

DEFENSE LESSON 1

OPENING LEADS

A. Opening leads against notrump: These are the recommended opening leads against notrump and their order of importance:

1. What's the number one rule of bridge for leading against notrump or suit contracts?

ALWAYS LEAD THE SUIT PARTNER BID!!!! (well at least 95 percent of the time)

Nothing drives me crazier than when I bid a suit and the opponents bid notrump and pard is on lead and leads some other random suit. The only question is which card you should lead from your holdings in his suit.

1. With a doubleton in partner's suit, lead the highest.
2. With touching honors, lead the highest.
3. With 4 cards, lead fourth best.
4. With 3 cards, it depends what your holding is in partners suit:
 - a. You should lead third best unless you feel the suit is going to be blocked in your hand, so from:

Axx- lead third

Kxx- lead third

Qxx- lead third

Jxx- lead third

but from holdings with two honors, it is my experience that you should lead middle:

AJX- lead jack

KJX- lead jack

QTX- lead ten

KTX- lead ten

If you don't lead middle, the suit manages to block into your hand.

Exceptions:

AQX- lead ace

AKX- lead ace

The only real exception to leading partners suit is that you have a suit you are ready to run within one lead and you have an entry; then you may overrule pard.

2. Also, if partner opened the bidding one of a minor and has not rebid it and the opps get into notrump and you have a good other lead, you may lead your suit.

SECOND BEST LEAD AGAINST NOTRUMP

- a. Lead your longest suit- 4th best if you don't have a sequence.

Complete Sequence- a series of three or more cards in order of rank and headed by an honor, such as AKQ, KQJ, QJT, JT9. Always lead the top.

Incomplete Sequence- a suit headed by three or more cards in order of rank and headed by an honor with a hole in it.

AQJxx- lead Q asking pard for unblock,

AKJxx- lead the Ace asking for pard to unblock

KQT9X- lead queen asking pard to throw the jack or ace

Interior Sequence- a suit headed by three or more cards in order of rank with a hole after the highest-ranking card.

You lead the highest inside card:

AJTxx- lead jack

KJTxx- lead jack

AT9xx- lead ten

KT9xx- lead ten

QT9xx- lead ten

If you don't have a suit with a sequence, you lead 4th from your longest and strongest. You don't run around your hand looking for creative leads to (hit!) your partner's long suit. If partner imperatively needed a lead, then they should have bid the suit. Which leads into a very important point.

*If you absolutely need a suit led, you better bid it no matter whether you really had the points to overcall it or not. Make a weak jump overcall if you have to, but bid it.

You may whine, "but Mark, what if the opponents bid my best suit?" It's too bad, lead it- at least you will get an idea of what's going on in it and partner will figure out that this is your best suit and will know what to lead back.

One of the few times I will not lead my longest suit:

1. If the opponents open the bidding with a major, playing 5-card majors
2. If the opponents bid the same suit twice, then I will start to believe them and partner will have to figure out from his holding and the auction that I am long in the opponent's suit.

Other than that, if one of the opps responds a suit or opens a minor and that's my longest suit, I will lead it.

OPENING LEADS AGAINST SUIT CONTRACTS

Here are the best types of leads against suit contracts in order of priority:

1. Lead any unbid side suit with an AK combination in it.
2. Lead the suit that partner bid.
3. From a doubleton, lead the highest.
4. From Axx, lead the ace.
5. From another honor third or fourth, lead low.
6. From touching sequence, lead the top.
7. From three small, lead small if you have not raised the suit. Lead the top if you have raised the suit.

8. Lead any suit with a sequence in it. A sequence, for the purposes of trump contracts, is defined as two or more cards in order of rank.
9. Lead any unbid suit containing a king, queen, or jack.
10. Lead a singleton.
11. Lead a worthless doubleton when you have a trump control.
12. Lead a worthless holding in an unbid suit.

Leads to avoid:

1. leading an ace without a king. Aces were meant to take kings and queens; all you get if you plunk down an ace on opening lead is a bunch of moths.
2. Underleading an ace.
3. Leading a worthless doubleton without trump control.
4. Leading trump (unless the auction is the type that calls for it. We will go over those later.).

GENERAL THOUGHTS

A lot of times, an opening lead is just a guess, and on any hand, what looks like a normal lead can be absolutely awful, and other times the same lead can be the only lead that sets the contract. That's why I never blame partner for making bad opening leads.

But what we have to try to do is make the most educated guess on opening lead. How do we do that? We have to think and make deductions.

1. We go over the auction in our minds and try to visualize from the auction any information that we have gained from the opponents regarding the distribution in the declarer's hand and dummy's hand. i.e., if opening bidder opens spades and rebids hearts, we know at least 9 of his cards, so he is short in the minors.
2. We also try to figure out from the auction approximately how many points declarer has shown and dummy has shown, so we can approximate from that how many points partner should have. This becomes much easier to visualize after dummy hits...at that point you should start

thinking about not only how many points partner has, but where his honors should be located.

3. We also have to visualize how declarer is going to play the hand from the auction.
 - a. Is declarer going to try to cross-ruff the hand? If so, we might have to lead trump.
 - b. Have the opponents bid three suits and not bid notrump? That's usually because they don't have fourth suit stopped and you should probably lead that.
 - c. Has partner not bid a suit when you know partner is most likely long in the suit and had the opportunity to bid it at a low level? It could be because partner has nothing in the suit and does not want you to lead it.
 - d. Is there going to be a long running suit in dummy or do you have honors in the suit that will come down in dummy that will be finesseable? If so, you may have to make an aggressive opening lead to take as many tricks as possible before declarer sets up dummy's suit for pitches.

4. Don't try to be too creative on opening lead-just make normal leads and then if you have the chance later in the hand once you have more information, you can become creative.

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