

Rick's Tricks

DDD

By Rick Roeder

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What is the most difficult element of bridge? Most think that defense is the most challenging aspect although some stars dissent. Swedish great, Peter Bertheau, casts a minority vote, as he thinks the choice of opening lead presents the greatest challenge.

Even serious partnerships have some OOPSIES on defense. After an error, DDD is really helpful in the post-mortem. DDD is my acronym for **D**iagnosing **D**efective **D**efenses. For DDD to be effective, both partners have to be good listeners. If the dialogue degenerates into “I’m right and you are an idiot,” little good will result – even if you are right and your partner is truly a first-class idiot.

In an IMP game, I was on lead after the following auction:

♠863
♥A8
♦J643
♣KQ94

ME	LHO	PARD	RHO
P	1♥	P	1♠
P	2♠	P	4♠

(all pass)

I saw this dummy after my ♣K hit the table.

♠K1074
♥KQ643
♦K2
♣75

Declarer won the ♠A, with Pard playing what I thought was an encouraging ♣3 (we play upside down carding). Declarer plays the ♦Q and my Partner wins the Ace. Pard plays the ♣J. Would you overtake or duck? Decide before reading on.

I elected to duck. Pard played a low Diamond on which Declarer pitched the ♥5 on his winner. Declarer played the ♠K and then a low Spade off dummy as Pard’s Queen popped up. Declarer

was now in control. After winning the ♠A, he led a Heart toward the King. I popped up Ace as my bullet was our 3rd and last trick.

In the post-mortem, we discussed the hand. My Partner thought that his ♣3 at trick 1 was a count card. I thought the ♣3 was attitude. He thought I should overtake the ♣J and play a 3rd Club so that we could get a decisive promotion (my 8 of trump was a critical card if Declarer had elected to ruff a 3rd round of Clubs with the King of trump). I told him that I thought attitude was more useful in this situation. Even if Pard's trick 1 play was count, how would I know if Pard started with 2 or 4 (or even a highly unlikely 6)? After all, I did not have X-Ray vision that Declarer's longest suit was Clubs.

At this point, I raised the issue as to who had ownership of the ♥A. The Declarer was quite competent. If he had ownership of the ♥A, why would he be screwing around with the Diamond suit at trick 2? Holding the ♥A, Declarer would almost always start extracting trumps so he could enjoy the long Hearts in dummy. Holding the stiff ♥A, one would presume that Declarer might well play the boss Heart at trick 2 to unblock a key side suit. If Pard assumes that I have the ♥A, he can force me into the most likely winning defense by playing a Heart after winning the ♣J. (Declarer's actual distribution was 4-3-1-5.)

Our partnership may still have some questions as to what third-hand's play at trick 1 means. I still believe that attitude will usually be most helpful. Remember that one can resolve many ambiguities by putting yourself in declarer's shoes. His line of play will often confirm or deny declarer's holding of a key card. Both of us acknowledged that we could have beaten the hand. Such acknowledgement can be important for partnership harmony. Plus, not telling Pard that he is an idiot will be very good for their self-esteem. ♣