early play more reasonable. I might also edit out an alternative solution or make the winning one both more logical and less dependent on an apparently contrived lie of the cards.

Although I prepared all the hands and text myself, others have contributed along the way. As well as those mentioned above, I would like to thank Graham Allan, Hugh Darwen and Maureen Dennison, who helped greatly in checking the proofs. If I may, perhaps I can finish with a word of advice. Try not to read too many hands at a time. After all, you would hardly down a whole bottle of vintage bourbon in one sitting. Besides, it may take me a while to collect enough material for a sequel!

Julian Pottage
September 2002

SECTION 1

Fairly Easy

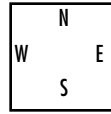


HAND 1 DIRECT ACTION

To Solution Part I

♠ K J 8 7 4
♥ 10 6
♦ A Q 6
♣ Q 10 3

♠ A 5
♥ A K 8 5
♦ J 10 8 5 4
♣ J 8



♠ 10 6
♥ J 9 4 2
♦ 3 2
♣ 9 7 6 5 4

| W | N | E | S |
|------|------------------|----------|----|
| 1♠ | dbl ¹ | pass | 1♣ |
| pass | 3NT | all pass | |

1. Negative.

♠ Q 9 3 2
♥ Q 7 3
♦ K 9 7
♣ A K 2

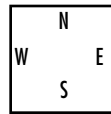
Contract: 3NT
Opening Lead: ♠7

HAND 2 ACHILLES' HEEL

To Solution Part I

♠ K 10 7 2
♥ 8 7 2
♦ A 8
♣ 9 6 5 2

♠ A 9 8 5
♥ Q J 5 3
♦ Q J 10
♣ K 4



♠ Q 3
♥ K 10 6 4
♦ K 6 5 2
♣ 10 7 3

| W | N | E | S |
|------|-----------------|----------|-----|
| | | | 1♣ |
| pass | 1♥ | pass | 1NT |
| pass | 2♦ ¹ | pass | 2NT |
| pass | 3NT | all pass | |

1. Checkback asking for 3♥/4♠.

♠ J 6 4
♥ A 9
♦ 9 7 4 3
♣ A Q J 8

Contract: 3NT
Opening Lead: ♠2

HAND 1 DIRECT ACTION

To Hand

Solution Part I

Suppose you win the ten of spades with the queen, go across to dummy with a heart, and run the ♦ J. West wins with the queen and plays a spade to dummy's bare ace. You will then go down, losing three spades and two diamonds.

Ducking the first trick works no better. East returns a spade and West, with both diamond entries, can still get the suit going.

Since the defensive strength lies mainly in one hand, perhaps you might think of an endplay or squeeze. The problem is this: with the hearts not breaking kindly, you have only seven top tricks. Therefore, a single extra winner generated using one of these methods will scarcely help.

Can you find a way to make the contract? See [page 86](#) for the second part of the solution.

HAND 2 ACHILLES' HEEL

To Hand

Solution Part I

Going up with dummy's ace of spades will not work because the resulting blockage will be merely temporary. East can win the first diamond and cash the spade queen. The defenders will score three spades and two diamonds.

Playing low at Trick 1 seems more obvious and the queen wins. If East returns a spade, the contract makes. North's nine will take care of the fourth round of spades and declarer can take the winning heart finesse after setting up the diamonds.

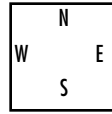
Is the contract always cold, or can the right switch at Trick 2 kill it? See [page 86](#) for the second part of the solution.

HAND 3 TENS AND NINES

To Solution Part I

♠ Q J 9 7
♥ K 8 3
♦ K J 8 7
♣ 6 5

♠ A 10 2
♥ J 9 5
♦ 10 9 6 4
♣ A 10 9



♠ 8 4
♥ Q 10 7 2
♦ Q 3
♣ 8 7 4 3 2

| W | N | E | S |
|------|-----|----------|-----|
| | | | 1NT |
| pass | 3NT | all pass | |

♠ K 6 5 3
♥ A 6 4
♦ A 5 2
♣ K Q J

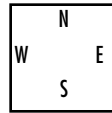
Contract: 3NT
Opening Lead: ♠Q

HAND 4 ENTRY EFFICIENCY

To Solution Part I

♠ 8 3
♥ Q J 6 2
♦ 10 9 7 3
♣ 8 5 2

♠ 10 6
♥ 9 8 4
♦ J 8 6 5 2
♣ 10 9 3



♠ 5 2
♥ A 10 7 5 3
♦ A Q
♣ K Q 7 4

| W | N | E | S |
|----------|------|------|-----|
| | | 1♥ | dbl |
| 2♥ | pass | pass | 4♠ |
| all pass | | | |

♠ A K Q J 9 7 4
♥ K
♦ K 4
♣ A J 6

Contract: 4♠
Opening Lead: ♥Q

HAND 3 TENS AND NINES

To Hand

Solution Part I

It looks right to win the opening lead with the king, saving the ace-ten as a tenace over the jack. Unless spades break 3-3, you will need two diamond tricks, so perhaps you duck a diamond at Trick 2. If you do that, East wins with the queen and switches to a low heart. West's king wins this and, when the ten covers the nine on the next round, you hold up the ace of hearts once more. East now abandons hearts and sends back a diamond. This destroys any chance of a squeeze and, when neither pointed suit divides evenly, you go one down.

You might think of finessing the ten of spades at Trick 2 to start diamonds from dummy. Unfortunately that does not work either. This time the defenders have a choice of winning actions. The most obvious one is probably for West to win the diamond, switch to a heart now and then revert to spades after the second round of hearts. You lose two hearts, two diamonds and a spade.

Can you see a better way to play the hand? See [page 87](#) for the second part of the solution.

HAND 4 ENTRY EFFICIENCY

To Hand

Solution Part I

East goes up with the ace of hearts and returns the suit, South ruffing. Success here depends on making a diamond trick as well as two clubs. The opening bid and West's weak raise mark East with most of the missing strength, which means that the cards should lie well for declarer. Even so, entries present a problem. There is no way to lead clubs twice and diamonds once from dummy when it contains only one obvious entry, the ♠10. Nor can you arrange for the defenders to make helpful leads. They possess an ample supply of exit cards in hearts.

Maybe you could create one extra entry by ruffing the heart return high and finessing the ♠6. When you do get to dummy, which finesse should you take? See [page 87](#) for the second part of the solution.

HAND 5 BATH TIME BLUES

To Solution Part I

♠ 6 4
 ♥ J 9
 ♦ K Q 10 9 7 2
 ♣ A K 6

♠ K Q 10 8 2
 ♥ Q 10 7 4
 ♦ J 4
 ♣ J 4

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

♠ 9 7 3
 ♥ K 5 3
 ♦ A 6 5
 ♣ 7 5 3 2

| W | N | E | S |
|------|-----|----------|-----|
| | 1♦ | pass | 1♥ |
| pass | 2♦ | pass | 2NT |
| pass | 3NT | all pass | |

♠ A J 5
 ♥ A 8 6 2
 ♦ 8 3
 ♣ Q 10 9 8

Contract 3NT
Opening Lead: ♠K

HAND 6 PASS THE PARCEL

To Solution Part I

♠ K 6 4 3
 ♥ Q 8 2
 ♦ 10 9
 ♣ A J 10 3

♠ Q 8 7 5
 ♥ 10 6 4 3
 ♦ K 6 5
 ♣ 9 2

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

♠ J 2
 ♥ 9 7 5
 ♦ A 7 3
 ♣ K Q 8 7 5

| W | N | E | S |
|------|-----|----------|-----|
| | | pass | 1NT |
| pass | 2♣ | dbl | 2♦ |
| pass | 3NT | all pass | |

♠ A 10 9
 ♥ A K J
 ♦ Q J 8 4 2
 ♣ 6 4

Contract: 3NT
Opening Lead: ♣9

HAND 5 BATH TIME BLUES

To Hand

Solution Part I

Clearly, declarer ducks the opening lead since a spade through the jack later will mean losing four spades and the $\heartsuit A$. West should read the spade position from East's signal and needs to switch. With the ace-king of clubs on view in dummy, the $\heartsuit 4$ looks the natural choice. If the $\heartsuit K$ wins, a heart continuation is no good: declarer ducks and loses merely two hearts, a spade and a diamond. However, East can revert to spades. South can ill afford to go up with the ace, so West scores the $\spadesuit Q$ and then goes back to hearts, leading the queen to squash dummy's jack. In this case the defenders score the five tricks they require: two in each major plus the $\heartsuit A$.

To succeed declarer must capture the king of hearts with the ace at Trick 2. Yes, East will get in with the $\heartsuit A$ and can play back a heart, but the eight stops the fourth round of the suit and the contract makes. Does the story end here or can the defenders do better? See [page 88](#) for the second part of the solution.

HAND 6 PASS THE PARCEL

To Hand

Solution Part I

In kitchen-bridge style, Trick 1 would go nine, ten, queen, small. Seeing no immediate future in clubs (indeed leading up to the ace-jack would concede an overtrick), East shifts to a heart. West can do no better than to take the first diamond and lead another club. In this case, playing either the ace or low from dummy leaves East with no way to get the clubs going and leaves declarer plenty of time to set up the diamonds and make the contract.

Foreseeing the above, perhaps East allows the $\clubsuit 10$ to hold. Now if declarer goes after diamonds, West wins the first round with the king and continues clubs, this time with dummy's A-J-x totally exposed. Nothing can prevent East from clearing the clubs and, upon getting in with the $\heartsuit A$, running the suit. Does this mean 3NT should fail or can declarer produce an effective counter? See [page 88](#) for the second part of the solution.

How good an analyst are you?

HAND 2 - ACHILLES HEEL

♠ K 10 7 2
♥ 8 7 2
♦ A 8
♣ 9 6 5 2

♠ A 9 8 5
♥ Q J 5 3
♦ Q J 10
♣ K 4

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

♠ Q 3
♥ K 10 6 4
♦ K 6 5 2
♣ 10 7 3

| W | N | E | S |
|------|-----------------|----------|-----|
| | | | 1♣ |
| pass | 1♥ | pass | 1NT |
| pass | 2♦ ¹ | pass | 2NT |
| pass | 3NT | all pass | |

♠ J 6 4
♥ A 9
♦ 9 7 4 3
♣ A Q J 8

¹ Checkback asking for 3♥/4♠

Contract: 3NT
Opening Lead: ♠2

Going up with dummy's ace of spades will not work because the resulting blockage will be merely temporary. East can win the first diamond and cash the spade queen. The defenders will score three spades and two diamonds.

Playing low at Trick 1 seems more obvious, and the queen wins. If East returns a spade, the contract makes. North's nine will take care of the fourth round of spades and declarer can take the winning heart finesse after setting up the diamonds.

Is the contract always cold, or can the right switch at Trick 3 kill it? See page 86 for the second part of the answer.



JULIAN POTTAGE is well-known for his books of bridge problems, which include *Bridge Problems for a New Millennium* and *More Hocus Pocus*. He contributes a regular problem column to BRIDGE magazine. He lives in the UK.

