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Bridge Today University

Advanced Defense 261, with the Granovetters

Class One

There are two types of defensive situations:

a) Situations where you can figure out how to defend without any help from partner; and

b) Situations where you need a signal from partner (because otherwise you're just guessing).

We call a) "chess thinking" problems, and the signals used to avoid guessing in b) are called "obvious shift" signals.

Lets look at type a) thinking first.

As a defender, you must quickly estimate the highcard points in your partner's hand and declarer's hand and try to picture their shapes as well. It's actually possible to defend just about every hand well without even looking at partner's cards (!) . . . if you can develop "chess thinking," which is the ability to picture how the play of the cards will unfold. ("What will happen if I play this suit now? What will the end position look like?") The problem with chess thinking is that it takes an extraordinary amount of concentration and energy, and for those players who do not play full-time, this exertion, hand after hand, can be exhausting.

One way to overcome exhaustion is to set yourself up in proper mental position by doing some early footwork on the hand. This is similar to tennis or golf, where you set yourself up to hit the ball from the right angle. In bridge, footwork is the early counting and picturing of the 52 cards. Bridge footwork is helpful on nearly every deal and once you get used to doing it, you'll save a lot of energy for other things.

The two basics of bridge footwork are:

1. Counting the points in everyone's hand.
2. Picturing the suit distribution around the table.

As soon as dummy comes down, you should estimate the point count in the two closed hands. Then you should start to imagine the shapes. Let's try it on this deal, which comes from real life and illustrates chess thinking as well:

North dealer
East-West vul

K 10 6 3 2
10 7 4
K Q 8 3
6

A 7 4
J 8 6 3 2
A 7
K Q J



	You		Partner
South	West	North	East
1H	pass	2H	pass
3D	pass	4H	pass
pass	double	(all pass)	

You lead the king of clubs and dummy comes down. The singleton club in dummy is a big disappointment to you, but don't get emotional, just go to work. First, count the points. You have 15, dummy has 8, that's 23, declarer has about 15 minimum, that leaves partner with 2. (It's usually right to count declarer for the minimum amount of points he can have. People like to bid a lot these days.)

As for the shape, declarer has five hearts, partner none. Given declarer's three-diamond bid and the fact he must have a few clubs (otherwise, partner would have too many for his silence), declarer is probably short in spades.

Declarer wins the ace of clubs and leads the jack of spades. Well, it looks wrong to duck, since declarer is short there and it may be a singleton. You decide to win your ace, but you can take your time about

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it if you like. There's no reason EVER to play an ace quickly. Once you decide you're going to win a trick with the ace, there's no harm in thinking about it, since by thinking you're not giving away any more information than you'd give away by playing it! Occasionally you'll change your mind, realizing it's best to duck even though your hesitation has told declarer you hold the ace. (Partner, of course, is not allowed to take advantage of this information.)

It could be better to duck the jack of spades, if declarer holds a doubleton jack, but, because the chance of a singleton is high, you go up with the ace. What will you do next?

Well, since you've done your mental footwork, you know that partner has at most two points. He could hold the jack of diamonds or the queen of spades- that's all. Here, only the queen is relevant because if declarer holds that card, you probably can't set this contract. Therefore, assume partner has the queen of spades, but does it help? Yes! If partner holds that vital queen, you can tap declarer by continuing spades. You lead back a spade, planning to play a third round of spades at your next opportunity. This will shorten declarer's trumps and promote one of your own. Easy, right?

In the 1983 Bermuda Bowl (the world team championships) in Stockholm, West failed to find this seemingly easy defense. Let's look at the whole deal.

K 10 6 3 2
 10 7 4
 K Q 8 3
 6

A 7 4	Q 8 5
J 8 6 3 2	-
A 7	10 9 5
K Q J	10 9 8 7 5 4 3

J 9
 A K Q 9 5
 J 6 4 2
 A 2

Zia Mahmood was the declarer. To review, he won the first trick with the ace of clubs and immediately played the jack of spades. This was an excellent play. Had he stopped to draw a single round of trumps, he would have lost the hand - you'll soon see why. West won the ace of spades and cashed the ace of diamonds. Then he played a club. Indeed, West led every suit but the right one - the one that would force the South hand. Here was the position when he led back a club:

K 10 6 3
 10 7 4
 K Q 8
 -

7 4	Q 8
J 8 6 3 2	-
7	10 9
Q J	10 9 8 7 5 4

West led the queen of clubs. Zia ruffed the club in dummy, and since he had never touched trumps, he was able to run the ten of hearts to West's jack.

9
 A K Q 9 5
 J 6 4
 2

If he had drawn a single round of trumps earlier, he would not have been able to run the ten of hearts, because dummy would then be void of trumps and West could play a third club to tap the South hand. Zia played the hand very well, but nevertheless he should have been set. West failed to think about what his partner held in high cards and then went into a state of panic, cashing his ace of diamonds and leading his club suit, tapping the wrong hand (i.e., the hand SHORT in trumps instead of LONG).

Just as you must remain cool and calm on declarer play, you have to take your time and think on defense. Often declarers rush defenders (or sometimes it just seems so). Don't let them do that to you! Dummy's singleton club was a rude shock to West, who probably regretted his penalty double when he saw it. Instead of thinking and counting partner for a possible queen, West allowed his emotions to get the best of him.

Try this one:

8 7 4 2
 A K 3
 A K J 10
 Q 4

A 3
 10 9 8 6
 Q 4 3
 A K 6 5



West	North	East	South
1C	double	pass	2S
pass	4S	(all pass)	

You lead the ace of clubs, partner plays the 7 and South the 2. You continue with the king of clubs, and partner plays the 8 and South the 3.

What is your plan?
