

Bridge Theory for the Practitioners

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27. A Complete Set of Questions in Defense

In October, 2012 issue of The Bridge World magazine, an article by Terence Reese was re-published (page 28) as a *Classic Rewind*. If you do not subscribe to the Bridge World, you can still read the whole article as this is the first chapter of Terence Reese's classic *Master Play in Contract Bridge*.

The title of this first chapter is "How Could I Tell?" and Terence Reese starts with:
"There was no way in which I could tell" ---- How often is it true? Early in the play, not often;
towards the end, never.

He then continues with what I call a complete set of questions to ask by a defender:

1. Is there anything in my partner's play up to now that does not fit in with the picture of the hand on which my intended play is based?
2. Is there anything in the declarer's play that does not fit in with my general picture?
3. Have I counted the declarer's possible tricks and am I satisfied that the play I have in mind, in so far as it contains any risk, must be made now?

Here are couples of example hands. The first one is from Mike Lawrence's *Dynamic Defense*.

You hold

K 3
K 9 4 3 2
K 8
J 8 7 6

And the auction goes

1D (RHO)	1H (you)	1S	P
2D	P	3D	P
3NT All pass.			

You lead the H-3 and see this dummy:

Q 9 8 7 5

T 8 7

Q 2

A Q 4

Here is your hand again

K 3
K 9 4 3 2
K 8
J 8 7 6

Trick 1. H: 3, 7, Q, A.

Trick 2. C: 9, 7, A, 2.

Trick 3. D: Q, 3, 4, K.

After winning this trick what shall you do?

Use principle 3 from above. Count declarer's tricks. Declarer most probably has six Ds to the AJT.., AJ (x) of Hs (probably AJx, as partner would strive to raise you with 3 Hs) and either the K of C or the Ace of S but not both (if he had both then his 2D rebid was just too wimpy).

Use principle 2 from above. The way the declarer played the C suit you can be pretty sure he has the K of C.

And so the best defense is?

As the declarer will have $1H + 5D + 3C = 9$ tricks (at least) if you let him get at it, you put down the K of S on the table. The J comes down from declarer's hand. And now S continuation sets the contract as you get $1D+3S+1H = 5$ before the declarer gets his 9 tricks.

Here is another hand from a recent BBO practice session.

I held

Q T 8 3

A K 4 3

A J

Q J 6

And the auction goes:

Amit	Atul Rai	Elizabeth	Jim Masilamani
1C	P	1D	P
2N	P	3D*	P
3N	all pass		

*3D = Artificial GF (we play a 2 way check back structure that I will write about in a future column)

I get the 7 of Hs lead which I win in the dummy with the T. The dummy held:

7 5
Q J T
K T 8 7 5 4
K 9

Here is my hand again for convenience:

Q T 8 3
A K 4 3
A J
Q J 6

I play D to the A and then the J of D and take the D hook. Jim wins and follows the *defensive principles* he knows so very well. He puts down the A of S. Atul plays the 2. However, Jim works out that if Atul held KJ2, he has to play the 2 in any case. In order to get a clearer answer, Jim now plays the A of C. Now Atul discourages with the 2 and Jim continues with S and sets me as Atul did hold KJ2 of Ss.

This was a strong defense by Jim but in retrospect I made an error. After Atul's 7-H lead, I should have realized that he has a tenace in S and should have taken the D hook the other way even risking to block the D suit.

“Wonderful game, this Bridge.” --- Mike Lawrence.

References:

1. **Terence Reese, “Master Play in Contract Bridge”.** This book has a Dover edition and is relatively cheap. I strongly recommend it.
2. **Mike Lawrence, “Dynamic Defense”.**