

# The Forcing Defense

By Kevin Wilson

[www.kevinbwilson.com](http://www.kevinbwilson.com)

In general, there are five typical approaches to defending a bridge hand.

1. Active Defense (aggressive when dummy has a known suit to establish)
2. Passive Defense (try to give nothing away)
3. Cutting Down on Dummy's Ruffing Power (start and continue trump leads)
4. Forcing Declarer Out of Control in Her Trump Suit (Bludgeoning)
5. Creating One or More Trump Tricks (Expert Level Stuff – promos and uppercuts)

## Today's focus is on #4 - The Forcing Defense

Use a Forcing Defense so that declarer can't safely establish and enjoy his side-suit winners. The strategy is to shorten declarer in trump such that our side will be in control of the trump suit. With some planning and a little luck, WE (the defenders) might establish and enjoy our own long suit. Once declarer's trump have been exhausted, our long suit winners can be cashed.

Hallmarks of a forcing defense:

1. Know trumps are not breaking well. You're holding four or more trump or strongly suspect that partner has four or more trump.
2. Have a suit that may work out as a bludgeoning suit. A sequence lead with length is the obvious example, but partner's overcalled suit may be another indication of which suit will force declarer.
3. Our defensive side must have sufficient entries. You must hold or expect partner to have some entries whereas the plan can work. If the opponents bid to slam, a forcing defense won't likely work because we won't get in frequently enough to inflict our plan.
4. Being two-suited on defense, with one of the suits being trump. This means that you will have the option between leading a singleton or leading your long suit.
5. Vicious against a 4-3 fit IF, and only if, you can force the long hand to shorten. If the short hand (the one that has only three trump) is the hand ruffing your long suit, declarer may be able to stay in control!

Flaws of a forcing defense:

1. Be careful as to which trump you win. Against a 4-4 fit you will often want to win the **third** round.
2. A cross-ruff technique can still work for declarer.
3. Your side doesn't have sufficient strength and entries to be able to keep leading the suit which forces declarer.

## Example Hand from The Forcing Defense: What would you lead?

You're South ♠ 9  
Dir: East ♥ 10642  
Vul: N-S ♦ A863  
♣ K974

♠ 874                      ♠ AKQJ6  
♥ Q93                      ♥ KJ7  
♦ K1092                    ♦ QJ75  
♣ A65                      ♣ 3  
  
♠ 10532  
♥ A85  
♦ 4  
♣ QJ1082

KEYS to the hand  
Leading When Holding Four Trump  
Sequence Lead  
Forcing Defense

N	E	S	W
	1♠	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

### Bidding Commentary:

East opens 1♠ with a medium strength opening bid. West has a typical raise to 2♠, which shows 6-10. East invites game by bidding 3♦. This game try bid asks West to consider how well the hands fit for diamonds and spades. Although West doesn't have quality spades, West does have the top of his range, great diamond cards and an outside ♣A. West should accept the game try bid by bidding 4♠.

### Play Commentary:

South has a terrific decision on the opening lead. Should South lead a singleton diamond and try to get a couple of ruffs? It is likely from the invitational auction that partner has some high card strength. A singleton lead against a suit contract is usually the best plan but this hand is different. The hand is different because it holds four trump and South knows that trump are going to break poorly for declarer. The sequence (♣QJ1082) and length in clubs suggests that the best defense may be to lead clubs and continue leading clubs at every additional opportunity. The defense may be able to force declarer to ruff clubs and lose control of the trump suit. South may eventually have more trump than declarer!

### The point:

Study this hand carefully to understand the power of a forcing defense. When the conditions are right, the defense can force declarer out of control and can eventually score their small clubs. They accomplish this by leading clubs at EVERY opportunity. Declarer can never score a heart trick if the defense does this. The other key point to this hand is the singleton diamond lead. If South chooses this lead, note that North has the ♦A (lucky) and South gets her precious diamond ruff. The contract still can't be defeated because declarer remains in control of the trump suit.

Contact Kevin for any professional bridge services that you, your partnership, or your group may be interested in. Please recommend Kevin if anyone asks you about great bridge speakers.

Kevin Wilson

[yourbridgepro@gmail.com](mailto:yourbridgepro@gmail.com)

865-679-6286