Summary of "Eddie Kantar Teaches Modern Bridge Defense"

NOTE: Kantar departs from certain conventions I wish to retain – in particular the use of reverse attitude, MUD and McKenney. Where this occurs, I have translated his recommendations in the main text, and relegated his actual suggestions to a footnote.

A. Leading against NT Contracts

NOTE!! No-Trump Contracts only!!

1. Safest & best lead is top of 3- or 4-card perfect honour sequence. Second best are top of a near-perfect sequence (eg. from AKJ10x).
2. Also good is leading partner's suit, especially after an overcall or a lead-directing double.
3. The lead of the Ace is the strongest lead and asks partner to unblock any honour (**Note**: only in NT, and I think this excludes the 10), or give count if lacking an honour (so attitude signals don't apply if the Ace is led in NT).
4. "Jack Denies": ie. the lead of the J denies a higher honour. Lead of J is from J109…, J108… or maybe J10x… or Jx.
5. Lead 9 from A109…, K109… or Q109…. The 9 usually promises the 10 and one higher honour in a broken sequence[1].
6. Lead 10 from AJ10, KJ10 (but the Q from QJ10). The 10 usually promises the J and a higher honour in a broken sequence, or is top of 109…
7. MUD leads from 3 or 4 low cards, to deny an honour[2]. Lead second highest. The second card played ("Up") will distinguish high-low doubleton leads from leads from longer worthless suits.
8. From 5 or 6 low cards, lead 4th highest if you have an outside entry or two. Ie. we don't lead 2nd highest from long feeble suits.
9. Lead of a low card (ie. 4th highest) promises[3] at least one honour and suggests that you can stand the return of the suit. If you want another suit returned, lead a higher[4] spot card. Ie pretend this is a MUD-style lead.
10. Tend to lead an unbid major rather than an unbid minor. However, if you have 3 honours in the minor (and little in the major) lead the minor.
11. Listen to the bidding for clues. Typical clues: (a) if partner could have overcalled cheaply, but didn't, he hasn't got the suit. (b) If partner could have doubled an artificial bid and didn't, he doesn't want the suit lead. (c) If partner didn't support a suit, he probably doesn't want it lead. (d) If the opponents don't end up in a major suit contract, they probably have less than an 8-card fit in the majors.

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[1] Kantar says ", though may be top of nothing", but this contradicts the MUD agreement below (which Kantar doesn't mention).
[2] Kantar has "Lead top of nothing".
[3] But since we lead 4th highest from long suits without an honour, maybe "suggests" is a better word than "promises".
[4] Kantar has "high".

B. Leading against Suit Contracts

NOTE!! <u>Suit</u> Contracts only!!

1. Lead a trump when you have strength in declarer's first-bid suit, but where another suit ended up as trumps.
2. With long trumps, try to force declarer by leading a long non-trump suit.
3. Short suit leads are most attractive when (a) you have an early trump entry and (b) you will not be ruffing with a natural trump trick.
4. Make an attacking lead if you fear tricks will disappear on dummy's long suit.
5. Avoid underleading an ace as an opening lead (**Note**: only in a <u>suit</u> contract).
6. If the bidding clearly indicates the opposition have a weakness in a suit, lead that suit regardless of your holding in it.
7. Lead top from honour sequences, "Jack denies", and 10 or 9 promising 0 or two higher honours (as against NT). But (against a **<u>suit</u>** contract) lead A from AJ10 or A109.
8. Lead K from AK doubleton. **Note**: we <u>don't</u>[5] play "Ace attitude, King count".
9. If you have raised partner's suit, and lack an honour, lead top of nothing. If you have NOT supported partner's suit, and lack an honour, lead low[6].
10. Lead Q from AKQ… Partner (if the lead is recognised) should give count not attitude. This is so the hand on lead knows how many tricks he can cash before declarer ruffs. The lead of the Ace denies AKQ.
11. The Ace is led from AKx… as an <u>opening</u> lead, but the K is led from AKx … <u>later</u> in the hand if you open a new suit. Even as an opening lead, lead the K from AKx… if (a) you are leading partner's suit, (b) you are leading your suit, supported by partner, or (c) you are defending a suit contract at the 5-level or higher[7].

C. Play Third in Hand

1. When partner leads low (initially presumed to be 4th highest), play high if dummy has small cards.
2. When playing 3rd hand high, play the lowest of equals.
3. When partner leads low, dummy has an honour and plays low, and you have a higher honour, conserve your higher honour and play a lower card if you have 9 or higher – ie. finesse against dummy.
4. With a doubleton honour, in NT and often in suit contracts, if partner leads an honour, unblock or overtake.
5. Maintain communications with partner. If partner leads what looks like a doubleton, and declarer has a likely trick in the suit, duck on the first round so that partner can lead the suit again when he gets the lead.

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[5] Or do we – this requires validation.

[6] Kantar doesn't supply any reasoning behind this suggestion. I'd have thought that what's needed is to indicate both your honour holding and length in partner's suit. If you have supported partner, a lead of a high card is not going to be confused with a singleton or doubleton, so Kantar's "top of nothing" suggestion is sensible. However, if I've not supported partner, I'm presumed short in the suit, so would want to give count – ie. echo with a doubleton. With a doubleton honour, I'd lead the honour.

[7] This is complicated, and Kantar doesn't supply any reasoning.

6. Use the Rule of Eleven if partner leads a likely 4th highest to determine declarer's strength in the suit. If the Rule obviously doesn't work, partner has not led 4th highest!
7. When returning partner's suit, return highest from a remaining doubleton, lowest from 3 remaining.
8. If as third hand you have a perfect honour sequence (eg. QJ10), if dummy plays high to win the trick, play the <u>highest</u> "equal honour". However, if dummy plays low, play the <u>lowest</u> "equal honour".

D. **Signalling in Suit Contracts**

NOTE!! <u>Suit</u> Contracts only!!

1. Encourage[8] a continuation if (a) you have a doubleton and want to ruff, (b) you have an honour equal to your partner's (eg. K if partner leads the Q), (c) you fear a shift would be disastrous (d) you want to force declarer or dummy to ruff.
2. If partner leads an honour, play a high[9] card to discourage partner, especially if you want partner to switch to another suit.
3. Playing the Q when partner leads the A promises the J, or is a singleton[10].
4. An echo in the trump suit promises more than two trumps.
5. Give count when declarer or dummy initiates a side suit – echo to show an even number, low-high to show an odd number; **only** if this information is more likely to be useful to partner than declarer.
6. When leading a suit for partner to ruff, lead a high card for the higher suit to be returned, low for the lower.
7. Always trust partner's suit preference signals in ruffing situations.

E. **Signalling in NT Contracts**

NOTE!! <u>No-Trump</u> Contracts only!!

1. The driver in NT is <u>attitude</u>. Unblock / overtake with doubletons; encourage with an equal honour; discourage without an honour.
2. In NT give <u>count</u> when (a) declarer or dummy initiates a suit; particularly when declarer leads up to a long suit missing one or two top honours – it helps partner to count declarer's hand and know how long to hold up; (b) partner leads an ace on opening lead, and you have no honour (J+) to unblock; (c) partner leads low, and you cannot beat dummy[11].
3. Suit preference signals are rare in NT; most commonly when you are driving out declarer's last stopper and want to indicate your entry – high / low (of equals) for a higher / lower suit.

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[8] Kantar has "Echo ("high low") to …". We play reverse attitude.
[9] Kantar supports "attitude" rather than "reverse attitude" (though he says the latter is perfectly playable), so has "low" here.
[10] **Note**: this helps the defence subsequently to avoid pseudo-squeezes.
[11] I think this last point is only in situations where you could be expected to beat dummy! If dummy plays the ace (or maybe the K), your card shows attitude.

4. Leading from KQJ9, the lead of the K followed by J asks partner to unblock the 10.
5. Similarly for QJ108; Q … 10 … ask for 9 to be unblocked.

F. __Play Second in Hand__

1. Only cover if you can promote something for yourself or partner.
2. Cover the last[12] of equal honours in dummy, unless you have a doubleton, when cover the first.
3. If declarer leads Q or J towards the A in dummy, assume declarer has the next lower honour, and don't cover with a single higher honour[13].
4. When splitting honours from QJ10 or J109, play the higher honour first.
5. Play second hand high if[14] you can (a) kill a long entryless side suit in dummy; (b) return partner's suit early in the hand at NT; (c) protect partner from being endplayed; (d) see that declarer is trying to steal the missing trick when you can take the contract down; (e) deceive declarer.

G. __Discards__

1. The first discard in a suit shows attitude. We play McKenney[15], so a high card is encouraging for the higher of the other two suits, a low card is encouraging for the lower of the other two suits. You may need to watch the second discard to determine whether the first card was high or low.
2. __Note__: with David I play McKenney on <u>even</u> discards, while an <u>odd</u> discard would be encouraging in the suit discarded[16].
3. When making two discards in a suit, the first shows attitude, the second shows <u>present</u> count.
4. The discard of an honour shows the top of a perfect sequence, and tells partner that the suit is guarded.
5. At NT, if you have the semblance of an entry, keep at least one card in any suit partner has bid (as an exit / communication card).
6. Unless you are seeking a ruff, don't discard down to a singleton or void in any suit, as this places the other cards for declarer.
7. Discourage another suit as a way of encouraging the suit you want led[17].
8. The weaker hand makes honest discards, the stronger hand need not, as the weaker hand is unlikely to be on lead.
9. Don't waste high cards[18].

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[12] Covering the first "equal" cannot normally gain, and could lose – eg. if partner (or a sneaky declarer) has a singleton higher honour.
[13] I'm not sure of the logic here – it seems open to double-bluffing by wily declarers.
[14] This advice may appear somewhat unmotivated without the examples.
[15] Kantar doesn't mention McKenney, so has "High is encouraging, low discouraging (for the suit discarded)". __Note__: in No-trumps, with McKenney, there can be ambiguity. Presumably, to allow flexibility, it should be "the <u>immediately</u> higher/lower suit"?
[16] Is there any distinction between <u>high</u> odd cards and <u>low</u> ones?
[17] I'm not quite sure how this works with McKenney. Presumably a discouraging card is a middle card. Jurek kept expecting me to recognise 6s as "low" cards (which I do … but they are ambiguous).

10. When discarding from a suit partner has previously led, make a present count discard (ie. echo if you <u>now</u> have a doubleton etc.). This is because on partner's lead, you would have given <u>attitude</u>, not count. Note that had declarer / dummy led this suit, you would have given count initially, so your present discard should simply <u>confirm</u> the count initially given (eg. by completing an echo).

11. Try to keep parity with dummy (and declarer, if you can determine declarer's distribution) – ie. don't discard from declarer / dummy's long suit with equal length[19].

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[18] Kantar has "if you can't afford a high card from the suit you want led, play a low card for the suit you don't want led". This <u>does</u> apply to McKenney – if you can't afford a high card indicating the higher suit, try a low card (from another suit!) to indicate the lower.

[19] Unless your spot cards are useless, presumably; though if you can afford it, it might be best not to reveal to declarer that the high spots in partner's hand are likely to drop.