Chapter 14: Defensive Carding

Defensive carding is mostly a matter of style and preference. This is an area of discussion with serious partnerships. KLP uses an extensive defensive system when defending, considering that you'll spent roughly half your time in bridge defending! KLP uses $3^{rd}/5^{th}$ best leads (with MUD and coded 9's/10's), upside-down carding, Obvious Shift principles, a suit preference echo, and prism signals. You can easily incorporate parts of this into your methods, but I feel that this scheme helps the most.

$3^{rd}/5^{th}$ Best Leads, MUD, and coded 9's/10's

4th best leads versus suits and NT acts as a double-edged sword: partner AND declarer know the entire suit at trick one, especially at NT using the rule of 11. I prefer $3^{rd}/5^{th}$ leads because declarer is put to an immediate guess; the lead can be made from a variety of holdings. Also I like MUD (middle-up-down) leads from three small lacking an honor because it differentiates from H-x-x. Lastly, 9 or 10 promises 0 or 2 honors above in an unbid suit only versus NT to aid partner's play of that particular suit.

Upside-Down Carding (UDCA)

UDCA is the mirrored opposite of standard carding. A high-low promises an ODD holding while a low-high promises an EVEN holding. Also, a low card is encouraging, and with regards to suit preference, a high-low shows a lower ranking suit. Also, KLP uses reverse suit-preference, in keeping with the theme. In essence, a higher suit exit asks for lower suit, and vice versa. Trust me, it's easier than you think!

Using the Trump Suit as an Echo

If you possess 2 or more cards in trumps, KLP uses them to signal an UDCA echo for suit preference of the two remaining suits (the opening lead and trumps are by default excluded). A high-low seeks the lower remaining suit, and vice versa.

Prism Signals

I thought a long time before incorporating this type of signals. It's used when declarer is running a long suit in NT, or has command of trumps and an echo isn't feasible. It's not for the faint of heart for it requires intense study to master prism signals, but well worth the effort and the information the defense can give one another. We use them only on first discards – otherwise, UD discards with more S/P overtones than attitude.