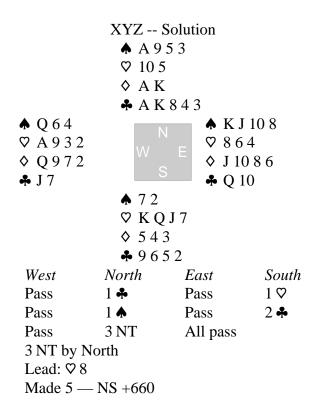


Join my opponent for this deal, in an online matchpoint pairs game. Do you play XYZ, an extension to this situation of two-way new minor forcing? What difference does that make on this deal, anyhow?

Playing your preferred style, what is your call over partner's 1 ♠ rebid?





Playing XYZ, your only reasonable action over partner's 1 ♠ rebid is to bid 1 NT. You must not pass partner in a 4-2 spade fit, and 2 ♣ would be inviting game (or escaping into diamonds). Over 1 NT, North can visualize the possibility of taking as few as the five top tricks in a notrump contract. A gentle 2 NT seems plenty. With only six points, and not knowing about partner's clubs, you pass.

However, our opponent was playing standard methods. Lacking a diamond stopper, 2 ♣ appealed more than 1 NT. North visualized clubs running, for eight tricks -- surely South will provide another. Suddenly optimistic, North leaps to game. To add insult to injury, even though I took the second heart trick, declarer had entries in clubs to enjoy two more of them -- making five for an 85% board. This was a system win for traditional methods.

Would you have led a spade? I might well have done so at IMPs, but not at matchpoints. No other lead makes a difference.