

## **DEFENSE REVIEW by Maritha Pottenger**

1. Opening Lead—passive is generally best unless auction demands attacking lead. Remember which auctions suggest trump lead and when you CAN lead Ace without King. Singletons stand out against suits and even doubletons can work out. Sequence leads are best because they attack without giving anything up.
2. When dummy comes down, review bidding and make tentative assessment of Declarer's shape and HCP's. Estimate where your tricks are/might be coming from to set contract.
3. Two most fundamental principles are PROMOTION and POSITION. Figure out which suits to attack from your side of the table and which ones partner needs to attack.
4. Most defenders are too active. Do NOT break new suits without a really good reason. Recognize “frozen” suits and those you cannot afford to touch and DON'T.
5. If you KNOW what is needed to set the contract, TAKE CONTROL. Don't assume partner will figure it out.
6. Signals are important, but partner does NOT always have the ideal cards to tell you the whole story. Watch the tiny spot cards also.
7. Rules are just guidelines. There is no substitute for THINKING. Know when to play Second Hand High and Third Hand Low and other non-standard actions.
8. As the play progresses, your options become more limited, but your knowledge increases. By middle of hand, you should have good idea of whether or not you can set the contract (or are just trying to prevent overtricks).
9. If you need partner to have a certain card to set contract, play him/her for it at IMPS. At matchpoints, double check HCP and see if partner CAN hold that card. If so, go ahead if you can stand the post mortem. If odds are bad, better not.
10. Covering honors with honors is ONLY to promote a card in your card or partner's. That means it is almost never correct to cover an honor with an honor in THEIR trump suit (unless they lead jack and you are looking at Q109, e.g.).
11. Continue to revise your assessment of Declarer's shape and HCP as play progresses. COUNT tricks, suits, HCP and it will keep you on track for winning defense.