

Opening Leads

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Jane Youngberg
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Current Changes to Opening Leads Unique Books – focus on fact rather than opinion

“*Winning Suit Contract Leads*”

“*Winning Notrump Leads*”

By David Bird and Taf Anthias

- Computer Simulations to analyze the best opening leads
- Generated **5000** deals for the west hand that match the North South Bidding.
For example **1S**, P, **2S**, P, **4S**.
- Determine which lead works best at both IMPs₄ and Match-points

Today's Presentation

1. Rational

2. Suit Contracts

3. No Trump Contracts

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Advantages of using the guidelines presented in the books

1. The guidelines are based on analytical data rather than opinion.
2. You will learn more about leads than would be possible in a lifetime of playing bridge 3+ times a week.
3. You will find your choice of opening leads easier as you will have a sound basis to draw upon.
4. Your partners will compliment you more often on your opening lead or criticize you less often 😊

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The Importance of Opening Leads

1. You are on defense 2/3 of the game.
(not including being the dummy)
2. If you make the best opening lead, you will have an advantage of almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of a trick. This is a greater advantage than the difference between a world class player's defense compared to a club player.

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Surprising Results

Opening Leads in a Suit Contract

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E/W vulnerable

N/S not vul

E S W N
 1H 1S 2S 4S
 P P X P
 P P

Lead	IMP Down 4	MP Average Tricks
5S	28.2%	5.72
2H	32.8%	5.87
AD	28.5%	5.71
5C	31.1%	5.80

“*Bergen for the Defense*” pg 80 “When the opponents sacrifice, always lead a trump, even if you have a singleton”

“*Eddie Kantar teaches Modern Bridge Defense*” pg 33 “Your side has the most points, yet they wind up playing the hand (the nerve!) Lead a trump.”

E S W N
 1H 1S 2S 4S
 P P X P
 P P

♠ 10 5
 ♥ Q 9 7 2
 ♦ A Q 2
 ♣ K 8 6 5

HCP 11

WEST LEAD?

Bidding: **LEAD?**

1S P 2S P
 P P Your Hand

♠ 8 2
 ♥ A 9 6 3
 ♦ 7 5
 ♣ K Q 8 5 4

♠ 10 5
 ♥ Q 9 7 2
 ♦ A Q 2
 ♣ K 8 6 5

Lead	IMP Down 4	MP Average Tricks
5S	28.2%	5.72
2H	32.8%	5.87

Bidding: Your Hand
 1S P 2S P
 P P

♠ 8 2
 ♥ A 9 6 3
 ♦ 7 5
 ♣ K Q 8 5 4

Lead	IMP	MP
KC	14.5%	4.40
7D	<u>19.2%</u>	<u>4.46</u>
AH	14.5%	4.30
2S	14.5%	4.31

Bidding:
 1S P 3S P LEAD?
 4S P

Your Hand

♠ 10 6 4
 ♥ 6 2
 ♦ K 10 7 6 3
 ♣ Q J 6

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Bidding:
 1S P 2S P LEAD?
 4S P P P

♠ A 9 8 4
 ♥ K Q 9 3
 ♦ 5
 ♣ Q 10 6 3

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Bidding: Your Hand
 1S P 3S P ♠ 10 6 4
 4S P ♥ 6 2
 ♦ K 10 7 6 3
 ♣ Q J 6

Lead	IMP	MP
4S	8.3%	2.25
6H	<u>10.2%</u>	<u>2.31</u>
6D	7.4%	2.20
QC	9.8%	2.25

Bidding: Your Hand
 1S P 2S P ♠ A 9 8 4
 4S P P P ♥ K Q 9 3
 ♦ 5
 ♣ Q 10 6 3

Lead	IMP	MP
4S	64.1%	3.88
KH	68.8%	4.0
5D	<u>73.0%</u>	<u>4.13</u>
3C	61.9%	3.84

Leading from a Doubleton

Leading from a doubleton is not such a bad lead, especially a worthless doubleton (without an honour).

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General Conclusions

1. A singleton is a “gift from above”
2. Leads from doubletons are much more effective than most players think.
3. The lead of an unsupported Ace is sometimes the best lead.

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4. When the opposition have stolen the bid, do not lead a trump. Generally, the same is true with splinter bids.

5. Often avoid leading from an honour and three small such as **Q 9 7 2**.

6. **K J x x**, or **K J 10 x**. Try to find another lead.

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Auction:
1NT 3NT

♠ K Q 5 2
♥ J 9 5
♦ A 10 7 4
♣ 8 7

Lead	IMP Beats Contract	MP Average Tricks
KS	27%	3.72
2S	21.8%	3.34
5H	23.1%	3.39
4D	16%	3.2
8C	20%	3.32

More Surprising Results

Opening Leads in a NT Contract

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Leading from an honour sequence in NT

Old: Best to have a sequence of 3 honours

New: Leading from a sequence of 2 honours is a good lead in NT.

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E S W N
1NT P 3NT
P P P

LEAD?

♠ K Q 5 2
♥ J 9 5 HCP 10
♦ A 10 7 4
♣ 8 7

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1NT – 3NT Auction

1. After an auction of 1NT - 3NT, the defenders hold **7.2** cards between them in each of the majors. Declarer and dummy hold **5.8**

2. Even when a minor suit holding is better, it is probably right to lead a major.

♠ 43 ♥ 54 ♦ 9642 ♣ KQ832

♣3 2.37 tricks ♠4 2.68 tricks

3. A passive lead from a major is better than leading from four cards to an honor in a minor

4. Leading from **KQ...** or **QJ...** in a major is an okay lead!

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E S W N
 1NT P 3NT
 P P P



♠ K 10 5
 ♥ A 2
 ♦ 10 6 5 4 3 2
 ♣ 8 4
 HCP 7

How many points does your partner have?

Leading Against a 1 NT Auction 1NT P P P

- 1) Leading a major is not such a priority as in a 1NT-3NT auction
- 2) Active leads from 4 card suits (Q 10 4 2) are more promising as you will often find partner with values
- 3) Leads from 5 card suits (A Q 9 7 2) are less attractive than in a 3NT auction as you may need 5 tricks in the suit to beat the contract

Auction:
 1NT 3NT

♠ K 10 5
 ♥ A 2
 ♦ 10 6 5 4 3 2
 ♣ 8 4

Lead	IMP Beats Contract	MP Average Tricks
5S	18.1%	3.34
AH	<u>27.8%</u>	<u>3.55</u>
4D	19.8%	3.44
8C	15.2%	3.28

Recurring Themes

- 1) **Lead from a sequence of two honors.** Previously, the understanding was to lead only from a sequence of 3 honours. **KQJxx - now KQxxx the K is a sound lead!!!!**
- 2) When your hand is weak, try to find your partner's strengths.
- 3) Focus on the majors in certain auctions

Which card is best from this holding ? Auction: 1NT-3NT

- **KQ752** lead the **K**
- The **top honor** is best from AK xx then KQ xx then QJ xx,
- Although the top honor will occasionally save declarer a guess, this reduces marginally the benefit of such a lead
- Interior sequence: from **K J 10 x**, the benefit of leading an interior sequence has some advantage but not from **K 10 9 x** and even less from **K 9 8 3**

Conclusions

- 1) **1NT-3NT** or **2NT - 3NT**
 or **1NT 2C(stayman) 2D 3NT**
 Generally try to lead a major.
- 2) Lead a short major when partner has points
- 3) **K Q x x x** – lead the **K**

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