

GCBA NEWSLETTER

Season 2021-22

November 2021

OPENING LEADS

When defending against a game, you don't need to be too heroic. You can expect to get the lead again after the dummy has been exposed and the early play offers further clues as to what you should do. Not so against a slam. Unless two tricks can be cashed at once, the defence must strike a telling blow to develop the second trick with the opening lead! Later is too late.

The one factor that works in favour of the defence is that declarer is rarely willing to risk immediate defeat if any alternative seems attractive. Sometimes such an alternative can be created by the lead itself. Consider this hand:

♠Q65 ♥K84 ♦J532 ♣KJ5.

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

Prospects are poor. Partner is virtually broke, and the cards look well placed for declarer. Take advantage of what you know that declarer doesn't – trumps aren't breaking. Lead the jack of Clubs. The fact that you let him see the Jack makes it even more likely that he will be able to establish the suit for no more than one loser. The full deal is:

♠ A98		
♥ QJ3		
♦ 4		
♣ AQT863		
♠ Q65	♠ JT763	
♥ K84	♥ 97652	
♦ J532	♦ 8	
♣ KJ5	♣ 42	
	♠ K4	
	♥ AT	
	♦ AKQT976	
	♣ 97	

IMPROVER'S CORNER

Third hand play is an area that abounds with errors and confusion. Suppose you are lucky enough to KQJ(x) of a suit that partner leads. Beginners are taught to play the lowest of touching honours and hence the correct play is the Knave. In reality, the number of tricks that your side can win in the suit is not related to the honour that you contribute, but if you were to play the Queen on the first round, then partner will not believe that you hold the knave and will thus be confused in the subsequent play and may easily mis-defend later. Thus the 'rule' of playing the lowest of touching honours is a sound one.

However, there are situations where you do best to break this 'rule'. Suppose you are defending a no-trump contract and partner leads the 5, dummy displays 32 doubleton and you hold QJT. If you insert then ten and declarer wins the King, then when partner gets the lead in some other suit, he may be wary of leading this suit again from an original holding of A9754 in case declarer has false-carded with the King and has a second stop with the Queen. Indeed, if this is the case then partner may try to find an outside entry in your hand so that you can lead through declarer's holding.

If instead you had played the Knave at trick one, losing to the King, then partner has no problem in leading another low card in the suit as this does not give up a trick regardless of whether you started with QJx or Jxx. This is exactly what you want him to do and thus the Knave is the correct play. If you followed that one, then you

should have no problem with this one. At no-trumps, partner leads the 4 (from say K8642) and you hold JT9 over dummy's 73 doubleton. If you play the nine, when declarer wins the Queen, partner will fear that declarer holds the Knave as well and may not continue the suit as this would concede an extra trick in the suit. However, if you play the ten and lose to the Queen, then partner will not have the same fear. Your ten must have been from Tx or JT_x and in either case a trick is not lost by continuing the suit from his side.

BEWARE! Do not make a habit of playing the middle of 3 equals. This is a play **ONLY** for no-trumps and **ONLY** when you have QJT or JT9 and dummy has no high honour.

OCTOBER PUZZLE

♠ AQ		♠ JT987
♥ AKJ	6NT by	♥ T9876
♦ AKJ2	West	♦ Q43
♣ AKJT		♣

You were asked to guarantee 12 tricks against any layout of the opposing hands on a diamond lead?

Win the lead in hand and play the ♠Q. If this loses you have 4 spades, 4 diamonds, 2 hearts and 2 clubs. When the spade holds, you continue with the ♥J. If this loses, then you make 2 spades, 4 hearts, 4 diamonds and 2 clubs. If the heart holds, you make your 12th trick by playing clubs from the top.

THIS MONTH'S TEASER

♠ AJ2		♠ Q8643
♥ AKJT54	6♥ by	♥ Q7
♦ 3	West	♦ 985
♣ AK8		♣ Q75

Plan the play – the defence start with 2 rounds of diamonds.