



# Voluntary enlistment

**MISSION** “Join the army, they said. It’s a man’s life, they said...” This cult phrase that tells you to go fight and be active, taken from the Asterix albums can sometimes be applied to bridge when a passive start is visibly doomed or when your partner has made a Lightner Double or even when the opponents have quickly bid their contract without being sure if it is the correct one. You obviously have no guarantee that this succeeds every time.

What do you lead as West?

HAND	DEALER SOUTH	N/S VUL.
<b>1.</b>	♠ KJ8754 ♥ Q96 ♦ Q105 ♣ K	W N E SOUTH
		1♠ Dble Pass 1♥
		Pass 4♥

HAND	DEALER WEST	NONE VUL.
<b>2.</b>	♠ 10987 ♥ KQJ5 ♦ 1084 ♣ A2	W N E SOUTH
		Pass 2♦ Pass 1NT
		Pass 4NT

HAND	DEALER SOUTH	ALL VUL.
<b>3.</b>	♠ Q95 ♥ KQJ865 ♦ Q65 ♣ 10	W N E SOUTH
		2♥ Pass 3♥ 1♦
		Pass 7♣ Dble

HAND	DEALER SOUTH	E/W VUL.
<b>4.</b>	♠ J92 ♥ K87 ♦ Q73 ♣ 9872	W N E SOUTH
		Pass 2♦ Pass 1♠
		Pass 3♠ Pass 2NT(*)
		Pass 4♣
		Pass 6♠

(\*) 12-14 HCP

**T**

homas Bessis plays bridge more often than before during this Covid period - practically every day of the week.

Tournaments on BBO or other online sites are offered throughout the week, most of them under the aegis of the ACBL, at very different starting times. Thomas alternates his partnership between Cédric Lorenzini and Frédéric Volcker and does not hesitate to tell me about his adventures, good or bad. Here are four committed leads from the pair Bessis-Volcker.

**1**

## Brilliant analysis



W	N	E	SOUTH
			1♥
1♠	Dble	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♥		

### YOUR MARKS

♠K	100
♠7	60
♣K	40

### Comments

Your hand is not very rich in immediate tricks but you lay solid hopes on your two red Queens. The King of Clubs may be a third trick, but leading that honor can ruin your hopes in the suit, just like the lead from one of your Queens. With this elimination done, this is easy: you have to lead a Spade, but which one? North's Double denies three Hearts (except if he has 15+ points). His jump to 4♥ with two cards is thus explained by the presence of honors that are more useful in a suit contract than in No-trump, even with only seven trumps. The jump to 3♦ describes often a 5-5 and shortness in Spades rather than Clubs. This is perhaps the occasion for a brilliant opening lead: the King of Spades.

## The full deal

	♠ A932 ♥ J10 ♦ A74 ♣ 8753	
♠ KJ8754 ♥ Q65 ♦ Q105 ♣ K	N W                  E S	♠ 106 ♥ 942 ♦ 862 ♣ J10964
	♠ Q ♥ AK873 ♦ KJ95 ♣ AQ2	

### Post-mortem

And this is indeed what Thomas Bessis chose to lead - and it is the only one of his thirteen cards which does not give away this contract, and even leads to declarer going down, unless - eye for an eye - he fells the singleton King of Clubs behind Ace-Queen! Bravo. Exceptional!

**2**

## The equation is right



W	N	E	SOUTH
			1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	4NT		

### YOUR MARKS

♥5	100
♥Q	60
♠10	30

### Comments

You have 10HCP, more than expected when North made a quantitative bid with theoretically 16-17HCP opposite 15-17HCP. One thing is certain: you have to

## DEFENSIVE PLAY

ADVANCED LEVEL

## My advice

### 1 No risk

When you have to lead against a suit contract and your four suits are headed by isolated honors, you often have to choose the least bad. In this context, the worst leads are from small honors-third, with a lead from Jack-fourth in last position. Leads from honor-fifth are the least bad, they are less dangerous than from honor-fourth. These are choices for your opening leads depending on your cards and they can be changed, of course, by explicit auctions.

## My advice

### 2 Construct a plan

Each round in the auction gives information about the distribution and strength of your opponents. By adding what you see in your hand to this information, you can sometimes construct the plan that will allow you to set up the number of tricks necessary for the defense to beat the contract or at least threaten it.

### 3 Objectives

Lightner Doubles against slams and lead directing Doubles against game contracts aim to dissuade the player who is on lead from his natural lead, and to draw his attention to a specific lead that good reasoning will allow him to find... most of the time. These Doubles involve taking responsibility by evaluating the cost of a possible error, the balance between what you have to gain and what you have to lose.

bring down this contract on your own, East doesn't have a single point in his hand. But make no mistake in your calculations, you are playing for four tricks, not five - declarer is playing 4NT, not 3NT. And only Hearts can offer three tricks. With the Ace of Clubs as an entry, it all adds up. But be careful, King-Queen-Jack will only give two tricks. The third can only come from your partner who certainly has zero points but can hold the 10 of Hearts. And to avoid any blocking, you have to lead small from King-Queen-Jack, a very unusual lead.

#### The full deal

	♠ AQ5 ♥ A10872 ♦ AQ2 ♣ 104	
♠ 10987 ♥ KQJ5 ♦ 1084 ♣ A2	N W                  E S	♠ 643 ♥ 93 ♦ 97653 ♣ 763
	♠ KJ2 ♥ 64 ♦ KJ ♣ KQJ985	

#### Post-mortem

Fred Volcker did indeed lead the Heart 5 and found an unexpected support: the first trick was won by Thomas Bessis' 9 of Hearts, when South reasonably played the 7 from dummy (KQ95, KJ95 and QJ95 against KQJ5). Opening 1NT with 14HCP and six Clubs is obvious.

### 3 The Vikings (1)



W	N	E	SOUTH
			1♦
2♥	Pass	3♥	6♣
Pass	7♣	Dble	



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#### YOUR MARKS

♠5	100
♥K	50
♦5	30

#### Comments

The next two deals saw Fred and Thomas play against the Norwegians Helgemo - Helness, one of the best pairs in the world, with a style just as aggressive as natural. This sequence is typical of their bidding style. They don't bother with frills, which is more often for the better - but not here. Thomas is on lead, a seemingly obvious one with the King of Hearts, but then he sees Fred double. The grand slam was bid offensively, but in a sequence that is anything but precise. The Double is 100% Lightner: Fred thinks that there may be a lead that beats this contract and it is not a Heart. South showed a violent two-suiter with eleven or twelve cards in the minors, so Fred has either a Diamond void or the Ace of Spades. Thomas, in view of his cards, quickly dismissed underleading the Queen of Diamonds, which will anyway be a natural trick behind South's Ace-King if East is void there, and led a Spade, from his Queen-third.

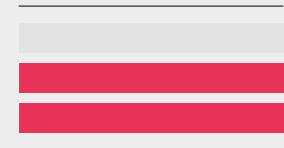
#### The full deal

	♠ KJ104 ♥ A103 ♦ 107 ♣ K875	
♠ Q95 ♥ KQJ865 ♦ Q65 ♣ 10	N W                  E S	♠ A8763 ♥ 9742 ♦ 32 ♣ 42
	♠ 2 ♥ - ♦ AKJ984 ♣ AQJ963	

**Post-mortem**

North thought that his King of Clubs and his Ace of Hearts were enough to make 7 Clubs regardless of the fact that the 6♣ call is *gambling* in itself. Fred's Double is legitimate, even if South could be void in Spades rather than Hearts: there is more to gain than to lose. The lead moves 30 IMPs because in the other room they stopped in 6 Clubs and there are thirteen tricks on top on the lead of the King of Hearts.

or in Diamonds (the Jack). If it is necessary to urgently establish a trick - the setting trick - a Heart lead is called for; it is less demanding than a Club lead. But a Club lead has the advantage of being neutral. The tricky part is guessing what prompts a champion like Helness to jump to 6♠ as soon as he learns of a Club control in a balanced hand with 12-14 HCP. What if it was a second bluff, this time with Ace-King of Hearts to lose? Or just a bid coming from pure force?



**DEFENSIVE  
PLAY**

ADVANCED LEVEL

**My  
advice**

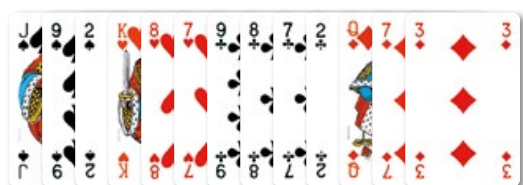
**4 Choose  
your own  
style**

Choose your opening leads according to your knowledge and your convictions. Each champion has his own style, but they are faithful to their logic and their sensitivity to the situation. It can't hit the bull's eye every time; a success rate of over 55% is already great art.



4

**The Vikings (2)**



	W	N	E	SOUTH
				1♠
	Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT(*)
	Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
	Pass	6♠		

(\*) 12-14 HCP

**YOUR MARKS**

♣8	100
♥7	70

**Comments**

Same match, a few deals later. Unaffected by going down in this grand slam, Geir and Tor continue their boarding ax approach. Thomas is looking his fate in the eye. Everything seems to be going well for his opponents, some deals without accidents and now the third Queen of Diamonds in front of dummy's length. If Diamonds give five tricks, the contract will make: five Spades, five Diamonds and two Aces. East must have an additional trick either in Spades (the Queen),

**The full deal**

		♠ K63 ♥ A1052 ♦ AJ108 ♣ A4	
♠ J92 ♥ K87 ♦ Q73 ♣ 9872	W	N E S	♠ Q4 ♥ J93 ♦ 652 ♣ J10653
		♠ A10875 ♥ Q64 ♦ K94 ♣ KQ	

**Post-mortem**

Thomas Bessis led a Heart, the only lead that gives declarer a chance to make twelve tricks, a chance that Geir Hegelmo did not let pass. Tor Helness's jump to 6♠ with 16HCP and a 4-4-3-2 opposite 12-14HCP and 5-3-3-2 has only one explanation. The match is lost, we have to make a difference. The reasoning was flawed by the response of 2♦ with four cards, which is no longer used except by our Supernatural Vikings! The Heart lead is necessary if dummy has the Heart two instead of the Diamond two, and South has the Heart Jack instead of the Queen, a layout where declarer has twelve tricks on any other lead (four Spades, one Heart, five Diamonds and two Clubs). Bridge is not an exact science...

A Lightner Double against a slam asks you to rule out a suit that your side may have bid. You must make a choice between partner having a void or (a) top honor(s). To make the right decision, you will have to both look at your cards (do I have a suit long enough so that it can be ruffed by my partner?) and listen to the auction (after an uninformative auction - could my partner have an Ace and could it disappear if I don't lead the suit?).