

§26. Opening Leads Against No-trump Contracts.

Notes on the basic principles to be taught in this section.

- Basic defence is taught in §5 (*lead from long suits, play third hand high, return partner's suit and the like*). This section revises those and also introduces one of Andrew Robson's phrases: "**Lead Low for Like and Lead High for Hate**"
- This lesson extends certain ideas, showing when negative leads from weak or short suits may be appropriate.
- The *Auction Slips* display the recommended opening lead in an unconventional format (it's at the bottom right-hand corner). Teachers may wish to cut these leads off, giving no guidance, or force students to make a lead face downwards before getting one of the other players to reveal what they should have led. This is all up to the teacher.

Four hands need setting up (overleaf); two are full deals (Hands 1 & 4), two are not ("Hands" 2 & 3). In the latter cases the West cards are irrelevant and have been greyed out.

Hand 1 (Hand 1 in the student notes, South is declarer in 3NT) shows a typical *tempo* hand.

South can count ten tricks in 3NT (four Spades, one Heart, three slow Diamonds and two Clubs) but East-West have the *tempo*. West leads a low Heart and East-West can set up four Heart tricks and the ♦A before South can establish his Diamonds. It is a classic "race", with the defence destined to win because they go first.

The defensive points to note (and to make to the class) are that...

1. West should lead his fourth-highest Heart (the ♥5);
2. East must play the ♥Q (*third player plays high*);
3. On gaining the lead with the ♦A East must lead back a Heart (*return your partner's suit*);
4. West must be aware that all his Hearts are winners.

Now, having re-established the basic rationale for leading the *fourth-highest-of-your-longest-and-strongest* against No-trumps it's time to see some exceptions.

"**Hand**" 2 is about choices of leads against No-trump contracts after 1NT – 3NT by the opponents.

North, East and South correspond respectively to Examples 6, 7 and 8 in the student notes.

"**Hand**" 3 is also about choices of leads against No-trump contracts, but here the opponents' bidding may guide the choice – or suggest that certain suits are not led.

North, East and South correspond respectively to Examples 9, 10 and 11 in the student notes.

Hand 4 (which does not appear in the student notes) shows how a defender may be thinking and how the defence may co-operate. East is declarer in 3NT.

(*This deal is played out fully – and explained – in VuBridge, issue 19*).

South leads a low Heart against 3NT. When he sees partner's ♥J and declarer's ♥A (best) he can deduce that East holds the ♥A K 10. (**How?** This point is well worth discussion with a class).

With eight top tricks, declarer should play on Clubs, as he has to set up at least one winner there.

South has two reasons **not** to play the ♠K on the lead of a low Club at trick two. Firstly, he cannot afford to be on play as a further Heart lead from his side of the table cannot help the defence (it *must* give away a trick). Secondly, the King is his potential entry to the long Hearts. This is why we advise *second player plays low*. Alternatively: *leave it to partner*. Note the effect of rising with the ♠K(!)

After taking the ♣A North leads a Heart (*return your partner's suit*), **through** the ♥K 10. If allowed to take the ♥Q South must play another; to set up Hearts with an entry to reach them.

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<p style="text-align: center;">Hand 1</p> <p>South plays in 3NT; ♥5 lead.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>♠ A K 3 ♥ 10 6 ♦ K J 7 2 ♣ K 7 4 3</p> <p>♠ 9 6 4 2 ♥ K J 8 5 3 ♦ 9 ♣ Q 8 2</p> <p>♠ Q J 10 5 ♥ A 9 ♦ Q 10 6 4 ♣ A 10 6</p> </div> <div style="width: 10%; text-align: center;"> <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>♠ 8 7 ♥ Q 7 4 2 ♦ A 8 5 3 ♣ J 9 5</p> </div> </div>		N		W		E		S		<p style="text-align: center;">“Hand” 2</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>♠ 6 5 2 ♥ K J 9 5 ♦ Q J 10 8 ♣ 9 4</p> <p>♠ A K Q 3 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ K 5 ♣ A K J 7</p> <p>♠ 10 9 8 7 ♥ 8 4 ♦ 7 6 2 ♣ Q 6 3 2</p> </div> <div style="width: 10%; text-align: center;"> <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>♠ J 4 ♥ Q 10 7 6 ♦ A 9 4 3 ♣ 10 8 5</p> </div> </div>		N		W		E		S	
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