

TAKING THE LEAD

Welcome to this special issue **all about leading!** We'll focus mostly on opening leads, but will touch on mid-hand leads, too.

Opening leads can be a blessing or a curse, without much in between. Sometimes, selecting the first suit played is a blessing, like when you lead a singleton and score a ruff, or lead your long suit against NT.

On the other hand, you've likely heard the lead being referred to as a cursed **"opening guess."** There are even hands where any reasonable lead gives away the whole contract. On this hand from the recent Motor City Regional, every single card in West's hand gives away the contract on opening lead!

<p>♠ AKT</p> <p>♥ x</p> <p>♦ A98xxx</p> <p>♣ QT8</p>	<p>♠ void</p> <p>♥ AJTxx</p> <p>♦ Kxx</p> <p>♣ AK9xx</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80px;"> <p>4♠x</p> <p>South</p> </div> <p>♠ QJ98xxxx</p> <p>♥ Kx</p> <p>♦ void</p> <p>♣ Jxx</p>	<p>♠ xx</p> <p>♥ Q98xx</p> <p>♦ QJTxx</p> <p>♣ xx</p>
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LEADS (circle card led, if not in bold)

versus Suits	versus Notrump
x x x x x x	x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x	x x x x x x x x
A K x T 9 x	A K J x A Q J x
K Q x K J T x	A J T 9 A T 9 x
Q J x K T 9 x	K Q J x K Q T 9
J T 9 Q T 9 x	Q J T x Q T 9 x
K Q T 9	J T 9 x T 9 x x

LENGTH LEADS:

4th Best	vs SUITS <input type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input type="checkbox"/>
3rd/5th Best	vs SUITS <input type="checkbox"/> vs NT <input type="checkbox"/>
	Attitude vs NT <input type="checkbox"/>

We'll get into the nitty gritty about leading agreements, honor leads, leading trumps, and more, later on. For now, let's begin with an excerpt by Alan Truscott in a 1964 New York Times bridge column:

Opening leads constitute an almost inexhaustible field of study for the bridge theorist. Traditional textbooks generally provide tables of opening leads, indicating the appropriate card to lead and the desirability, or otherwise, of leading the suit at all. Unfortunately, the value of such tables is very limited, because they must be hedged about by myriad exceptions. Inspection of one's own hand and consideration of the bidding will often cause the opening leader to depart from the orthodox procedure.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

<i>Elke Clark</i>	<i>Carol Lubomudrov</i>
<i>Laura Digan</i>	<i>Al Mrofka</i>
<i>Frances Franklin</i>	<i>Ann O'Shea</i>
<i>Marilyn Green</i>	<i>Sandra Ollar</i>
<i>Richard Grimes</i>	<i>Virginia Packard</i>
<i>Marilyn Knight</i>	<i>Dale Stoy</i>
<i>George Krohn</i>	<i>Takeko Toyama</i>
<i>Denise Lagrone</i>	<i>Dan Watson</i>
<i>Elizabeth Litkowski</i>	<i>Min Wu</i>

IN MEMORIAM

Peter Davis
David Howell
Arlene Knapp
Evie Lichter
Seymour Mandell
Gerald Wahl

NEW ACBL MILESTONES (THROUGH SEPT. 30)

Junior Master (5)

William Facey
Hsiao Ping Katz
Judy Lynn
Robert Zannini

Club Master (20)

<i>Richard Atkins</i>	<i>Murry Pierce</i>
<i>Julie Beals</i>	<i>Linda Powers</i>
<i>Leif Britting</i>	<i>Thomas Spoor</i>
<i>Leslie Cohen</i>	<i>Susan Stoll</i>
<i>Alyce Howarth</i>	<i>Kenneth Vernon</i>
<i>Cathy Howe</i>	

Sectional Master (50)

Donald Cleveland
Karen Kearns
Ognian Ikononov
Brad Orr
Assia Shisheva
Janet Stack-Miller

Regional Master (100)

Robert La Cosse

NABC Master (200)

Murali Mani
Jane Stewart

Life Master (500)

<i>Mike Andrews</i>	<i>Manus Nemeth</i>
<i>Larry Junck</i>	<i>Susan Royer</i>
<i>Norm Kakarala</i>	<i>Peter Root</i>
<i>Donald Meier</i>	

Bronze Life Master (750)

Jean Grande

Ruby Life Master (1500)

<i>Richard Bauman</i>	<i>Suzanne McIlhiny</i>
<i>Stuary Dombey</i>	<i>John Vollmayer</i>

SEMBA & ACBL NEWS & UPDATES

» To support recruitment, SEMBA will reimburse ACBL dues for any NEW member during 2025.

» The ACBL now requires units to “earn” their share of membership dues by recruiting/retaining members. As a result, you may be contacted by SEMBA if your membership lapses.

» The ACBL updated policies for tournament game times. Going forward, two-session events will be at 10:00a and 2:30p, as opposed to a “playthrough.”

» SEMBA's ended its first fiscal year with \$55,191 in capital assets. See the financial statement on the following page for details.

» SEMBA is supporting bridge education at the University of Michigan, with 15+ students attending weekly sessions since Sept 9, averaging 12+ attendees per meeting. Most are rubber bridge players or brand new to the game.

OPENING LEADS AND CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Let's kick off by dissecting some “lead-isms” that we've all read and heard:

» **Fourth best from longest/strongest**

» **Lead the unbid suit**

» **Lead a doubleton to get a ruff**

While these provide a good foundation, leading is unfortunately nuanced. Growing your game means understanding how to apply these “rules,” and what to do when they leave you nothing to lead! Let's discuss these mantras. *NB: we are primarily considering matchpoints (pairs).*

» **Fourth best from long/strongest** «

This comes from a common agreement to lead 4th from a long suit, and is rooted in the principle of knocking out the offenses' aces/kings to set up our defensive tricks. At matchpoints, though, we also need to avoid giving away tricks. Consider:

<u>WEST</u>	<u>EAST</u>
1♦	1♥
2♥	AP

Leader: ♠K75 ♥QT3 ♦KJ ♣K8532

Experts here would recommend leading the ♠5. Based on the auction and our delicate red suit holdings, it is clear we want to lead a black suit. With Kxx and Kxxxx, conventional wisdom suggests a fourth-best club. However, IF leading away from the ♣K gives the opponents a free trick (e.g. by leading into declarer's AQ), it's unlikely we'll ever recoup it--we have a lot of clubs, meaning the opponents have fewer, and can probably ruff in by the time our ♣K is a winner. If leading away from the ♠K allows them to win cheaply with the ♠Q, it is more

likely the opponents have longer spades and we may still win it later.

» **Lead the unbid suit** «

While this often works, what if you have tenuous holdings in the unbid suit(s), or the opponents have bid all of the suits? In these cases, it is often better to (a) lead dummy's suit rather than declarer's, and (b) lead one of the opponents' SECOND bid suits. For instance: WEST EAST

1♦	1♠
2♦	3♣
3♥	3N

Leader: ♠QT95 ♥QT92 ♦6 ♣J974

Despite the paucity of points, this hand is very good defensively. With a four-by-one shape, we know the opponents' suits aren't splitting well, but we still have to make the opening guess. A heart (dummy's second suit) is likely best, leading through strength in the shorter suit.

» **Lead a doubleton-get a ruff** «

Doubleton leads against suit contracts are revered among newer players. Why don't we see them as much at top levels? When we have a shorter suit, it's likely the opponents have more combined length there. Leading it often helps establish their side fit. In fact, one key declarer strategy is to pull trumps and work on your next longest combined fit. So, why help them do this as a defender? Better guidelines here are to only lead a doubleton (seeking a ruff) IF: a) You have a (likely) fast trump entry - the ace or well-placed king, b) You do not

have natural trump tricks coming (e.g. KQx, QJx), thus need the ruff, AND c) You believe you can get to partner to give you your ruff. If the opponents bid a game and you have 12 HCP, your partner probably has at most 3. How are we going to get to them to give us the ruff?

SEMBA FY23-24
FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Income:

Capital contributions (MBA/ SOMBA).....	\$55,287
Tournaments.....	\$30,654
Member Dues.....	\$4,107
Miscellaneous.....	\$200
Interest.....	\$852

Expenses:

Tournaments.....	\$25,628
Storage.....	\$264
Business.....	\$2,648
Donations.....	\$500
Table Talk.....	\$6,084
Administrative Director.....	\$785

FY end net worth: \$55,191

Welcome to new SEMBA board members: **Catherine Gay, Peter Hellekjaer, Paul Kubicek, and Lynn Root.**

Thank you to **Dave Cleveland, Deepak Dighe, Jane Hall, and Bob Ondo** for your service!

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BREAKING DOWN THE NUMBERS: 4TH VS. 3RD/5TH

In the ACBL, leading fourth best is the norm. When asked about their leads, many players say “standard,” an ambiguous term often implying fourth best because of its ubiquity. This is widely accepted for leading against no-trump, but **why do experts tend to prefer 3rd/5th vs. suits?**

The answer lies in partner’s ability to count how many the leader has in the suit. Leading 4th best, we lead the same card from 3- and 4-card holdings, like Q74 and Q754. It is better to lead the same card from 3- and 5-card holdings, because partner will more easily distinguish 3 from 5 than 3 from 4 (or 4 from 5), due to the larger disparity. **Why is this important?** Let’s consider the problem:

♠93 ♥52 ♦Q9754 ♣AJT5

We are leading against 4♥. Let’s say we opt to lead a diamond. Leading 4th best, you’d lead the ♦5. Let’s change the hand slightly:

♠93 ♥52 ♦Q975 ♣KJT65

You’d also lead the ♦5 from this suit. Why is this a problem? Let’s consider the full hands.

♠ 93	♠ AQT62	♠ 8754
♥ 52	♥ Q9	♥ AT6
♦ Q9754	♦ T862	♦ KJ3
♣ AJT5	♣ 93	♣ Q62
	♠ KJ	
	♥ KJ8743	
	♦ A	
	♣ K874	

In this first example, West leads the ♦5 playing 4th best. East puts in an honor and South wins the ♦A. Declarer begins pulling trump; East wins the ♥A and is in a bind - we are wary of the strong spades in dummy, and need to figure out what is cashing in case declarer gets to pitch losers away.

But, East does not know if West led from a 4-card diamond suit (and declarer started with two), or a 5-card suit (and declarer started with only the ace). If we KNOW no diamonds are cashing, we may as well try leading clubs in case West has the ♣A. However, let’s look at the second hand:

♠ 93	♠ AQT62	♠ 8754
♥ 52	♥ Q9	♥ AT6
♦ Q975	♦ T862	♦ KJ3
♣ KJT65	♣ 93	♣ Q62
	♠ KJ	
	♥ KJ8743	
	♦ A4	
	♣ A87	

Here, East needs to cash the diamond, and it turns out there is no future in clubs (they’ll be pitched on spades). If West had led 3rd/5th--the ♦7--East can be sure declarer has at least one more diamond, because West would’ve led lowest from five.

Leading 3rd/5th removes some of the guesswork, and will help you from missing out on tricks because you tried to cash something that declarer was able to ruff! To lead 3rd/5th, lead third from 3- or 4-card holdings, and fifth from 5+.

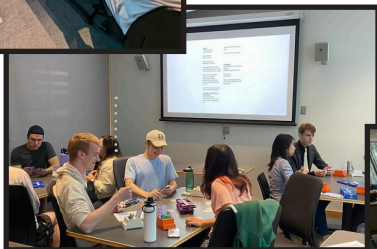
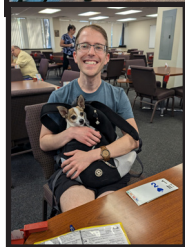
PHOTO GALLERY: UM BRIDGE CLUB & SEMBA “EIGHT IS ENOUGH” SWISS



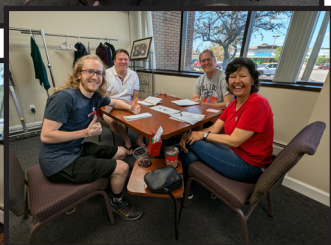
Bridge Club at
the University
of Michigan-
Ann Arbor



Eight is Enough” winners:
Miriam Shaw, Matt
Rosenthal, Brenda Jaffe,
Steve O’Guin



“Eight is Enough”
Swiss players



LEADING MID-HAND

Let’s take a break from opening leads to talk about mid-hand leads. There is a very useful, standard convention used to convey information when leading mid-hand. I distinctly remember playing with a mentor a decade ago in Ann Arbor. At the end of the hand, they asked, “Julie, I led you the little baby two of diamonds, why didn’t you lead one back?.” This comment meant nothing to me at the time, but I soon learned the simple rule behind it: leading a

SMALL card in the middle of the hand (through dummy or declarer) means we want partner to return the suit if they get on lead. Leading HIGH means we do not. Generally, this correlates to whether we have an honor in the suit, but we can lead high with an honor if we want partner to return a *different* suit.

Tournament attendance continues to rebound! The 2024 Motor City Regional table count was up by nearly 20% over 2023.

Overall, 2024 tournaments are seeing about 60% of pre-covid attendance.

INTERMEDIATE/ NEWCOMER NOOK

Much of this issue focuses on which suit to lead in various situations. Let's turn now to which *card*.

Generally, **the best leads in bridge are top of an honor sequence (e.g. AKxx, KQx, QJx); it's even better if you have a 3+ card sequence like KQJ.** This is because on defense, we typically want to drive out the offense's aces and kings to set up our queens and jacks as winners. But, what about when the bridge gods don't grant us any sequences?

You may have suffered the headache of leading low from three or four small cards ("xxx" or "xxxx" in print) and inadvertently suggesting you have an honor in the suit. Or, perhaps you led high from xxx and inadvertently suggested you have a singleton or doubleton, because we high-low with shortness.

To complicate things, sometimes we've raised partner's suit and then end up on opening lead. Which card do we lead then? Overall, there are two distinct methods to be aware of:

→ Show **COUNT** on opening lead -- lead high from shortness (singleton or doubleton); lead low from 3+ regardless of honors in the suit.

→ Show **ATTITUDE** on opening lead -- lead low from an honor and high from no honor.

Let's go over best practices for using these methods.

Against a suit contract, show COUNT on opening lead.

It is important for partner to know whether to try to give you a ruff and know what tricks are or are not cashing.

Against a NT contract, show ATTITUDE on opening lead.

Typically, we lead 4th best from our longest and strongest. But, perhaps you have to lead vs. 3NT with a pitiful hand like: ♠843 ♥9752 ♦642 ♣752. Don't feel bad, it happens to the best of us. Depending on the auction, you should pick an unbid suit and lead HIGH in it, denying an honor.

Note: From xxx, lead highest. From xxxx, you may lead highest, but if you have the 9 or 8, you can lead second highest. This still conveys no honor, but doesn't waste the 9/8 in case it may take a trick later.

Now to a special case: against any contract where we've supported partner's suit on the auction, show ATTITUDE on opening lead.

Why? Partner knows you have 3+ because you raised their suit. So, if you high-low from xxx to deny an honor, they won't mistake you for a doubleton. Conversely, if you have Kxx, Qxx, Jxx, or Txx, lead low. It is important to retain your honor if declarer also has honors (e.g. in the following position, you don't want to lead your queen--you need it to cover declarer's jack later). **AT862**

97



KJ3

Q54

Let's look at examples. You are South:

1. ♠Q76 ♥7642 ♦KJT ♣AJ4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	P	1♠	P
1N	P	2♠	AP

The only safe and reasonable lead in our hand is a heart. We are defending a suit contract and we don't want to accidentally imply we have a singleton or doubleton by leading high. So, lead LOW (4th best or 3rd/5th per your partnership agreement).

2. ♠KT5 ♥AQ4 ♦6532 ♣J53

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	P
1♠	P	1N	AP

Here, we are leading vs. NT with four cards in one of the unbid suits, diamonds. Lead HIGH - the ♦6. Because we are defending NT, partner will not believe you are leading shortness to try to get a ruff. Thus, we can show our attitude on opening lead by leading high to deny an honor. This will help partner evaluate whether to keep playing diamonds or try to find the honors you have elsewhere.

3. ♠T83 ♥K84 ♦KT875 ♣63

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	2♣	2♥
3♣	P	3N	AP

In this case, partner opened 1♥ and we supported hearts. The opponents land in 3N and we're on lead. Here, when partner already knows we have 3+, we lead attitude, meaning lead LOW-the ♥4--to show an honor.

I/N LEAD QUIZ: You are South

1. ♠AJ4 ♥754 ♦865 ♣A72

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	P	1♣	P
1♥	P	1♠	P
3♠	P	4♠	AP

2. ♠JT2 ♥974 ♦KT95 ♣K63

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
P	1♥	1♠	2♥
2♠	AP		

3. ♠8643 ♥KT7 ♦AJ6 ♣J93

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	P	1N	P
3N	AP		

4. ♠Q72 ♥K643 ♦5 ♣Q9842

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	1N	2♠
3♦	P	3N	AP

5. ♠KQ4 ♥QJ9 ♦K643 ♣A82

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	P	1N	P
2♣	P	2♠	P
4♠	AP		

Answers pg. 17

SOUTHEAST MI TEACHERS

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(248) 356-6254

Tues (PM) - Lynn Root

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IT'S YOUR BID LEAD

The panel suffered at the hands of the editor here, with many panelists begrudgingly submitting leads that they felt no one should learn from. All hands were taken from real boards played. For each hand, we will discuss the lead that "worked" on the actual hand, how the panel voted, and what a simulation program computes as best.

Regardless of what "works" on a given hand, the panel's input is invaluable. Opening leads are guesses, and can be quite random. But, especially in matchpoint games, you are protected if you match the lead of others in your position, even if it doesn't work. For now, let's start with some panel feedback not specific to any hand:

Suzy Burger: *I cannot imagine why anyone would ever want my opinion on opening leads, oh, well, here goes...*

Bob Webber: *Even though I remain the world's worst leader, this was fun.*

Willie Winokur: *My favorite suit to lead in unclear auctions is diamonds. Unusual for me to lead clubs, except when a choice between unbid major or unbid minor.*

The next issue's bidding hands are on page 15. *Readers, feel free to submit answers for a chance at a free play at next year's Motor City Regional.*

PANEL SCORES

J. Koschik.....490	M. Hirschman..440
S. Burger.....480	B. Katz.....440
J. Chiesa.....480	O. Lien.....440
K. Dasher.....480	I. Rosenstein..440
B. Webber.....480	B. Bryant.....430
G. Benedict.....460	D. Eaves.....430
J. Grossman.....450	D. Temkin.....430
W. Winokur.....450	M. Crane.....410
M. Bendure.....440	M. Kleinplatz...410
J. Fleischmann..440	C. Jolly.....370

READER SCORES

J.M. Swiger.....460	D. Bauman.....390
N. Manley.....450	T. Larson.....380

HOW THE PANEL VOTED

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Mark Bendure	♦A	♦A	♣3	♣T	♣Q
Gene Benedict	♥J	♣4	♣3	♥T	♥T
Brenda Bryant	♠2	♣4	♠A	♣T	♥T
Suzy Burger	♠9	♦A	♣3	♥T	♥T
Joe Chiesa	♥J	♦A	♣3	♥T	♥T
Mike Crane	♥J	♥T	♣3	♥5	♥T
Kurt Dasher	♥J	♦A	♣3	♥T	♥T
Debra Eaves	♣A	♦A	♣3	♣T	♣Q
Jonathan Fleischmann	♠2	♦A	♦3	♥T	♣Q
Jerry Grossman	♠9	♦A	♣3	♣T	♣Q
Marty Hirschman	♠9	♦A	♣3	♦A	♥T
Christian Jolly	♠2	♥8	♠A	♥5	♣Q
Bob Katz	♦A	♣4	♣3	♣T	♥T
Morrie Kleinplatz	♦A	♦A	♣3	♦A	♣Q
John Koschik	♠2	♦A	♣3	♣T	♥T
Owen Lien	♠2	♣4	♦3	♥T	♥T
Irv Rosenstein	♠9	♥T	♣3	♥T	♥T
Dick Temkin	♠2	♥8	♣3	♥5	♥T
Bob Webber	♠2	♣4	♣3	♥T	♥T
Willie Winokur	♠2	♣4	♣3	♣T	♣Q

1. IMPs. N/S Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠92 ♥J3 ♦AQJ73 ♣AJ98

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
X	P	4♠	AP

This hand comes from a 2024 SEMBA sectional. Most panelists passively led a major to avoid giving away a critical trick in the minors. Some led the ♠2 to show suit preference for the lower suits. We'd love to know if partner has a stray queen, and where it is. On this deal, E/W got to a 23 HCP game and partner actually had the ♣Q and ♥Q. We have to lead a club to beat the contract--which only Debra (and the computer simulation) found.

WEST	EAST
♠ QT65	♠ AKJ83
♥ A985	♥ KT62
♦ K8	♦ 9
♣ K63	♣ 742

On non-club lead, declarer can lead up toward the ♦K to set up a fast pitch for a club. We'll take a club, a diamond, and eventually, partner's ♥Q. On a club lead, we'll take two clubs, the ♦A, and the ♥Q.

Simulation results:

Action	Avg. Def. Tricks	Set %
♠2/♠9	2.74	20.66
♥J	2.71	20.33
♣A	2.78	20.11
♦A	2.75	19.30

Panel Votes:

Action	Votes	Score
♠2	8	100
♥J	4	80
♠9	4	80
♦A	3	70
♣A	1	60

Jonathan Fleischmann (♠2): My partners no doubt will suggest that I'm the last person to consult for advice on

good opening leads. With that in mind, I like a trump lead here where both opponents have advertised distributional hands and no other option appeals. Either minor lead would be a pure guess, and a heart might give away that suit.

John Koschik (♠2): No non-trump lead is attractive, and no reason to believe critical minor-suit discards are coming from the heart suit.

Owen Lien (♠2): I like a trump lead. Looks like partner has some hearts and I've got the minors covered. Not randomly leading an unsupported ace, and partner's hearts can't be good enough for me to be getting a ruff since she failed to bid them over double.

Gene Benedict (♥J): Unlikely to cost a trick.

Joe Chiesa (♥J): Playing for 2♦, 1♣ and 1♥. If dealer has ♦K, we have a chance. 2nd choice ♦A.

Mark Bendure (♦A): With partner's apparent weakness and my heart holding, there is a very good chance that declarer will try to discard minor suit losers on hearts, so we should attack the minors immediately. The ♦A may win with the king in partner's hand or 3+ diamonds for both defenders. It doesn't drop a trick if dummy has the King. If declarer has the king, there will be time to re-evaluate when dummy appears and to shift to a club at trick two if that is where our defensive tricks can be found.

Bob Katz (♦A): My best shot at imps to beat it.

Morrie Kleinplatz (♦A): Less likely to blow a trick than the ♣A. After such a strong auction, a passive lead seems futile at IMPs.

Debra Eaves (♠A): Since my partner might have bid a major over the double and didn't support my diamonds, he probably has clubs. I don't like leading unsupported aces but I might get lucky on this hand.

2. IMPs. N/S Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠972 ♥T8 ♦AJ52 ♣K843

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

		1N	P
3♠*	P	4♥	P
4N	P	5♣**	P
6♥	AP		

*5-5 Majors GF **1/4 keycards

I was on lead with this hand in an online qualifier for the 2014 junior world championships. As panelists note, it is simply a guess as to what tricks, if any, partner may contribute to the defense. While I was playing, panelist Bob Katz happened to be kibbitzing while at an annual bridge party. Bob shopped the lead around to some local experts. Only one got it right--Chuck Burger.

The lead that worked was a club. Partner held the ♣Q, and we had to set up our club trick before declarer's diamonds provided a pitch for it. Chuck's logic was that partner is likely to have few HCP, so the ♣Q is more likely than the ♦K. The panel and simulation largely agreed that the ♦A is best, setting the contract over 10% of the time. Many panelists did opt for the aggressive club lead, though, and others went passive with a trump, hoping our defensive trick(s) will come without an aggressive lead.

Simulation results:

Action	Avg. Def. Tricks	Set %
♦A	1.10	10.13
♠2/7/9	0.82	6.67
♣4	0.62	6.53
♥8/10	0.80	6.24

Panel Votes:

Action	Votes	Score
♦A	10	100
♣4	6	80
♥8	2	60
♥T	2	60

Joe Chiesa (♦A): Trying to look like I have ♥Q. Partner may have the ♥Q or ♣Q. In my opinion playing her for the ♥Q offers a better shot.

Jonathan Fleischmann (♦A): Unless dummy has exactly one diamond and two clubs facing declarer's club AQ and diamond K, this won't cost and may be necessary to secure our side tricks before they go away. At least Blackwood and Garozzo would approve.

Jerry Grossman (♦A): I'm sure this is wrong on the actual hand, but I usually lead aces at slams.

Morrie Kleinplatz (♦A): This should be unanimous. Hope for a loser or a major suit guess. Cashing may also incline declarer to believe you have a missing major suit queen.

Gene Benedict (♣4): It's best to make an attacking lead against a small slam.

Bob Katz (♣4): Tough problem. Probably nothing can go away before we get in. Ace of diamonds is right if partner has the king AND responder has two diamonds. A club is right if partner has the queen and declarer has two clubs. The latter is more likely.

Owen Lien (♣4): This seems kind of random: try to establish a club or try to cash 2 diamonds. Since dummy is supposed to not have 2 fast losers anywhere, I'll try a low club hoping to either hit partner's queen or for a misguess with partner having the jack.

Christian Jolly (♥8): It's a crapshoot.

3. MPs. N/S Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠AQ ♥854 ♦KJ3 ♣K7543

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1♠ P 1♥ P
2♦ AP

This is an auction where many experts believe you decide to lead a trump first, and look at your hand second. East has shown two suits, and West preferred one. East will likely need to ruff hearts in West's hand. Leading a trump is often right to cut down on this, although looking at three small hearts (East's first suit), they may not need to ruff many, meaning we'd be leading from a vulnerable trump holding for no reason. On the actual hand, a trump lead was indeed correct. The panel and simulation, however, felt otherwise.

Simulation results:

Action	Avg. Def. Tricks	Set %
♣3	4.43	20.62
♠A	4.36	18.56
♥8/5/4	4.29	17.27
♦3	3.95	14.59

Panel Votes:

Action	Votes	Score
♣3	16	100
♦3	2	60
♠A	2	60

Marty Hirschman (♠3): In theory, the auction calls for a trump lead, but there is too much chance that will give up a trick here, which is important at matchpoints (and the field will not lead a trump from this holding, so a trump lead risks getting a bottom board). We may need to take our club tricks before they go away on the hearts. Also, if dummy is 5-1-3-4 or similar and declarer is 1-5-4-3, I may be able to give partner a second- or third-round club ruff.

Dick Temkin (♣3): Usually right

to lead trump on these auctions, but with three small hearts, it's unlikely to do much damage. And it's likely to cost a trump trick. It seems right to lead the unbid suit to try to establish trick(s) there.

Jonathan Fleischmann (♦3): I better put my money where my mouth is. The book says to lead a trump on this auction, then look down at your hand to see what you have, so I'll stick with that. If I give up a trump trick, I should get it back by preventing heart ruffs in dummy.

Owen Lien (♦3): Ick. I hate everything, but will lead a low trump. Maybe I'll get lucky and find partner with an honor there. Even if I lose a trick on the lead it should come back with one fewer heart ruff in dummy.

Brenda Bryant (♠A): Normally right to lead a trump, but holding three small hearts means the suit might come in easily. I hate leading a club away from the king with length and declarer likely short. I will get to see dummy and hopefully know what to do next.

4. MPs. None Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠K ♥T954 ♦AT643 ♣QT9

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

4♠ AP
2♠ P

This hand really split the panel - one of the hardest things about matchpoints is that the goal is not clear. On an auction like this, we may need to make an aggressive opening lead (like a club) to build our setting trick before it goes away. Or, we may need to be passive and not give anything away. Or, as was the case on this hand from an ACBL game on BBO, we need to lead the ♦A to hold the opponents to 12 tricks, else they take all 13. The actual hand was, perhaps, unusual in that the

♠A turned up in dummy, so our king was easily found. Declarer is able to ruff dummy's strong heart and club suits good to establish pitches for all his diamonds (unless we take one first!).

The panel was largely split between a club and a heart, but the simulation suggests that the ♦A takes the most tricks on average, although the margins are narrow among all reasonable leads.

Simulation results:

<u>Action</u>	<u>Avg. Def. Tricks</u>	<u>Set %</u>
♦A	2.86	30.34
♥T/5	2.64	28.88
♣T	2.49	27.27

Panel Votes:

<u>Action</u>	<u>Votes</u>	<u>Score</u>
♥T	8	100
♣T	7	90
♥5	3	70
♦A	2	60

Joe Chiesa (♥T): Either rounded ten could succeed. Lead through strength.

Owen Lien (♥T): Hopefully start establishing things in partner's hand before they start establishing dummy's minor. Club lead seems too risky with it often costing a trick or tempo unless partner has the jack.

Mark Bendure (♣T): That is my shortest side suit, which increases the odds of length (hence potential losers) in declarer's hand. The Ten from an interior sequence may allow us to trap the Jack in either opponent's hand if partner holds the K and is a step toward establishing a second club trick if partner holds the Ace.

Debra Eaves (♠T): I only need the A, K or J of clubs from partner to help set up a trick in this suit.

Bob Katz (♠T): Better to lead from a suit where you have something.

John Koschik (♠T): As close to a gimme as there is in this set.

Marty Hirschman (♦A): Dummy's jump to game without even inquiring about declarer's hand, suggests great strength. There is a good chance that dummy has a lot of tricks and that we will lose our diamond trick(s) if we don't lead one. Just taking the ♦A could be a top for -450 against all the -480s.

Morrie Kleinplatz (♦A): These auctions are a crapshoot. I may as well see dummy so that I can fully and carefully assess the damage I've done.

5. MPs. None Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠93 ♥T96 ♦3 ♣AQJ9863

<u>WEST</u>	<u>NORTH</u>	<u>EAST</u>	<u>SOUTH</u>
		1N	3♣
3N	AP		

Another matchpoint headache--do we risk giving the opponents a free club trick, in the hopes of running our club suit later? This hinges on partner having a second club to get to us when they (hopefully) win the lead. A prevailing strategy in these cases is to try to "lead with the field" for protection, but the panel suggests there is no clear answer as to what the field is thinking. The winning lead on this particular hand --from an ACBL game on BBO--was the ♥T. It's also ok to cash the ♣A and then switch to the ♥T; we just need to set up partner's hearts before giving up the lead. The simulation reflects this, with the ♣A carrying much more weight than the ♣Q.

<u>WEST</u>	<u>EAST</u>
♠ KJ2	♠ QT85
♥ Q3	♥ A74
♦ JT8642	♦ AKQ
♣ K4	♣ T52

Simulation results:

Action	Avg. Def. Tricks	Set %
♥T	3.02	11.97
♠9/3	3.00	12.12
♥6	2.96	10.93
♦3	2.88	9.52
♣A	2.68	7.27
♣Q	2.21	3.71

Panel Votes:

Action	Votes	Score
♥T	13	100
♣Q	7	80

Brenda Bryant (♥T): *Argh. To lead your suit or not lead your suit, that is the question. Matchpoints, not giving her a trick!*

Joe Chiesa (♥T): *Neither the ♣A (no outside entry) nor the ♣Q (If partner has two clubs we will probably beat it with a non-club lead) makes much sense.*

Owen Lien (♥T): *Definitely not a club. For me it's clearly between a heart and a spade. I like the ♥10 as it's likeliest to be productive at building an entry to partner's hand for the hoped-for club return.*

Bob Webber (♥T): *Playing partner for exactly one club.*

Marty Hirschman (♥T): *Dummy had a negative double available over 3♣ but didn't use it, so their length is presumably in the minors. I'm hoping partner can get in with something and lead their singleton club through declarer's Kx.*

Jerry Grossman (♣Q): *On a good day partner will have a second club and an entry.*

Morrie Kleinplatz (♣Q): *I'll look for a new partner if dummy's (or declarer's) stiff King is their 9th trick.*

SPRING 2025 "IT'S YOUR BID" HANDS

1. MPs. E/W Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠Q4 ♥AK986 ♦AKQT ♣KQ

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	P	3♣	?

2. MPs. Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠AKJ92 ♥KJ3 ♦void ♣KQ752

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♦	X	5♦	1♠ ?

3. MPs. All Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠AQ7543 ♥73 ♦A873 ♣J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
X	1♦ P*	P 1N	1♠ ?

*Denies 3 spades

4. IMPs. N/S Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠AJ943 ♥AKT95 ♦A4 ♣8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♠	P	P	?

5. IMPs. All Vul. SOUTH holds:

♠JT8732 ♥2 ♦JT ♣T962

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	X	2♦	P ?

Readers, submit responses by
January 10, 2025

jarbit24@gmail.com

Mailing address on back cover

TRUMP LEADS DEMYSTIFIED

Let's talk trump leads. We all know the sinking feeling of the opponents cross-ruffing entire hands while our honors fly by. *But, how do we know when to attack trumps at the get-go?* Some guidelines:

- **When one opponent has shown 2+ suits** and one ends up as trump, you often want to lead trump. This extends to auctions like Garbage Stayman, where cross-ruffing is the likely declarer strategy.
- It's good to lead a trump **when we've doubled the opponents, particularly in a partscore.** Perhaps the opponents preempted, but we hold the bulk of the high card points. We want to cut down on them scoring tricks by ruffing.
- **Never lead a trump if dummy may be void** in trumps (e.g. someone opens a Weak 2 and everyone passes).
- This tip is not about trump leads, but is germane: **if you know the opponents' trumps are splitting badly, it's best to lead your longest/strongest suit** rather than go after ruffs. You want to force the opponents to use their trumps so that later, you may use yours to gain control of the hand.

Remembering Gerald Wahl

Submitted by Michael Betzold

When my longtime partner Gerald Wahl pre-alerted the "imprecision" bidding system we used, some opponents would roll their eyes. "We'll alert everything," he'd promise. "You'd better!" they'd respond. "Otherwise we won't understand what you're doing." "Neither do we!" he'd reply.

Gerry was the only person I found crazy enough to play the system I'd invented. We stuck it out for fifteen years and laughed all along the long and winding road to reach Life Master status, enduring all the bottoms and quizzical glances. Time rewards the endurance of

LEADING HONOR SEQUENCES

Leading top of an honor sequence is arguably the best lead in bridge.

It forces out the opponents' high cards—without risking giving up a trick—and promotes our lower honors. These sequences include AK, KQ, QJ, JT, and T9.

■ **Against a suit contract, you only need a two-card honor sequence to lead it.** So, a suit like KQ85 or JT53 is a great choice. You'd lead the King in the first example and the Jack in the second.

■ Against NT, things are messier. **You generally want a three-card sequence to lead it against NT.** Else, you may lead small. For instance, from KQ32, you'd lead the 2. If you have a "broken" sequence, like KQT2 or QJ94, now it's better to lead the honor.

➔ But, which honor? The expert standard is to play that **leading the K vs. NT asks partner to unblock** any honors. You'd only do this with holdings like KQT9 or AKJT. **Leading the A or Q asks for attitude.** So, with KQTx, you'd actually lead the Q, asking partner for an attitude signal for the ace or jack.

even the foolish. We had unconventional methods but those were tolerated. My partner always showed up by game time—often with many seconds to spare!

A good bridge partnership is like a successful marriage in that you frequently must forgive and forget. Gerry forgave my mistakes readily, but he was much harder on himself. But he'd sometimes expressed frustration with the game, exclaiming "I hate frickin' bridge!"

Gerald Wahl was a focused, consistent, and inventive partner. We played until the final weeks of his battle against prostate cancer. You don't get to choose what cards you're dealt; you can only make the best of them.

DOG DAYS SECTIONAL RESULTS

Open pairs Weds PM: Joe & Rhonda
Monro Thurs AM: Joe Monro, Mike
McDonald Fri AM: Mike Crane, Bob
Webber Fri PM: Cono Emanuele, Joe
Ernsthausen

0-1000 pairs Thurs AM: Gay & Michael
Garcia Thurs PM: Paul Kubicek, Asher
Howarth Fri AM: Pamela & John Rush
Fri PM: Gay Garcia, Constance Chapp
Sat AM: Miriam Shaw, Matt Rosenthal
Sat PM: Yanping Zhang, Zinlei Zhou

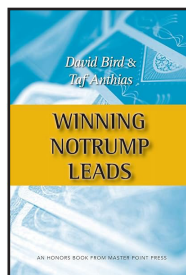
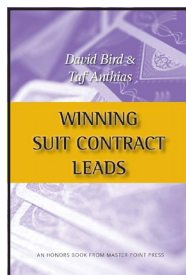
SS Swiss Thurs: Mike Alioto, Sheldon
Kirsch, Rose Burke, Lynne Cook

Sat. Swiss A: Marty Hirschman,
Bob Webber, Jonathan Fleischmann,
Kurt Dasher B/C: Paul Stunkel, Jane
Gardner, Barbara Cusick, Jerry Smith

Sun. Bracketed Teams Bracket
1: Julie Arbit, Kurt Dasher, Bob Katz,
Jonathan Fleischmann Bracket 2: Steve
Jacob, Bob Raf, Steve Shumer, Michael
Kaleel Bracket 3: Matt & Susan Evett,
Donna & Steven Dotson

RESOURCE ROUNDUP

The "Winning Leads" series by David Bird & Taf Anthias provides a comprehensive and statistics-based look at leading in modern bridge. There are some surprising tidbits--like leading a short suit vs NT to hit partner's suit--but they will get you considering all 52 cards when weighing your lead options.



TEST YOUR LEAD SOLUTION (from last page)

♠ AKJT98742

♥

♦ KT62

♣

♠ 63

♥ AJ643

♦ Q98

♣ 862



♠ -

♥ KQ8

♦ 54

♣ AKJT9532

♠ Q5

♥ T9752

♦ AJ73

♣ Q4

As with many of Irv's bridge stories, this hand is perhaps more humorous than instructional, but let's tease it apart. South starts with a negative double. Later, East supports hearts and E/W ultimately land in 7♣X.

At the table, South carefully considered the auction. If E/W have a heart fit as advertised, we can give partner a heart ruff on opening lead. South led a SMALL heart to give LOW suit preference (for diamonds). South indeed found North's void; unfortunately, North was also void in trumps! East won the heart cheaply with the 8, pulled trumps, cashed the ♥KQ, and got to dummy with the ♣8 to cash the ♥AJ, pitching diamonds and taking all 13 tricks (eight clubs + five hearts).

The lesson? Listen to partner - they'll tell you what to lead!

I/N QUIZ ANSWERS

(1) ♦5

(3) ♠6

(5) ♥Q

(2) ♥9

(4) ♠2

#5 incorporates last issue's lesson. The opponents bid to 3N, advertising around 25 combined HCP. We have the remaining 15. Don't lead your diamond suit - you will almost surely be giving away a free trick. Make the safer lead--top of an honor sequence.

SEMBA CLUB DIRECTORY

+Intermediate/Novice games *Invite-only games

Listings here are in-person

Monday

Winners Bridge | 11a | 38651 Woodward, Blomfield Hills | Dave Fletcher
Blue Water Bridge Club | 12p | 600 Gd River, Port Huron; Fred Goodell
War Memorial | 12p | 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pt Fms; Tony Faint
*Ann Arbor City Club | 1p | 1830 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; Ronnie Meade

Tuesday

Downriver BC | 10:30a | 14680 Dix-Toledo, Southgate; Cono Emanuele
+Bridge Central | 11a | 0-2500 | 17200 Dove, Clinton Twp; Vickie Vallone
Plymouth DBC | 11:30a | 525 Farmer St, Plymouth; Jim Perna
Alger Center BC | 12p | 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pt Fms; Dave Fletcher
*Ann Arbor City Club | 1p | 1830 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; Ronnie Meade
Ford DBC | 6p | 3640 Madison, Dearborn; Ellen Silverest

Wednesday

Eton Center DBC | 11a | 4900 Pardee, Dearborn Hts; Joyce Kozma
Mid Week BC | 11a | 38651 Woodward, Bloomfield Hills; Tony Faint
Plymouth DBC | 11:30a | 525 Farmer St, Plymouth; Jim Perna
*Country Club of Dt. | 12:30p | 220 Country Club, Grosse Pt Fms; Dave Fletcher
Mackinaw BC | 1p | 190 E. Long Lake, Bloomfield Hills; Josie Doherty
Ann Arbor Bridge Club | 7p | 2114 Pauline, Ann Arbor; Ray Gentz

Thursday

Burns Park Bridge | 12p | 1320 Baldwin, Ann Arbor; Matt Evett
Neighborhood Club | 12p | 375 Lothrop, Grosse Pointe; Tony Faint
+*Ann Arbor City Club | 1p | 0-499 | 1830 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; Ronnie Meade
*Country Club of Dt. | 5p | 220 Country Club, Grosse Pt Fms; Dave Fletcher
Trenton DBC | 6:30p | 2700 Westfield, Trenton; Bob Ondo

Friday

Bridge Central | 11a | 17200 Dove, Clinton Twp; Vickie Vallone
St. Clair DBC | 12p | 308 S 4th St, St Clair; Fred Goodell
Highland DBC | 12:15p | 444 Beach Farm, Highland; Jim Perna
*Ann Arbor City Club | 1p | 1830 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; Ronnie Meade

Bridge Connection - 26776 W 12 Mile, Southfield

- Mon-Fri @11:55a | Sat @12:30p | Weds @7p | Mike McDonald
- +Thurs @11a (0-1000, free lecture beforehand) | Tues @9a (0-300 Barometer)

Virtual

- On Bridge Base Online, click "Virtual Clubs" then "ACBL - North America"

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MOTOR CITY REGIONAL RESULTS

Open pairs **Monday:** Jiang Gu, Peter Wong **Tuesday:** Jiang Gu, Peter Wong **Wednesday (IMP pairs):** Jerry Grossman, Jack Shartsis **Friday:** Marty Hirschman, Lynne Schaeffer

Gold rush pairs **Monday:** Gillian & Mike Andrews **Tuesday:** Paul Tilly, Mike Roeder **Wednesday:** Janice McHale, Larry Junck **Friday:** Joe Bevacqua, Allan Pyke

Side games **Tues AM:** Owen Lien, Dan Irish **Weds eve:** Jiang Gu, Peter Wong **Sat AM:** Michael Kraut, Robert Bloom **Sat PM:** Jane Gardner, Tom Baer

A/X Swiss

Thurs: **A:** Samir Zeine, Saleh Fetouh, Jiang Gu, Peter Wong **X:** Scott Humphrey, Rose Burke, Michael Kraut, Jim Overcasher **Sat:** **A:** Samir Zeine, Saleh Fetouh, Richard Chan, Shihong You **X:** Joseph Shull, Steven Jackson, James Kart, Chris Grande

B/C Bracketed Teams

Thurs Bkt 1: Sue McIlhiny, Joseph Reimann, John Caldwell, Kathy Twomey **Thurs Bkt 2 (tie):** L Dillon, Bill Gregg, Kim Hauley, Dianne Arman; Matt & Sue Evett, Donna & Steven Dotson **Sat:** Thomas Weeks, David Pierce, Nanci & Bruce Poling

Sun. Bracketed Teams

Bkt 1: Bob Katz, Owen Lien, Julie Arbit, Kurt Dasher **Bkt 2:** Tengyun Tony Cao, James Yi, Yanping Zhang, Xiaoping Wu **Bkt 3:** Joan Capuano, Jill Rastelli, Jane Lehman, Sally Shelden

TEST YOUR LEAD

SOUTH

♠ Q5

♥ T9752

♦ AJ73

♣ Q4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	2♣	X
2♥	4♠	5♣	P
P	5♦	5♥	P
6♣	6♠	7♣	X
AP			

This hand is based on an old favorite hand of Table Talk panelist Irv Rosenstein.

North opens 1♠, East bids 2♣. We make a negative double, showing hearts. Undaunted, West now bids 2♥. The auction quickly escalates, with East supporting hearts on the way to the final 7♣X contract.

What would you lead?

Answer, pg. 17

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Upcoming Tournaments

January 22-25: Snowflake Sectional

February 13-16: Valentine Sectional

April 5-6: Ann Arbor All-Swiss Sectional

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