# **DEFENSE**

# UNBLOCKING SUITS The Value of Link Cards



with the Monroes

## Take Your Tricks! Unblock and Untangle those long suits.

One of the common ways to defeat a NoTrump contract is to win tricks in a long suit. Third hand must be careful not to block the suit.

- ☑ High cards may need to be sacrificed to empower low cards and promote tricks.
- ✓ Low cards may be more valuable than high cards as a "link" to partner's suit.
- ☑ Get those high cards out of the way.
  - 1. What does the opening lead tell you?
  - 2. Look at the cards in Dummy and the cards you hold.
  - 3. Identify the "link" card to get to partner's hand.
  - 4. Play high card from the short side first to "unblock".

# DEFENSE PLAY

Try to visualize the trick-taking cards in partner's hand based on the opening lead, the cards in Dummy, and the cards you hold.

THIRD HAND. The player who contributes the third card to a trick is the partner of the player leading to the trick.

 Third Hand may need to sacrifice a high card in order to unblock partner's long suit and keep a link card.

<b>SEQUENCE LEADS</b>	- Top of Touching C	Cards headed by an honor card.
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3-card Sequence against NoTrump Contracts\*

Solid	<u>K</u> -Q-J-9-6	<u>Q</u> -J-10-5-2	<u>J</u> -10-9-4
Broken	<u>K</u> -Q-10-9-6	<u>Q</u> -J-9-5-3	<u>J-</u> 10-8-4
Interior	A-Q-J-7-5	K-J-10-6-3	Q-10-9-5

# OPENING LEADS

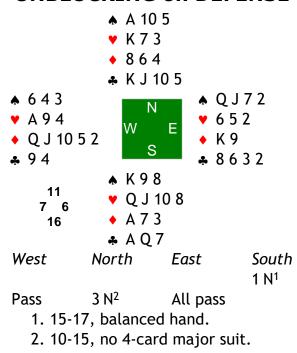
\*Leading against a Suit Contract, a 2-card sequence is adequate.

4<sup>th</sup> BEST – Fourth highest card from the top of the longest and strongest suit. Visualize the likely cards higher than the opening lead. Q-9-8-4-2

- RULE OF 11: Subtract the number on the card led from 11. The result is the number of cards in the other hands higher than the card led.
- THE TWO: Opening leader has specifically a four-card suit. Third hand can now determine the number of cards in each of the other three hands.

### **UNBLOCKING on DEFENSE**

**Board 3**South Deals



**Contract:** 3 NT South **Lead:** ◆ Q, Top of Honor Sequence

Declarer's Sure Tricks: ♠ A♠ K ♠ A ♣ A♣ K♣ Q♣ J = 7

Tricks Needed: 2 Source: ♥ = 3

**Declarer's Plan.** After winning the ◆ A, Declarer plays ▼s, losing the ▼ A and promoting three ▼ tricks.

The Holdup Play. With only one winning ◆ trick, if East unblocks and plays the ◆ K at trick one, Declarer holds up once with the ◆ A (Rule of 7). If East fails to unblock and plays the ◆ K at trick two, South ducks again and the ◆ suit is eliminated for the defense.

**Defense.** East plays the  $\star$  K, third hand high, trying to win the trick and at the same time unblocking the  $\star$  suit. When Declarer ducks, East returns the  $\star$  9. If Declarer decides to duck again, letting East's  $\star$  9 win the trick, what does West do? West must overtake the  $\star$  9 to continue playing  $\star$ s. West's protected entry back to the established  $\star$ s is the  $\star$  A.

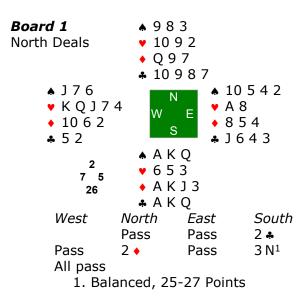
**Ouch!** If West allows East's  $\bullet$  9 to win the trick, East must now choose another suit to lead, probably the  $\bullet$  Q. Now when Declarer plays the  $\bullet$  K to drive out the  $\bullet$  A, the  $\bullet$  suit has not been established and is effectively out of play. West can try playing the  $\bullet$  Q, Declarer wins the  $\bullet$  A, and collects enough tricks to make the contract.

**Unblock.** West must overtake the  $\bullet$  9 with the  $\bullet$  10, and return the  $\bullet$  J to force out Declarer's  $\bullet$  A. West has now the  $\blacktriangledown$  A as an entry to the promoted  $\bullet$  tricks.

**Return Partner's Suit.** It's usually right to return partner's opening lead and help to establish tricks in partner's suit - even if it means losing a trick or two. With a clear plan to defeat the contract, a defender may return a new suit.

# **Unblocking on Defense**

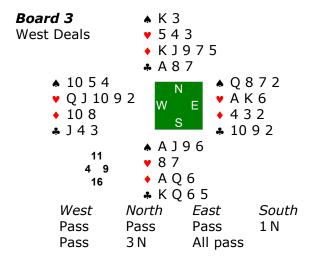
#### Overtake The AK



Contract: 3 NT South, 9 Tricks Lead: ▼ K, Seq., East plays ▼ A Sure Tricks: 3-♠, 4-♠, 3-♣ = 10.

**Play:** East wins the ♥A (OVERTAKES, UNBLOCKS) and returns the ♥8. West sets the contract by winning the ♥s.

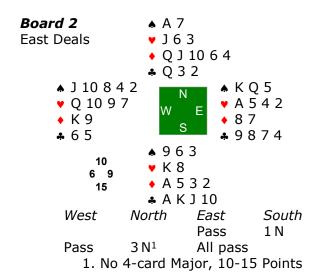
#### Get Rid of the ♥A & ♥K



**Contract:** 3 NT South, 9 Tricks **Lead:** • Q, Seq., East wins the • K **Sure Tricks:** 2-♠, 5-♦, 3-♣ = 9.

**Play:** East wins the ▼AK (OVERTAKES, UNBLOCKS) and returns the ▼6 so West wins three more ▼s.

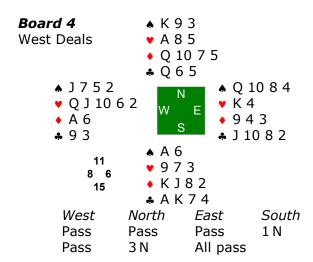
## Those High ♠s Are in the Way



**Contract:** 3 NT South, 9 Tricks **Lead:** ♠ J, top of seq., East overtakes **Sure Tricks:** 1-♠, 1-♠, 4-♣ = 6.

Play: East wins the ♠ K (OVERTAKES and UNBLOCKS). East plays the ♠ Q (UNBLOCKS) forcing the ♠ A. South tries the ◆ finesse. West wins ◆ K and ♠s.

## Win the 1st ♥ Trick

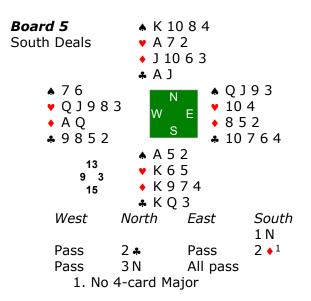


Contract: 3 NT South, 9 Tricks Lead: ▼ Q, Solid Seq., East plays ▼ K Sure Tricks: 2-♠, 1-▼, 3-♣ = 6.

**Play:** Declarer ducks and East wins the ▼ K (OVERTAKES, UNBLOCKS). East returns the ▼ 4. West has the ◆ A, an entry card.

# **Unblocking on Defense**

## **Give Partner Valuable Information**



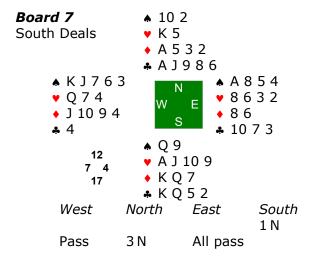
Contract: 3 NT South, 9 Tricks

**Lead**: ♥ Q, Broken seq., East plays ♥ 10

**Sure Tricks:** 2-4, 2-7, 3-4 = 7.

**Play:** South ducks and East UNBLOCKS the ▶ 10. South tries the ▶ finesse but West wins the ▶ Q and promotes ▶ s.

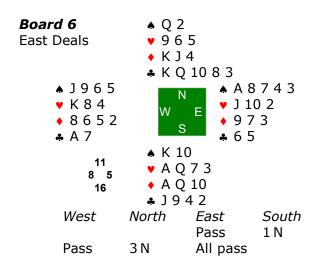
#### The ♠ 8 is a Problem



**Contract:** 3 NT South, 9 Tricks **Lead:** ♠ 6, 4th best, East wins the ♠ A **Sure Tricks:** 2-♥, 3-♦, 5-♣ = 10.

**Play:** East wins the  $\blacktriangle$ A (3rd hand high) and returns the  $\blacktriangle$ 4 (original 4th highest). West wins the  $\blacktriangle$ K and  $\blacktriangle$ J on which East UNBLOCKS the  $\blacktriangle$ 8.

#### Partner's 5th ♠ Is A Winner



**Contract:** 3 NT South, 9 Tricks

**Lead:** ♠ 5, 4th highest, East plays ♠ A

**Sure Tricks:**  $1 - \checkmark$ ,  $3 - \checkmark = 4$ .

**Play:** East returns the ♠4 (original 4th highest), South wins the ♠K and West UNBLOCKS the ♠9. South plays ♣s. West wins the ♣A, wins the ♠J, and leads the ♠6 (link card) to East.