




This series is about opening leads against suit contracts. SA Version

VB#22 Year 1 Opening leads (suit contracts) Part 2 SA	Contract: 2C
Date: 05/10/2014	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North	
♠ 7643	
♥ Q6	
♦ KQ63	
♣ A64	
West	East
♠ 2	♠ KJ985
♥ J972	♥ A84
♦ AJ754	♦ 2
♣ J93	♣ KQT5
	
South	
♠ AQT	
♥ KT53	
♦ T98	
♣ 872	

This second set of six deals continues the theme of opening leads against suit contracts.

The basic idea is to select one of the following strategies. Which you choose will depend on the bidding and your own holding. There is always an element of luck here as well as many choices may well prove to be wrong. Oh well, that's the way the cookie crumbles...

Short suit leads: (aiming to get a ruff for the defenders).

Sequence leads: which are both constructive and passive, in that they give nothing away.

Passive leads: (trump leads and leads from bad suits). Think of these as *Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's*.

Attacking leads: that is, leads from honors in the hope of developing tricks quickly.

Hand 1: Sometimes - as here - you can predict what dummy will have. That's all very well, but can you take advantage of that fore-knowledge with your opening lead?

West	North	East	South
-	P	1♠	P
1NT	P	2♣	P
P	P		

Lead: ♣ 2

This is a common type of hand. East-West end in a modest part-score after West Passes opener's simple 2♣ rebid. What should you lead?

Before seeing dummy the defenders can deduce that West is likely to have an acute Spade shortage and a few Clubs (otherwise West would surely have given preference to 2♠ rather than Pass 2♣). So, East is probably going to play the hand by ruffing Spades in the dummy.

How can this be prevented? Simple: lead a trump! Trump leads can be made for two reasons – one is that it is *passive* (you wish to avoid opening up suits), the other is that you might prevent ruffs in the dummy.

Here, by playing three rounds of trumps, the defense can prevent any Spade ruffs in the dummy and can ensure that they make three Spade tricks. The defenders will also come to the ♣A and a couple of Heart tricks (or a Heart and a Diamond) for one down.

When leading trumps, incidentally, it is customary to lead the lowest card. There is no need to lead "second highest from a poor suit" or any such convention. Partner knows you have little in the suit anyway.



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Date: 05/10/2014	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

<p>North</p> <p>♠ 5</p> <p>♥ QJT63</p> <p>♦ Q832</p> <p>♣ JT4</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ AQT82</p> <p>♥ K7</p> <p>♦ A95</p> <p>♣ Q83</p>	
<p>West</p> <p>♠ KJ93</p> <p>♥ 984</p> <p>♦ KT7</p> <p>♣ A62</p>			
<p>South</p> <p>♠ 764</p> <p>♥ A52</p> <p>♦ J64</p> <p>♣ K975</p>			

The opponents reach a contract giving us little clue of what to lead.

Faced with a barrel full of rotten apples which one has the fewest maggots?

West	North	East	South
-	P	1♠	P
3♠	P	4♠	P
P	P		

Lead: ♠ 4

East-West bid 1♠ – 3♠ – 4♠, a sequence which gives us no real clues about what to lead. We have no knowledge of declarer's hand (has he stretched to bid game? Is he entirely confident? Does he have shape in the form of a singleton somewhere?) and we have only a sketchy view of what dummy has. West has 10-11 points (more or less) and four Spades. Having said that, there are a multitude of hands where West would bid 3♠ including shapely ones as well as flat ones.

We have nothing attractive to lead (no Ace-King combination, no sequence, no singleton) and the danger with these holdings of unsupported honor cards is that leading away from them may well give the opponents a trick to which they are not entitled.

With this type of hand it can be right to follow a *passive defense*, meaning that we just get off lead and make declarer do his own dirty work. We don't want to lead a Club, Diamond or Heart but we'd welcome East or West broaching the suit first. So we lead a trump.

Let's stop for a moment and look at the hand from East's point of view. He's got at least one, possibly two, heart losers (he doesn't know where the ♥A is lurking), a Diamond and one or two Club losers (he doesn't know who has the ♣K). If we, as South, were to lead a Heart or a Club it would give declarer an easy trick there (a second trick in the case of Clubs).

Diamonds is an interesting suit that is worthy of study. Were we to lead one of those declarer would play low from the table, taking the ♦Q with the ♦A. Subsequently, he would be able to make three tricks in the suit, picking up our ♦J by means of a finesse. It's yet another suit that would be poisonous to lead. If declarer broaches the suit first he makes just two tricks – if we lead it he makes three. It's another example of a **frozen suit** – whoever leads Diamonds loses out by doing so.

Anyway – to the play. Declarer takes the trump lead and draws trumps. He next tries his 50% shot in Hearts, leading up to the ♥K. Not today, José. We take the ♥A and, still refusing to open up anything that we shouldn't, carefully play back a Heart.

Put on lead by ruffing a third Heart declarer tries his luck with a Club to the ♣A and a Club to the ♣Q. Maybe that will win...? Maybe North has the ♣K? Sorry, East. It just ain't your lucky day. We bash that with the ♣K and play another Club.

Partner wins that with the ♣J, defeating the contract. It is worth noting, though, that partner is on lead and has little choice but to lead a Diamond. In doing so declarer is able to make three Diamond tricks and escapes for one down.

Passive defense, beginning with a trump lead, takes the day.



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VB#22 Year 1 Opening leads (suit contracts) Part 2 SA

Date: 05/10/2014

Dealer: East

[Play this hand online!](#)

Contract: 4S

By: East

Board #: 3

Vulnerable: N / S

<p>North</p> <p>♠ 9</p> <p>♥ T763</p> <p>♦ A9732</p> <p>♣ QT3</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ AJT852</p> <p>♥ J</p> <p>♦ QT5</p> <p>♣ A62</p>	
<p>West</p> <p>♠ KQ3</p> <p>♥ KQ984</p> <p>♦ K8</p> <p>♣ J84</p>			
<p>South</p> <p>♠ 764</p> <p>♥ A52</p> <p>♦ J64</p> <p>♣ K975</p>			

This hand looks to be remarkably similar to Hand 2. The same hand on lead to the same contract. Surely the opening lead will be the same?

You might have thought so...

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	P
2♥	P	2♠	P
4♠	P	P	P

Lead: ♣ 5

You may note that your hand here is identical to Hand 2. Same hand, same contract – so the same lead, right? Wrong.

On Hand 2 East-West bid East-West bid 1♠ – 3♠ – 4♠, a sequence which gave us no real clues about what to lead. Here we know a little more; East-West bid 1♠ – 2♥ – 2♠ – 4♠.

What do we know now? Well, East has a minimum opening bid with long Spades. West has a decent hand (at least an opening bid) but is also promising five Hearts, quite possibly decent ones. Now, the problem with this type of hand is that those Hearts on the table are likely to be declarer's **source of tricks**. It isn't necessarily the case but it happens so often that you can take it as probable.

When declarer is threatening to set up a side-suit it is usually important to get your tricks before the rats get at them. Any losers declarer has in Clubs and Diamonds may well disappear on dummy's Hearts – and you have been warned by the bidding.

In these circumstances the watchword is **attack**. Lead aggressively (your strongest suit – away from a King for example) and hope to get four tricks set up fast.

Note that on a trump lead declarer would win in hand and lead a Heart. You are stymied; you can't duck the ♥A (it would never make a trick if you do). However, taking the Ace is equally fatal. Declarer bins his losing Clubs on the ♥K Q and records an overtrick. Ugh.

On a Diamond lead (wimpish! Why lead from a **Jack??**) to North's ♦A and a Club switch (second best defense) East takes the ♠A and can dump a Club on a Diamond before playing a Heart. Check and Mate.

On a low Club lead (the best shot by far) declarer can turn and twist as he might but 4♠ is booked for the scrapyard. You have the timing to take two Clubs and two Aces before those ever-so-dangerous Hearts get established. It's all a question of **tempo**.



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VB#22 Year 1 Opening leads (suit contracts) Part 2 SA

Date: 05/10/2014

Dealer: East


[Play this hand online!](#)

Contract: 4S

By: East

Board #: 4

Vulnerable: All

North			
♠ 3			
♥ A842			
♦ A743			
♣ Q975			
West		East	
♠ 642		♠ AKQJT	
♥ KJ3		♥ QT75	
♦ KQ9		♦ JT2	
♣ A863		♣ J	
South			
♠ 9875			
♥ 96			
♦ 865			
♣ KT42			

Another day, another deal, another opening lead problem. This time, the opponents' bidding gives you some clue as to their hands.

However, does that give you enough indication of what to lead?

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♠	P
2NT	P	3♥	P
3♣	P	4♣	P
P	P		

Lead: ♣ 2

East-West reach 4♣ and you have to find an opening lead as South.

With rubbish it can be a good idea to lead a shortage (the doubleton Heart in this instance) but there are two reasons why you shouldn't lead a Heart on this hand. Firstly, East has bid the suit on your right – so partner is unlikely to be well at home there. Secondly, you have four trumps – it is often right to retain them as a nuisance value. Declarer will have to drain his resources to pull all the trumps.

Best is the *attacking* (or *aggressive*) Club lead, the ♣2 for choice. Surprisingly, this hits declarer where it hurts as he gets **tapped** (which means he is forced to ruff in the long hand). As we know, *ruffing in the long hand* is something that is bad for declarer to do to himself so it is good for the defenders to do it to him.

[Note: When choosing to lead from a long suit against a suit contract you follow the same rules as against No-trumps – fourth highest from a broken suit headed by an honor]

You need to work out *why* the Club lead is so devastating – East wins the ♣A, draws trumps (say) and knocks out the ♥A. The defenders play another Club and East's last trump goes when he trumps the Club. On lead with the ♦A the defenders have Club winners.

There are possible variations in the play, it is true, but the bottom line is that declarer cannot afford to ruff Clubs in hand and your best defense is to make him do precisely that.

There is a surprisingly common bridge urban myth that you should *never* lead away from a King. Poppycock and balderdash...



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VB#22 Year 1 Opening leads (suit contracts) Part 2 SA	Contract: 5D
Date: 05/10/2014	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

West	North	East	South
-	P	1♦	P
1♥	P	2♣	P
3♦	P	5♦	P
P	P		

Lead: ♠ 2

This deal illustrates another example of an *attacking* or an *aggressive* opening lead.

East-West bid to 5♦ quickly, with both players having suggested long side-suits and you have to find the best opening lead.

On these occasions the defenders often have to get their tricks quickly before the rats get at them. Spades (the unbid suit, note) represents the best chance of quick tricks for the defenders so you should lead that suit. From such a holding the best card is, naturally, the ♠2 (you lead a **low** card to indicate that you **like** the suit and would like it led back).

Here, you and your partner can have two Spade winners on the table immediately with the ♥A to come in due course. In fact, it would be weak play to try to cash the ♥A too early; best is to try to cash three rounds of Spades (declarer's ♠Q might be an attempt to hornswoggle you). If declarer has a Heart (cue for a song??) then it cannot run away so you can afford to sit back in your chair and wait patiently.

However, the same is most certainly not true for Spades. There are too many Hearts in the dummy to be discarded on the long Clubs but the Spades losers on the table will disappear with great rapidity if you don't cash your winners. On a passive lead (a trump, say, or even a Club) declarer has the *tempo* to throw his Spade losers away on his long Clubs.

North
♠ AT765
♥ J832
♦ 3
♣ 542

West
♠ 983
♥ KQT94
♦ K742
♣ K



East
♠ Q4
♥ 7
♦ AQJ65
♣ AQJ73

South
♠ KJ2
♥ A65
♦ T98
♣ T986

An unusual deal, this one, in that the opponents play in that rare spot - five-of-a-minor.

This means that your target is just three tricks but how are you going to go about getting them?

Quickly or by sitting back and patiently waiting for what's rightfully yours?



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VB#22 Year 1 Opening leads (suit contracts) Part 2 SA	Contract: 6S
Date: 05/10/2014	By: East
Dealer: West	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

West	North	East	South
1♥	P	2♣	P
3♥	P	3♣	P
4♠	P	4NT	P
5♦	P	6♣	P
P	P		

Lead: ♦ 6

Well, here you are against a slam contract (6♣). What should you lead, South?

The answer is that you should **attack** with an *aggressive* lead. Declarer is likely to be able to make tricks with dummy's long Heart suit so North-South have to set up a trick (preferably two tricks!) quickly. There are echoes here from Hand 3.

The best prospect for the defense looks to be in Diamonds – so the opening lead should be the ♦6, hoping that North has either the ♦Q (possible) or the ♦A (unlikely).

Bullseye! The defenders have the *tempo* now and East must lose two tricks. On a passive lead (a trump, say) declarer draws trumps and plays the ♥A and another Heart, setting up lots of tricks and losing just the ♥K.

A hand based on one from real life where 6♣ duly went off on a Diamond lead.

West	North	East
♠ J9	♠ 76	♠ AKQT842
♥ QJT753	♥ 92	♥ A8
♦ AJ4	♦ QT3	♦ 85
♣ K6	♣ QT8543	♣ A7
	South	
	♠ 53	
	♥ K64	
	♦ K9762	
	♣ J92	

In this last deal you are on lead against a slam contract.

What are your tactics here?

What is the bidding telling you to do?