

34- 2024 – Leading

We all find leading difficult at the best of times. Sometimes, you are best to work out what to lead by *eliminating* the Suits you must not lead. Then there will be 1 or 2 Suits to choose from

Here are 2 Hands where West was helped as Declarer by poor leads:

1. Dealer West EW Vul

	NORTH	
	KJ864	
	J964	
	K4	
	KJ	
WEST		EAST
AQ7		53
AK8		7532
AQ82		9763
A98		752
	SOUTH	
	1092	
	Q10	
	J105	
	Q10643	

The Bidding was:

West	North	East	South
2C (1)	P	2D (2)	P
2NT (3)	P	P (4)	P

- (1) Strong Hand
- (2) 0-3 Points, any shape
- (3) Strong balanced Hand, 21+ Points
- (4) East could not Pass fast enough

North led S6 (away from his SK)

West took stock. After the Spade lead, there are 6 sure Tricks, with the best prospects for 2 more being in Diamonds

West won the lead with SQ, cashed DA and led a small one. North won with DK, and led another Spade which West ducked for 1 round, another Spade followed

West won SA, and knowing he had an entry to Dummy with D9, thought about cashing HA, HK and H8, hoping the Hearts would break 3:3 to give a 9th Trick. However, commonsense prevailed, as West could go down with this approach if North has the long Spades and the long Hearts

So, West cashed out making 8 Tricks, when 7 were only there

North should not have led away from SK. He knew from the Bidding that West had 20 + Points, so he needed to be patient and wait for his 3 Kings to win tricks. He also cannot lead a Diamond or a Club, so all was left was to lead H4 and hope. West could not make more than 7 Tricks in that case – eventually SK would take SQ

2. Dealer West Nil Vul

	NORTH	
	K65	
	Q84	
	A8	
	K8753	
WEST		EAST
J1087432		AQ
K5		J1072
102		9754
Q4		AJ2
	SOUTH	
	9	
	A963	
	KQJ63	
	1096	

The Bidding went:

West	North	East	South
3S (1)	P	4S (2)	P
P	P		

- (1) Without at least 2 Honours in a suit, many will not pre-empt at the 3-level (the late and great Ross Crichton taught me that, but West broke his rule)
- (2) A bold but good bid, knowing East has a few Tricks to contribute

North led C5 (leading away from CK)

West took the Club finesse to hand, then finessed CJ and played CA, throwing a losing Diamond. Next, he played HJ. South rose with HA, returned another Heart, won by HK. West then led a small spade to SQ, and cashed SA

West ended up losing 3 Tricks, 1 Spade, 1 Heart and 1 Diamond. Game made

North should not have led away from CK. A Spade is also too risky. The HQ is a potential Trick, so Diamonds should be led. Lead DA and a small one. South wins DK, and later the Defence will make a Spade and a Heart – 1 off

MORAL OF THE STORY

Sometimes a lead is obvious (e.g. Partner's suit, or top of a sequence)

But sometimes it is not clear what to lead, so before leading it pays to eliminate Suits you *must not* lead, and the choice then becomes clearer

35 September 2024

Hello Spring!

Here is an interesting statistic – at Wed night's game at the Club, NS won with 58.04% and 2 EW pairs drew for 1st place with 58.04% each. Is there anyone in probability land who can work out the odds of that happening? (Of course, the ultimate freak event would be where every single hand that is bid and played at a game gets exactly the same result – everyone NS and EW comes first with 50%)