



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(349) Opening Leads vs. 5-minor Contracts**

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Level: 6 of 10 (2 of 6)

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#### **General**

If the opponents are playing the hand in 5-minor and our side was not competing in the auction, then something likely went very wrong for their side. Along the way to 5-minor the opponents have likely given us a lot of information about that hand. Their auction helped them make an “educated” decision to play there. That gives us valuable information that should help us find a good opening lead for our side. Let’s see how we use the auction and our hand to decide what to lead against their 5-minor contract.

#### **Thinking about the Auction**

Early in the auction, the opponents were likely looking for a Major suit fit. When that failed (as clearly it did, since they are not playing game in a Major suit), then they began to look to play in 3NT. There should be a clear reason that they did not do so! That reason is that there is a suit where they have determined they do not have a stopper. From the auction, we should be able to determine what suit they are worried about (usually a Major) and lead it, no matter what our holding in that suit.

#### *Example 1*

1♠ 2♣

2♥ 3♣

3♦ 4♣

5♣

The opponents had a 2/1 GF auction, and when the Responder choose to rebid their ♣ suit it suggested that they may have a problem in ♦. The 3♦ bid by Opener asked for a ♦ stopper (if Opener had a ♦ stopper they would have rebid 3NT). So, it is clear that neither player has a ♦ stopper. We should lead a ♦ on this auction no matter what our ♦ holding is.



### Card Combinations to Lead From – Active vs. Passive Leads

Leading away from an honor is an action that has risk of giving the opponents a trick they do not deserve but has potential reward as well. The reward is for our side to take immediate tricks or develop potential winners.

When the opponents play in 5-minor then they usually have a large amount of distribution, so we frequently attack from our shorter suit that contains an honor.

#### *Example 2*

1♦     1♠  
2♦     3♠  
5♦     All Pass

♠ T83  
♥ J9853  
♦ K4  
♣ Q93

Here it is best to lead the ♣3. This lead gives our side the best chance of developing a trick before it disappears.

An unusual thing about leading against a 5-minor contract is when a suit has been “telegraphed” for us we often make a lead we otherwise would not even consider. In this case, we lead the suggested suit no matter what our holding is.

#### *Example 3 - Consider the auction in Example 1*

1♠     2♣  
2♥     3♣  
3♦     4♣  
5♣

♠ Q83  
♥ JT98  
♦ AQ94  
♣ 93

Even from a holding like this, we should lead a ♦ -- ♦A. Partner is almost certain to have the ♦K and if we do not take our ♦ tricks now, then they may go away when declarer sets up dummy's ♠ suit.



## Conclusion

There are many auctions that may lead the opponents to 5-minor, but most of them give us a clear idea about which suit the opponents are concerned about (other than something like 3m – 5m). The most important thing about selecting an opening lead against 5-minor is to listen to the auction. When you do so, then you know the suit you should lead and all that is left is to select the proper card. This may involve leading an unsupported Ace (something that is unusual) or even leading a King to allow you to look at the dummy and stay on lead. Try to listen to the auction and understand what it is telling you to do in this type of auction.