

Do you ken DODDS?

Silence is Golden

It is pleasing to establish a comprehensive way of communicating in defence. Good partnerships benefit considerably from the confidence so generated. One can over-egg the pudding, however. Everything you signal to partner is available to declarer. That is one of the reasons why it is good to use a signalling method, particularly for discards, in which you can convey “nothing to say” if you so wish. It is also a reason why most signalling schemes apply solely to the **first** discard. After that you may simply come under pressure from declarer, giving you different factors to consider for your forced discards.

For example:

```
      A J x
Q x x      x x x
      K 10 x
```

The thirteenth card of the suit could be almost anywhere, but the the relevance of the situation is that declarer, South, has a choice of which way to finesse for the Queen. It is important therefore that West does not signal that “values” exist in this suit. It is important that East does not signal that “no values” are held in the suit. Perhaps paradoxically, if the squeeze pressure becomes great, it is West who should discard a small card, not East. Declarer is particularly liable to mis-guess if this discard is made calmly, as early as practicable in the hand.

So, if you sit down at the table with a strange partner, what signalling style should you consider. Over the past few years, more and more amongst ordinary club players I have heard them agreeing DODDS. I confess, this scheme was unfamiliar to me, I assume the title comes from Leslie Dodds, an expert player from the mid-20th Century. Konstam and Dodds were a formidable partnership espousing the CAB bidding system, elements of which survive to this day. Whatever, I digress.

This discard scheme is one of the simpler of the odd/even family. If , for your first discard, you pitch an even card you would like partner to lead that suit. If you pitch an odd card, you would like partner to lead the other suit **of the same colour**. To send no signal, one simply asks for the lead of the suit on which you have made the discard. No doubt some players adapt this scheme to ask for the other suit of the same rank, major or minor, but colour coding seems the more common. The odd/even assignment may be reversed by some pairs but let us keep the one above for this article.

I have tried this scheme myself for over a year. I am becoming more and more enamoured. It lends itself to more sophistication than one might think initially .

For example, the suit preference so indicated should not necessarily demand a lead of that suit. It merely shows values there. It is up to partners, looking at their values, if any, also held in that suit, to decide to lead it, to set up, or cash tricks, or to make a more passive lead to protect those implied values from a devastating finesse.

Sometimes you may be able to help partner decide by the rank of the odd card you discard: the **lower**, the more keen for an actual lead. As ever, it is sometimes hard to tell on the first discard whether your card is high or low. The 4 from 432 would be high, but the 6 from 876 would be low. When declarer is running a suit, perhaps drawing trumps, more than one discard may be made from the same suit. Partner then should be able to distinguish the difference and judge accordingly.

With an even discard showing your suit preference directly, the same idea can be applied. The **lower** the more encouraging. This is because a higher card may be valuable. The difficulty of recognising high or low on the first discard remains. It may not be so easily resolved without damaging your holding the suit. Hence, emerges the

principle that, given a choice, it is usually better to make an indirect signal with an odd card than a direct one with an even card.

Then there is the ability to make a non-signal. The simplest way is to use an odd card to signal values in the suit that is being run by declarer. Another way is to signal values in a suit that partner is known to be unable to lead. For example, you may have bid a suit, which partner has led, but after a couple of rounds partner is now void. In this case, if your signal is odd, indicating your own suit, then it is a non-signal. If even, however, another level of sophistication is possible. This can become a McKinney signal: high for a higher suit, low for a lower suit. Since your hand will be holding the majority of the un-played cards in your suit it will usually be clear, but a second discard will clarify the situation. For example:

	S x x x x	
	H x	
	D A x x x x	
	C Q x x	
S K x		S A Q J x x x
H 10 x x x		H J
D x x x		D K Q x
C A J x x		C x x x
	S x	
	H A K Q x x x x	
	D J x	
	C K 10 x	

South is playing in a Heart contract after you, East, have opened 1S. Partner leads King and another Spade. Declarer ruffs the second round and leads 4 rounds of trumps. When West is in, a Diamond lead is essential. Hence, on the second round of Hearts, you should discard an high even Spade, followed by any lower spade on the third round. This first even discard may appear to be non-signal at first, but a second from the same suit clarifies the request.

No doubt, one can construct deals where the combination of odd/even cards in your hand makes it inconvenient to say all you would wish, but such are rare. *In extremis* there may be the chance to discard a high honour to wake up partner to the fact that you can cash tricks in a particular suit.