
KRZYSZTOF
MARTENS

GUIDE
DOG

PART II

GARSŲ PASAULIS
Vilnius 2010

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Part 1:

HOW TO PLAY HONOR CARDS

As you will see this book has been designed with the idea that the partnership is playing 21st century bridge. That includes reverse signals, except where indicated. High cards are odd numbers or discouraging, low cards are even or encouraging. The same applies to our discards.

GUIDE DOG

~ A friend to the blind who leads him through difficult or dangerous situations...

Bridge literature focuses mainly on bidding, the play of the hand and lead problems based on clues from the bidding, declarer's play up to a given moment and partner's plays. Usually the solution to the problems can be figured out by one player without needing cooperation from their partner.

Defensive agreements are limited to the first card led in a suit, the system of discarding, and giving count and attitude signals. However, there are other situations that can be encountered on defense that are only a guess without specific agreements.

In my opinion, it is impossible to reach a high level of play, without the ability to establish effective cooperation with your partner. The foundation of this is the precise exchange of information. It is also wise to give the kind of information that can only be sensibly used by your partner. We have to remember that declarer may also be watching our moves carefully.

A fundamental rule applies in this situation – the usefulness of a signal must be more to partner's advantage than to the opponents.

The Concept Of Limited Context

The exchange of information can be concerned with: the suit we attack – how do we signal honor cards and count in this suit; showing the quality or the length of the suit played by partner or declarer; showing honors or length in a side suit by discards when not following suit.

I define 7 areas that need to be understood for expert defense:

- sequences
- count leads
- count signals
- substitute count
- complex count signals
- suit preference
- the play of honor cards.

Having a defined structure of defensive agreements and discards is not enough. Knowing when to use a particular signal and having the ability to draw the right conclusions is essential. The defenders' alphabet of signaling options is relatively modest. However, there is a never-ending discussion about when to direct the defense, show defensive intentions, or give accurate information about the location of high cards or the number of cards in a suit.

Active experimentation and independent creativity are the key. The nature of discards used must be elastic so that experimentation and creativity are possible. The context of a situation is also important. In the linguistic sense "context" means the dependency of the meaning of some fragment of speech on the meaning of the words preceding or following it. For example, the word "sea" we understand first and foremost as a huge amount of water, but the expression "a sea of

Part 1: How To Play Honor Cards

sand” we understand as a desert, in other words an area devoid of water. The word “sea” in this particular phrase is a synonym for “immense area.”

In the situational context of bridge communications, the important factors are: location in time and space, goals, plans, intentions and players’ knowledge.

Building a bridge partnership is a complicated process. Undoubtedly, being innovative is a desired mental attitude for both partners. Creative cooperation between them is essential. One has to learn that there is a division of labor on defense and accept refined methods. Specialization (assigning different roles) may be necessary depending on the predisposition of the players.

Dividing the partnership into one player that delivers information (the right information) and one player that gives orders (directing traffic – conveying suggestions and deciding the entire line of defense) isn’t optimal, but in some cases effective.

Resolving problems with the help of a cooperative method requires a similar level of skill from both players. The result is a feeling that the partnership can co-create and shape their bridge world.

Keep in mind that all the hands presented here are from a pairs tournament where every trick is important.

THE CONCEPT OF LIMITED CONTEXT

Defense, which includes both the opening lead and later plays, is the least liked element of the game of bridge. It is a sad fact that the status quo is currently most players make poor leads.

As much as we are able to tolerate, or even like, our character foibles, to admit to our own insufficiencies of intellect is contradictory to human nature. Lack of motivation to improve the quality of defense can be seen at every level of bridge development – the ability to make good leads always runs behind the skills of bidding and declarer play. The mistakes that are often made are simple and the result of laziness – a refusal to count to 40 high card points, 13 cards and 13 tricks.

Compared to bidding and play problems, defense problems are less clear cut, correct techniques are less obviously useful, and routine play may not help and can even be harmful to one's results at the table.

The key to improving this situation is to create effective cooperation between the partners.

Bridge players have a tendency to generalize. Making agreements is very popular – first and foremost we play either count signals or attitude with elements of suit preference. Which method is best? Unfortunately, there's no correct answer to this question. Before giving an answer one should explain: "better for what?" or rather "more useful to do what?" There are some factors like:

- 1) Anticipating partner's needs (what kind of information will he need?)
- 2) The level and type of contract
- 3) The skill level of the opponents

Anticipating partner's needs is an unusually difficult aspect of defense. Everything depends on the context.

Part 1: How To Play Honor Cards

Let's imagine that the opening lead is against a no-trump contract. Depending on the circumstances a signal by the other defender:

- a) encourages or discourages a continuation
- b) shows an odd or even number of cards in the suit
- c) shows suit preference in the remaining suits.

Obviously, a professional pair should define the situations in which the various rules above should apply.

Some situations are obvious.

Against 3NT partner leads the ♠10, and the dummy comes down with

♠ A K Q J

Playing count or attitude signals doesn't make any sense. It would be extremely helpful for the other defender to show preference in the remaining suits.

Contextere – means in Latin – “weave” or “weld.”

The context imposes a certain area of mutual cooperation – analysis. The difficulty is for both partners to think alike. I call this “cooperative analysis”.

It requires each player to make an additional analysis from partner's point of view, taking into consideration information he has from the bidding and the play of the hand up to a particular moment.

The Concept Of Limited Context

On many hands the context will be very narrow.

For example:

| W | N | E | S |
|------|-----|---------|------|
| 1♥ | 3♥ | 4♥ | Pass |
| Pass | Dbl | Pass... | |

3♥ = shows a solid minor and asks for a stopper in hearts.

North having these cards:

♠ J 10
♥ 3
♦ A K Q J 8 6 5
♣ A Q J

may select the lead of the king of diamonds, wanting to draw partner's attention to the lower of the remaining two suits, that is, clubs.

♠ A Q
♥ 3
♦ A K Q J 8 6 5
♣ J 10 3

Here he might select the lead of the ace of diamonds, showing spade values.

In this example the context is known from the bidding – the solid diamond suit.

Partner will choose a count signal or may be able to follow partner's intentions and show suit preference.

Part 1: How To Play Honor Cards

The following example would not be possible for any pair except one with a very detailed set of agreements.

NS vulnerable

| W | N | E | S |
|------|-----|---------|------|
| 1♥ | 3♥ | 4♥ | Pass |
| Pass | Dbl | Pass... | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|--|------------|------------------|---|---------|--|
| | | | ♠ A Q | | | |
| | | | ♥ 6 | | | |
| | | | ♦ A K Q J 10 7 4 | | | |
| | | | ♣ 5 4 2 | | | |
| ♠ 8 7 5 | <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | W E | S | ♠ J 4 2 | |
| N | | | | | | |
| W E | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | |
| ♥ A Q 8 7 2 | | ♥ K J 10 4 | | | | |
| ♦ 8 2 | | ♦ 6 3 | | | | |
| ♣ A Q 7 | | ♣ J 10 9 8 | | | | |
| | | | ♠ K 10 9 6 3 | | | |
| | | | ♥ 9 5 3 | | | |
| | | | ♦ 9 5 | | | |
| | | | ♣ K 6 3 | | | |

Lead: ♦A, showing spade values.

South follows with the ♦9 and ♦5, also showing interest in spades.

The Concept Of Limited Context

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|------------|----------|---|------------|--|
| | ♠ 5 4 2 | | | | | |
| | ♥ 6 | | | | | |
| | ♦ A K Q J 10 7 4 | | | | | |
| | ♣ A Q | | | | | |
| ♠ A Q 7 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | W E | S | ♠ J 10 9 8 | |
| N | | | | | | |
| W E | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | |
| ♥ A Q 10 8 7 | | ♥ K J 10 4 | | | | |
| ♦ 8 2 | | ♦ 6 3 | | | | |
| ♣ 8 7 5 | | ♣ J 4 2 | | | | |
| | ♠ K 6 3 | | | | | |
| | ♥ 9 5 3 | | | | | |
| | ♦ 9 5 | | | | | |
| | ♣ K 10 9 6 3 | | | | | |

Lead: ♦K, showing club values.

South follows with the ♦5 and ♦9, also showing interest in clubs.

The purpose of the next book in the series “The University of Defense” – “Guide Dog” is to narrow the context. This means showing the circumstances in which a discard or another play changes in meaning depending on the needs of the particular hand.

Is there a discard that solves every type of problem that can be encountered on defense? The answer is ‘no’ – it is impossible beyond a certain level of complexity.

One model (attitude, count, suit preference) will not work on complicated hands, basically for two reasons.

First, it is difficult effectively to solve two conceptually remote lead problems using only one model. By “an effectively solution” I mean one that is correct, clear, and easy upon which to base analysis.

Second, some information in a concrete situation will not be useful and other information that the applied model doesn’t recognize will be invaluable.

Part 1: How To Play Honor Cards

As it happens there is group of hands, one that is far from small in number, on which a more sophisticated method of conveying information is necessary – substitute and complex count.

The purpose of the concept of Limited Context is to help us untangle the kind of problem in this example.

EW vulnerable

| W | N | E | S |
|-----|------|----|---------|
| 1NT | Pass | 2♦ | Dbl |
| 2♥ | 3♦ | 3♥ | Pass... |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|----------|---|--|--|
| | ♠ K 10 3 ♥ 6 5 2 ♦ J 10 9 4 ♣ K 8 4 | | | | | |
| ♠ A Q J 9 ♥ A K Q ♦ 8 2 ♣ 7 5 3 2 | <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | W E | S | ♠ 8 4 2 ♥ J 10 8 7 4 ♦ Q 3 ♣ A 10 9 | |
| N | | | | | | |
| W E | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | |
| | ♠ 7 6 5 ♥ 9 5 3 ♦ A K 7 6 5 ♣ Q J 3 | | | | | |

Lead: ♦J.

The play of honor cards by South on the first two tricks should show suit preference.

The Concept Of Limited Context

In many similar situations:

- a) first the king, and then the ace of diamonds suggests values in the lower of the remaining two suits. This is only a suggestion, because the defender may not have any other strength, and so he simply plays his honor cards in a natural way.
- b) winning the first trick with the ace of diamonds and then playing the king – definitely shows values in spades.

On this particular hand there are some special circumstances.

Both defenders anticipating the next stage of the defense expect a spade return to be logical. IN THIS CONTEXT an atypical play of honor cards (first the ace and then the king) is a kind of wake up call asking if it is necessary to change the seemingly obvious line of defense.

It means this – I'm proposing to shift to a club and not a spade. Partner (N)'s role at trick two is to reject the offer (♦10) or to accept it (♦4).

Bear in mind that if dummy's spades are slightly better (or the clubs slightly worse) this inference may not be available, or not nearly so clear.

This narrowing down of the context of signaling is therefore one of the most important concepts to combat the complex scope of bridge problems. It assumes that there are clearly defined groups of defensive problems that are conceptually remote from each other.

For each such limited group of hands (the context) we create a separate model of discards (or plays). Information that is conveyed by a predefined action will change depending on the context – in reality depending on the need. Changing the background and circumstances of particular hands generate different needs, and this is the challenge I'm trying to address. We will need both members of the partnership to be on the same page if our partnership is going to defend optimally.

For this reason, I think it is indispensable to create a context map, or in other words, a data bank of sets of similar defensive problems in which defined actions meet the concrete (and defined) needs of partner.

Obviously, in your career you're going to encounter many delicate, subtle defense problems the interpretation of which will be different for each partnership.

Such is the beauty and charm of bridge.