Bridge Online

Leading against 6NT at IMPs

by Barrie Partridge

WHILE Match-pointed Pairs is the most popular format at Bridge Club Live, there are many who like to play with IMP scoring, and, in addition to a number of teams events, we provide an 18-board duplicate Butler Pairs movement on most evenings.

This board occurred in just such a recent session. All ten tables played in 6NT, made at four tables and off at six tables. At Game All, your opening lead makes a 24-IMPs difference to your final score. You hold as West:

♠ A 10 8 7
♥ 7 3 2
♦ 7 3 2
♣ Q J 8

Partner passed and South's opening weak 1NT was immediately raised to 6NT on your left. What do you lead?

It is usually best when leading against a 6NT contract to make as passive a lead as possible so as not to give anything away and to make declarer do the work. This occasion was no exception. With 7 HCP in your hand, partner is unlikely to have more than a jack. As long as you avoid a club, or the ♠A and a club switch, the contract can't be made as declarer simply doesn't have enough tricks.

The full layout was:

	♠ K Q 2 ♥ A Q J 6 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ A 9 5	
♠ A 10 8 7 ♥ 7 3 2 ♦ 7 3 2 ♣ Q J 8	N W E S	♠ 6 5 4 ♥ 9 8 5 4 ♦ 10 9 6 4 ♣ 4 2
	♠ J 9 3 ♥ K 10 ♦ A J 8 ♣ K 10 7 6 3	

At one table, the ♣Q was led, at another the ♣J, and at yet another, the lead was the ♠A followed by a switch to the ♣Q. Declarer took the club with the ♣K and finessed the ♣9 for the contract.

A low spade at trick one is luckily a survivable lead for the defence provided you don't duck the second round. This is what happened when Skipton's Judith Biles was declarer. She took the first trick with the ♠J and led the ♠3 to the ♠K, West ducking. Judith demonstrated that this was more than just careless. It was a fatal mistake!

After taking the first two tricks in spades, Judith played four rounds of hearts, throwing the ♠9 and ♣3, and then three rounds of diamonds, finishing with the lead in hand.

The position now was:

	♠ Q ♥ — ♦ — ♣ A 9 5	
♠ A ♥ — ♦ — ♣ Q J 8	N W E S	♠ 6 ♥ — ♦ 9 ♣ 4 2
	♠ — ♥ — ♦ — ♣ K 10 7 6	

Judith led the ♣6, so West had to cover with the ♣J to prevent a successful finesse of the ♣9. The trick was taken in dummy with the ♣A.

Now Judith led the ♠Q, which West had to take with the ♠A.

West was left with ♣Q-8 from which he had to lead into declarer's ♣K-10 to allow declarer to take the last two tricks and the contract for +14 IMPs rather than –10 IMPs.

These regular Butler IMP Pairs events start at 8pm UK time on some evenings and 9pm on other evenings. The 18 boards are usually played in well under two hours, thus being much faster than at face-to-face clubs.

Bridge Club Live is the only online bridge club based in England – or in the UK for that matter. ❐