

Leads

Our original plan was for this website to be only for beginners, and unfortunately we have moved a bit fast. We have written about Multi Landy, Lehbensol etc and now it's time to get back to basics.

We make no excuse for writing about Stayman and Transfer bids, beginners need these in their armoury, but now, Let's talk about leads.

So for this session we will discuss leads against NT.

Next session we will talk about leads against suit contracts.

Back to basics, what are we trying to do when we lead?

Against a contract of 3NT, we are trying to take 5 tricks, this can be accomplished in a number of ways.

1. We can take the first 5 tricks in a suit sometimes even in our own hand.
2. Or with partners help.
3. Or we may have 5 tricks to take in more than 1 suit.
4. Or we may need to set up a long card in a suit, after allowing declarer to take their stopper.
5. Or may be its partners suit that is the most important, not ours.

Let's look at a number of examples for each category.

1. We hold AKQJx in a suit, and are on lead. We can lead this from the top, and as long as Declarer does not hold 5 cards in this suit in 1 hand, we will take 5 tricks.

Sometimes we hold a pretty good suit, and have to decide if we can afford to give up a trick at all. AKJxx may take all 5 tricks if dummy or Declarer holds a doubleton Qx, in which case playing the suit from the top will get all 5 tricks.

2. Sometimes the suit is split between ourselves and partner, we hold AJxxx and partner holds KQx. We are holding the same high cards as example 1, but the suit is split. It is important to remember how to play a suit like this, just as if you were Declarer.

Remember to play the high cards from the short hand first.

This means you need to lead a small card to your partner first, if by mistake you lead a high card first, the suit can get blocked, and without further entries you may not take the maximum tricks in this suit.

3. Sometimes we hold AKx and partner has the Qx.

In another suit we hold Kx and partner holds Axx.

Between these 2 suits we can take 5 tricks, but identifying this, and working out which order to take them before Declarer has taken 9 tricks themselves, can sometimes be a little bit tricky.

4. But easily the most common situation is when the Declarer has a stopper, but only one, in the key suit.

This means we need to let them get that trick early, just as if we were saying, play the high card from the short hand first, except the short hand is the opponents, not ours.

	xxx	
KJxxxx		Qxx
	Ax	

We lead a small card, and after Declarer takes their Ace, whenever either you or partner gets in later in another suit, we have the communications to take another 4 tricks.

5. We hold

KQJT3
T92
A32

Leads

J2

And open 1S. Next player makes a takeout double, partner passes, next player bids 2NT, and you are now defending 3NT.

The bidding, contract 3NT.

W	N	E	S
1S	X	P	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

You lead KS, and eventually get in again with AD and put the contract 1 light.

This is quite straightforward, so why do I put this in?

Because next time the bidding may be different, and partner will be on lead.

W	N	E	S
1S	1NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

And partner holds

92
KQ543
987
93

Only if partner leads a Spade will the contract be defeated.

You need a very good reason not to lead partners suit, not just a reason, such as "I had 5 Hearts", or "I only had 2 Spades"

Those are reasons, but not very good ones..