

MAKING AN OPENING LEAD—THINK! by Maritha Pottenger

NO TRUMP CONTRACTS

What is the auction?

Remember the **major suit bias** when dummy does not transfer or Stayman.

Did **partner bid** anything? If so, lead LOW from three or more cards; high from doubleton.

Did partner make a **lead directing double**? Did partner **FAIL to make a lead-directing double**?

Could partner have made a one-level overcall and did NOT do so?

Is there **one suit** that seems **conspicuous in its absence**?

Was the **auction tentative** with no extras (e.g., 1NT-2NT-3NT), **consider a passive lead**.

Does the final contract (e.g., 6NT) **call for a passive lead or lead of an Ace (gambling 3NT opening)**?

Listen to auction with “source of tricks” jump to 3NT Consider unbid suit & dummy's suit for lead.

What is your hand:

a) Do you have a “**almost automatic lead**” such as top of sequence? Still, think about it!

b) Do you have a very **weak hand**? [If so, **try to find partner's suit!**]

c) Have the **opponents bid your suits**? [**Consider “top of nothing”** and wait for partner to lead suit bid on your right from her side of the table.]

d) Do you have **5 cards in suit bid on your right**? [If good spots, might lead it anyway.]

e) **Could partner have 5 cards in suit** (known to be only 4) **bid on your left**? Consider it.

f) Would 4th-best lead be from a **holding that often kicks a trick**? (e.g., AQxx or KJxx) [Consider top of nothing in something else and waiting for partner to lead from her side.]

g) Do you have a **very strong hand for auction** (e.g., 11-15 & they are in game)? [Try to avoid finessing yourself.]

Remember **lead conventions**, e.g., Queen from KQ109 or KQ10xx and Ace from AQJ10(x).

SUIT CONTRACTS

What is the auction?

Does someone promise a long, strong suit? If so, must **lead aggressively**.

Do you expect a **balanced Dummy and Declarer**? **Passive** lead probably best.

Will opponents be cross-ruffing (e.g., two suited or three-suited bids, splinters, etc.)? Lead **trumps**

Are opponents sacrificing (but NOT two-suited)? Lead **trumps**.

Has partner bid? If so, should usually lead partner's suit (unless have a singleton and expect to lead partner's suit later for a ruff, for example). Lead low from 3 or 4 to an honor (unless Dummy bid NT—in which case, lead honor). Lead top of nothing from 3 small. With 4 or more, lead top honor at 4 level and above in case you win trick and need to switch suits for partner.

Do you know partner has 4 trumps from auction? Forcing defense: 4th from longest and strongest.

Are opponents in 5 of a minor, but not 3NT? Lead suit they are worried about.

Did opponents **sniff at slam** and stop, or cue bid and stop? Lead suit they are worried about.

Could partner have a singleton or a void based on the auction? Lead that suit.

Did **partner make a lead-directing double**? Lead suit.

Did **partner FAIL to make a lead-directing double**? That suit is less likely to be correct lead.

If auction shows **NO EXTRAS**, passive defense probably best.

What is your hand?

Do you have a **singleton** (and NOT a strong hand). Probably right to lead it.

Consider leading a **doubleton**, especially with trump control, especially with a weak hand.

Do you have an “**almost automatic lead**,” e.g. AKxx or KQxx, etc. Still, think about it!

Do you have a **strong hand for the auction**? If so, trump or top of nothing might be best.

If you have a **very weak hand** and partner could have made a one-level overcall and did NOT, that suit is less

likely to be the correct lead.

How strong is Declarer?—more strongly Declarer has bid, less you should risk finessing yourself.