

KRZYSZTOF MARTENS

OPENING LEAD

GARSŲ PASAULIS

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INTRODUCTION

*High level of opening leading
can be achieved solely by means
of clear and simple in its forms,
logical thinking.*

H. Kelsey

Opening lead is the least liked part of bridge. This is the consequence of a sad fact that most players lead poorly. And much as we are able to tolerate or even get to like shortcomings of our character, accepting intellectual weaknesses goes against human nature. Hence aversion to defensive play, observable at every stage of bridge development.

To be sure, good players lead better than weak players, but the level of opening leading always lags behind declarer play or bidding skills. It is therefore common for many players to treat hands in which they defend with some sort of impatience. In the next deal we will bid to a distributional slam or a light game, or we will pre-empt opponents out of their optimum contract – in a word, we will perform a number of brilliant moves bringing us a lot of points or money and providing us with an opportunity to show the real strength of our play. For the time being, however, we have to defend. The contract seems cold, declarer looks as if two overtricks were just a matter of time, and so we lead through dummy's strength, or lead trumps, or the highest from a sequence, because this is what routine tells us to do. If, by some unfortunate decree of fate, in a match or a rubber game we constantly get worse cards than the opponents or we defend more often than we declare in a tournament, we routinely let the tricks go time and again on the opening lead, complaining about the bad luck and restlessly waiting for a better hand. How much more proper and, most of all, more efficient attitude would be to prove by means of successful defensive play that it is not only the cards we are dealt but also, to a considerable degree, the abilities we possess, what influences the result.

THEORY OF OPENING LEAD

Winning defence does not require exceptional skills or knowledge.

Mistakes in this element of bridge, usually very simple, can most often be attributed to laziness – negligence to count up to 40 HCP, thirteen cards or tricks. Another common cause of defensive disasters is failure to draw conclusions from the bidding, or partner's and declarer's actions.

Counting and drawing conclusions are basic components of defensive analysis.

This analysis is a constant exercise in logic. The longer the practice period, the better our mind will be equipped to work in the required area and the higher will be the level from which we start in each given hand.

Compared with bidding or declarer play, the defensive problems are less obvious, good technique less useful and routine sometimes even harmful.

The objective of the following study is to show the paths of such logical thinking. With every analysis conducted by a defender by himself, the number of obvious, effortlessly drawn conclusions should increase. This, in turn, will allow him to broaden the scope of the analysis. At the same time, the rising difficulty level of the considered examples will enable reader to make use of the hitherto gained skills.

As far as match or rubber bridge is concerned, and this is our main focus here, all deals fall into two categories:

- slams, games and doubled contracts – we have to devote all our energies to comprehensive, as careful as possible analysis;
- part scores, the question of overtricks, the “cold” games – here the analysis can be more superficial, because ensuing losses, if any, are less costly.

For obvious reasons vast majority of problems to be found in the book represent the first category. It is important, however, to draw reader's attention to one danger. The plays presented below are often spectacular, sometimes even brilliant. It might seem, on the face of it, that successful defence consists for the most part of such plays. In reality, **brilliancy for its own sake causes more harm than good.**

In the examples presented in the book all the attractive, spectacular plays were preceded by strenuous, detailed analysis.

Finally, there are hands where we cannot afford too long an analysis, since it would betray the intentions behind the resulting play. In such cases our mind should work extremely efficiently, so that conclusions and conceptions were ready before it's our turn to play. By studying the material in this book scrupulously, the reader is expected to attain this ability, too.

Our defensive activities in each hand begin with the opening lead – not an easy thing to do, as every player is well aware of. “You're letting the contract make”, the bridge jokers used to address the opening leader. And they had the point: the number of contracts fulfilled because of a wrong opening lead is estimated at 720 million per year in the world. No matter how high the stakes and what currency, this problem has a significant bearing on the redistribution of national product in many countries. It is thus reasonable to take steps in order to become the beneficiary of this redistribution.

In further defensive play additional information is available: dummy's cards, partner's signals, cards played by declarer and his conception of play. Considering the opening lead, by contrast, we have to rely merely on hypotheses constructed basing on bidding and our own hand – its strengths and weaknesses.

The whole auction must therefore be carefully and thoroughly analysed. All conclusions are important, including the negative ones, i.e. finding out what the auction denies. To be able to do that, one must get acquainted with opponents' bidding system and ask a number of additional questions. Partner's bidding is also useful. Or, for that matter, lack thereof. Surprisingly much can be inferred from partner's silence.

Here is a handful of examples.

S	W	N	E
1 ♣	pass	1 ♥	pass
1 NT	pass...		

We learn that South has 12-14 HCP and a balanced hand.

Conclusion 1 – opener has fewer than four diamonds.

Conclusion 2 – negative – opener hasn't got four spades (otherwise he would rebid 1♠), four hearts (he would raise to 2♥).

Conclusion 3 – final – opener has only four clubs, thus a 3-3-3-4 shape, or, less likely, 5-3-3-2 with five clubs.

S	W	N	E
1 ♦	pass	1 ♥	pass
2 ♣	pass	3 ♣	pass
3 ♦	pass	4 ♦	pass
5 ♦	pass...		

We are equipped with the following information. South has 5+ diamonds, 4+ clubs and 12-17 HCP. North has 4+ hearts and support in both minors. The conclusion is strikingly clear: opponents are vulnerable in spades since neither of them attempted to play in notrump.

S	W	N	E
—	—	1 ♥	pass
1 ♠	pass	3 ♠	pass
4 NT	pass	5 ♦	pass
5 ♠	pass...		

This time we are in a position to draw conclusions from partner's bidding despite the fact that he had passed throughout. His failure to double the conventional ace-showing 5♦ bid suggests – if we, as East, decide to lead a minor – his preference for the club rather than diamond lead.

Having gathered all the available data concerning the meaning of the auction we need to focus on two key question, the second of which is a logical consequence of the first. We should:

1. Imagine typical hands of declarer and dummy.
2. Come up with a hypothesis about how, in general terms, the play will proceed. Such hypothesis may be formulated in the following manner:
 - declarer will seek to ruff his second suit in dummy; or
 - declarer will intend to draw trumps and establish dummy's long suit; or
 - lacking other options, declarer will be forced to look for honour tricks in all suits; or even
 - unfortunately, due to insufficient information we are unable to predict declarer's plan of play.

If we are able to at least tentatively determine declarer's intentions, we will, needless to say, strive to counter them.

S	W	N	E
1 ♠	pass	1 NT	pass
3 ♥	pass	4 ♥	pass...

It is very likely that declarer will attempt to ruff spades in dummy. This suggests the trump lead.

S	W	N	E
1 ♠	pass	3 ♦	pass
3 ♥	pass	3 ♠	pass
4 ♠	pass...		

Declarer's intentions are equally easy to guess. After drawing trumps he will try to use dummy's long diamonds. The attacking club or even heart lead seems necessary, while the trump lead, apparently handy for declarer, would be a serious error.

S	W	N	E
1 ♣	pass	1 ♥	pass
1 ♠	pass	1 NT	pass
2 NT	pass	3 NT	pass...

Declarer will use all suits as sources of tricks, so we must lead passively.

A vitally important problem is the choice of passive or active defensive strategy.

Active defence consists of establishing and cashing one's tricks.

The objective of **passive** defence is not to let declarer take the declared number of tricks.

Both methods share the same purpose. Every time we are on lead we must consider whether declarer possesses the sufficient number of tricks. Acting on the hypothesis that he does, we would choose the active defence. It is imperative in such situation to cash our tricks immediately, even if, on the face of it, we are losing something.

Assuming, by contrast, that declarer is short of tricks, we would defend passively, to avoid supporting him with additional tricks.

The next step in our opening lead analysis is the **estimation of the chances of making the contract**. This must include:

level of the contract;

type of contract (suit or notrump);

opponents' combined strength;

characteristics of opponents' hands (balanced or unbalanced, possession of good long suits etc.);

favourable or unfavourable – from declarer's point of view - breaks and location of honours.

The above analysis will allow us to divide all contracts into four groups:

light, where combined strength of the opponents is below the average strength required for the contract of the given level. Such contracts, unless totally hopeless, are based on some compensating features of opponents' hands.

with **sufficient** strength;

with combined strength **above** the average required;

with **unspecified** combined strength.

S	W	N	E
pass	pass	2 ♥	dbl
4 ♥	pass	pass	dbl
pass...			

Clearly, this contract lacks sufficient HCP.

S	W	N	E
1 NT	pass	2 NT	pass
3 NT	pass...		

Here the combined strength more or less corresponds with the level and type of the contract.

S	W	N	E
1 ♣	pass	2 ♣*	pass
3 ♥**	pass	3 NT	pass...

* - inverted minor; ** - +18 HCP, +5♥

Plenty of extra strength, at least 29 HCP between the opponents.

S	W	N	E
1 NT	pass	3 NT	pass...

The combined strength is not specified, falling somewhere between 23 and 31 HCP.

Classifying the contract as belonging to one of the above categories has significant bearing on the strategy of the opening lead. This is because:

- light contracts are usually fulfilled only with favourable layouts;
- contracts with adequate strength require at least average layouts;
- contracts with extra strength can only be defeated if the layout is evidently unfavourable for declarer.

Finally, in considering the opening lead we must take into account our actual hand. Here we must first of all look at the HCP distribution to determine our partner's potential.

(40 HCP) - (opponents' combined strength, from-to) - (our strength, from-to) = (partner's strength, from-to).

Generally speaking, **the stronger our hand is and weaker partner's, the more advisable it is to lead safely, passively.** Conversely, being much weaker than partner, we can lead boldly, actively.

In selecting the suit of the opening lead it is necessary to take into consideration the probability of establishing or losing a trick (or tricks) in the suit. Importantly, it should also be assessed if possible loss of trick will affect the outcome of the hand. There are hands where the number of tricks that can be taken by both sides exceeds thirteen.

Before moving to specific examples, let us summarize factors involved in choosing the opening lead.

Bidding analysis, making use of all available clues (including negative ones).

Painting the picture of dummy's and declarer's hand.

Anticipating declarer's plan and, accordingly, defining our own objectives.

Assessment of the chances of making the contract in view of the favourable or unfavourable breaks and location of honours.

Determining the strength of all four hands and, as a consequence, our chances of establishing or losing a trick in the suit we are contemplating leading.

The conclusions drawn from all these considerations will be, as a matter of practice, utilized selectively – in some cases only some of them will be of real significance. For example, in a hand where opponents reach their contract after an extremely intricate auction, abounding in detailed information about their shape, distribution of honours etc., we will be more concerned with points 1, 2 and 3 above. If, by contrast, the bidding was short and not too revealing, we will pay more attention to points 4 and 5, acknowledging the first three with only a short statement, resulting more from our experience than from analysis.

1) W hand, ♠ K 10 6 4 2
 none vul. ♥ A 7 5
 ♦ 10 9
 ♣ J 4 3

S	W	N	E
1 ♦	pass	1 ♥	pass
3 ♣	pass	3 ♦	pass
4 ♦	pass	5 ♦	pass...

Bidding info: South is at least 5-4 in minors, +17 HCP. North has 4+ hearts and strength sufficient to accept the invitation.

Even moderately experienced player will infer from this auction that opponents' weak suit is spades. By-passing 3NT suggests inadequate stopper in the unbid suit or complete lack thereof. We should, therefore, play the king of spades to retain control over the hand, for it may be more obvious from our point of view how the defence should proceed.

	♠ J 7 5	
	♥ Q 10 4 2	
	♦ J 8 7 4	
	♣ K 2	
♠ K 10 6 4 2		♠ A 9 8 3
♥ A 7 5		♥ K 9 8 3
♦ 10 9		♦ 6 3
♣ J 4 3		♣ 7 6 5

	♠ Q
	♥ J 6
	♦ A K Q 5 2
	♣ A Q 10 9 8

We take the first trick with the king, partner signals even number of spades while declarer drops the queen. From our perspective the solution couldn't be easier – we must cash two heart tricks immediately, before declarer disposes of dummy's heart losers on clubs. If, instead, we started with a small spade to partner's ace, he would possibly find it awkward to underlead his heart king in view of dummy's ♥Q1042.

2) W hand,
NS vul.

♠ 9 8
♥ Q 9 5 3 2
♦ 7 4 2
♣ K 6 3

S	W	N	E
1 ♦	pass	1 ♥	pass
2 NT	pass	3 NT	pass...

Bidding info: South holds a balanced hand with +4 diamonds and 18-19 HCP.

Opponents' combined strength seems to be over the average for a 3NT game, so in order to set it we must develop a long suit. We don't have a suit that would qualify (hearts were bid by declarer), so we should lead the alleged partner's suit. Which of the black suits is it? The answer lies in the auction: partner's failure to overcall 1♠ despite favourable vulnerability indicates that he hasn't got a suitable spade suit. In these circumstances we can only count on his clubs. We should lead the ♣3.

♠ Q 7 3 2
♥ A K 8 7
♦ J 3
♣ 9 7 4

♠ 9 8
♥ Q 9 5 3 2
♦ 7 4 2
♣ K 6 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 10 6 4
♥ 10
♦ A 6 5
♣ Q 10 8 5 2

♠ A K 5
♥ J 6 4
♦ K Q 10 9 8
♣ A J

This is an example of drawing right conclusions from partner's failure to bid.

3) W hand,
EW vul.

♠ A Q 7 4
♥ Q J 8 2
♦ A J 3
♣ Q 10

S	W	E	N
1 ♦ pass	1 NT pass	2 ♣* 2 ♦	dbl pass...

Bidding info:

1♦ – natural, 5+ cards;

2♣ – at least 4-4 in majors.

Partner's double was, natural, for penalty.

What can we infer from this auction?

South is unlikely to have three cards in any major since he did not bid 2♥ or 2♠. That means he has clubs in addition to his diamonds. North, in turn, holds just one, maximum two clubs.

This was the diagnosis of American **Pender** in the final of World Team Championships, Biarritz 1983. Consequently, he led small diamond, to be able to follow with the ace and another trump after getting in. He risked losing a potential trumps trick with the jack, but he beat the otherwise cold contract.

♠ K 6 3 2
♥ 7 6 5 4
♦ K 7 2
♣ 8 7

♠ A Q 7 4
♥ Q J 8 2
♦ A J 3
♣ Q 10

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 8 5
♥ K 10 3
♦ 6 5
♣ K 9 6 5 4

♠ 10 9
♥ A 9
♦ Q 10 9 8 4
♣ A J 3 2

4) W hand,
none vul.

♠ K 9 4 2
♥ J 9 5 4
♦ 6
♣ Q 10 3 2

S	W	N	E
1 ♠	pass	2 ♦	pass
2 NT	pass	3 NT	pass...

Bidding info:

Natural, 2NT shows extras.

No doubt we ought to lead one of our long suits. But which?

In the absence of any clues, we should simply choose the better one.

The two of clubs, therefore.

	♠ 7 5	
	♥ A 8 3	
	♦ Q J 9 3 2	
	♣ A 9 5	
♠ K 9 4 2		♠ 10 8
♥ J 9 5 4		♥ K 10 2
♦ 6		♦ 10 8 7 5 4
♣ Q 10 3 2		♣ K 8 7

	♠ A Q J 6 3	
	♥ Q 7 6	
	♦ A K	
	♣ J 6 4	

As we can see, we found partner with comparable values in hearts and clubs. Still, the heart lead would, as a matter of practice, let the contract make, unless partner was in such a shape as to switch to clubs after taking with the heart king.

5) W hand, ♠ J 10 9 8 4
EW vul. ♥ 10 9
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ A J 5 2

S	W	N	E
1 ♥	pass	2 ♣	pass
3 ♣	pass	3 ♥	pass
4 ♥	pass...		

Bidding info: natural.

It follows unequivocally from the naturalness of this sequence that partner holds a singleton club. So, in spite of a juicy spade sequence we lead the ace and a small club, to indicate diamond entry. Two aces and two ruffs is all we need. One off? No, two, because declarer will put up the king when partner plays a diamond. Which, in fairness, is an appropriate thing to do.

	♠ A 2	
	♥ K 8 7	
	♦ J 7 5 2	
	♣ K 10 8 3	
♠ J 10 9 8 4	N W E S	♠ Q 7 6 3
♥ 10 9		♥ 6 5 3
♦ A 6		♦ Q 9 8 4 3
♣ A J 5 2		♣ 4
	♠ K 5	
	♥ A Q J 4 2	
	♦ K 10	
	♣ Q 9 7 6	

The conclusions that needed to be drawn from the bidding to find this winning opening lead were of elementary nature.

6) W hand,
EW vul.

♠ A J 4
♥ K 8 5 3
♦ 10 9
♣ A 8 6 4

S	W	N	E
1 ♦	dbl	1 ♠	pass
3 ♣	pass	3 ♦	pass
4 ♦	pass	5 ♦	pass...

Bidding info: South has at least 5-4 in minors, +17 HCP; North has 4+ spades and enough points to accept his partner's invitation. We've seen this theme before. Opponents' weak spot is hearts. Declarer will strive to get rid of losing hearts, either from hand, with the aid of dummy's spades, or from dummy on hand's club winners. If so, we must cash our heart tricks early. This can be accomplished by leading the heart three.

♠ K Q 9 8 3
♥ 7 6 4
♦ J 8 5
♣ K 5

♠ A J 4
♥ K 8 5 3
♦ 10 9
♣ A 8 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 7 6 2
♥ Q 10 9 2
♦ 7 6 4
♣ J 7

♠ 5
♥ A J
♦ A K Q 3 2
♣ Q 10 9 3 2

As can be seen, the heart lead sets the contract one trick. At the table, West led trumps. He later explained that the trump lead is best if declarer holds a two-suited hand. That is indeed so, but only when two conditions are met: we are protecting our genuine values in declarer's side suit and we are able to lead trumps sufficient number of times. None of these conditions are fulfilled in the above hand.

7) W hand, ♠ Q J 9
 none vul. ♥ A Q 9 4
 ♦ 8 7 2
 ♣ 9 8 4

S	W	N	E
1 ♥	pass	1 NT	pass
2 ♣	pass...		

Selecting the opening lead here is neither easy, nor obvious. The scarcity of information about North's hand prevents us from predicting declarer's plans.

Three leads should be considered:

trumps – a typical lead against declarer's two-suited hands, whose purpose is to protect our values in his second suit;

the queen of spades, attempting to establish and cash spade tricks before declarer develops diamonds;

diamonds, a clearly passive lead, "not gaining, but not losing anything either".

I'm not showing the full deal this time. In the cases where the opening lead is uncertain, let me suggest, I'll only assess the estimated effectiveness of each lead. In this case it is as follows:

♣9 – 80%

♠Q – 15%

♦7 – 5%

This procedure should allow less experienced players to compare their own assessment of the effectiveness of each lead with the more or less realistic estimation.

8) W hand,
EW vul.

♠ A 7 5
♥ Q 10 8 7
♦ A J 4 3 2
♣ 10

S	W	N	E
1 NT	pass	2 ♣	pass
2 ♠	pass	4 ♠	pass...

Bidding info: 1NT – 16-18 HCP, 2♣ – Stayman, around 9-12 HCP.

The point count: (11) + (9-13) we dummy + (15-17) declarer = 35-40 HCP, which leaves partner with 0-5 HCP.

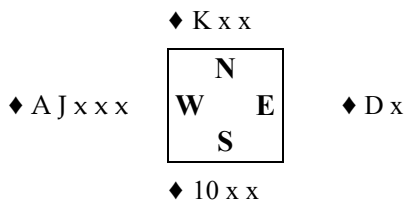
A typical example of a hand where every opening lead can be successful, but, at the same time, each may prove disastrous. Let us consider all of them:

A) ♣10 – if only partner has a quick entry, the club ruff will provide the setting trick. It is not, however, too likely, bearing in mind his range of 0-5 HCP.

B) ♥7 – an active lead, meant to open a potential source of tricks. It will work out fine if we find partner with heart values, but, as it often happens with active leads, it can easily cost a trick. It is by no means guaranteed that, given his maximum of 5 HCP, partner holds any heart honours.

C) ♠5 – leading trumps to prevent ruffs. This lead combines the drawbacks of passive (surrendering the potentially vital tempo) and active lead (the danger of facilitating the finesse against partner's jack for declarer).

D) in extreme case even a small diamond lead may be effective, as a way of starting the following suit:



or preparing the ruff, if partner holds doubleton diamond.

Since we cannot refuse to lead, we have to make a decision. I will again propose some estimations, admittedly of subjective character. For a more objective result we would have to analyze every opening lead in the context of, say, a thousand deals in which opponents would bid in the same way with different hands. Unable to undertake this task, I will draw on my experience of tens of thousands deals played.

This is the estimation:

♣10 - 20%

♠5 - 40%

♦3 - 5%

♥7 - 35%

9) W hand,
NS vul.

♠ K 9 4 2
♥ J 10 9
♦ 6 5 4 2
♣ 8 6

S	W	N	E
—	—	—	1 ♠
pass	2 ♠	dbl	3 ♠
4 ♣	pass	5 ♣	pass...

Bidding info: standard.

For the third consecutive time we face a situation where each opening lead can be effective.

Spades – to cash tricks there;

♥J – to lead through something in dummy;

diamonds – same as above, with the additional chance for a ruff;

trumps – to restrict opponent's ruffing potential.

A clever way to combine the advantages of the first three options is leading the ♠K. If it holds, we will be in a position to judge whether it is necessary to switch. Partner will let us know with his card what continuation he deems best.

♠ J 6 5
♥ A K Q 4
♦ A J 9
♣ K 10 5

♠ K 9 4 2
♥ J 10 9
♦ 6 5 4 2
♣ 8 6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q 10 7 3
♥ 7 6 3
♦ K 10 7 3
♣ A

♠ 8
♥ 8 5 2
♦ Q 8
♣ Q J 9 7 4 3 2

10) W hand,
none vul.
 ♠ K J 4 2
 ♥ 7 4
 ♦ K J 8 7
 ♣ 10 9 8

S	W	N	E
1 ♦	pass	1 ♥	pass
1 NT	pass	2 NT	pass
3 NT	pass...		

Bidding info:

North has hearts and invitational strength.

South has a little extra (13-14 HCP).

As the auction clearly indicates, opponents' hands are balanced and the combined strength just enough for game. This suggests declarer will be looking for tricks in all suits. Judging by our diamond honours he will stumble upon unfavourable layout. Chances of making the contract are not, therefore, great, provided we will not assist declarer with our leads. All this point toward the final conclusion: we lead passively the ten of clubs.

	♠ A 9 8 3	
	♥ K J 6 2	
	♦ 9 5	
	♣ A 7 5	
♠ K J 4 2		♠ 10 7
♥ 7 4		♥ Q 10 5 3
♦ K J 8 7		♦ 4 3 2
♣ 10 9 8		♣ K 6 4 2

	♠ Q 6 5	
	♥ A 9 8	
	♦ A Q 10 6	
	♣ Q J 3	

The overactive, misconceived in light of the above reasoning, spade lead would allow the contract to make.

11) **W** hand,
NS vul.

♠ 8 7 2
♥ K J 9
♦ 8 5 4 2
♣ J 6 3

S	W	N	E
1 ♠	pass	3 ♦	pass
3 ♠	pass	6 ♠	pass...

Bidding info: South holds six or more spades, 12-17 HCP, while South has good diamonds, spade support and an aversion to scientific bidding.

It can be assumed with considerable degree of certainty that long spades and diamonds will provide declarer with twelve tricks. If so, the active lead – of hearts or clubs – has no alternative.

The better of the two is, of course, the heart lead, insofar as it is enough to find partner with the queen to make the lead potentially effective, as opposed to, practically speaking, two club honours. We must, then, lead hearts – the king, that is, since leading the jack or the nine might mislead partner.

	♠ A Q 5	
	♥ Q 4 2	
	♦ A K Q J 7 6	
	♣ 5	
♠ 8 7 2		♠ 9
♥ K J 9		♥ A 8 7 6
♦ 8 5 4 2		♦ 10 9
♣ J 6 3		♣ 10 9 8 7 4 2

	♠ K J 10 6 4 3
	♥ 10 5 3
	♦ 3
	♣ A K Q

While pondering over the opening lead we should always consider opponents' failure to check the stoppers as a case for the active lead.

12) W hand,
both vul.

♠ 9 8 7 6 4
♥ 9 6 5
♦ 10 4 2
♣ J 5

S	W	N	E
1 ♦	pass	1 ♥	pass
1 NT	pass	2 NT	pass
3 NT	pass...		

Bidding info: natural; 2NT – invitation, 3NT – acceptance.

Adding up of South's (14-15 HCP), North's (11-12 HCP) and our own strength (1 HCP) leaves partner with 12-14 HCP. The spade lead would only be successful if declarer and dummy held exactly two spades each. At the same time, it's clear from the bidding that partner has at least four clubs and a few entries.

The hand comes from *France vs. West Germany* match played during European Championships in 1983 in Wiesbaden. Michel Lebel led the jack of clubs, setting the contract two tricks. At the other table, after identical auction, a spade was led and the French were soon claiming an overtrick.

♠ Q J 10 2
♥ A J 10 3 2
♦ 8
♣ A 8 6

♠ 9 8 7 6 4
♥ 9 6 5
♦ 10 4 2
♣ J 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 5
♥ Q 8 7
♦ A Q J
♣ Q 10 9 7 4

♠ A 3
♥ K 4
♦ K 9 7 6 5 3
♣ K 3 2

13) W hand, ♠ 10 7 5
 both vul. ♥ 8 4 2
 ♦ 5 3
 ♣ Q 10 8 5 2

S	W	N	E
—	—	1 ♦	1 ♠
2 ♥	pass	3 ♦	pass
4 ♦	pass	4 ♥	pass
4 NT	pass	5 ♥	pass
6 ♥	pass...		

Bidding info: natural; 4♥ - high honour, 4NT - Blackwood, 5♥ - two aces.

Needless to say, we do not take into consideration a passive red-suit lead - it is not in our interest to activate declarer's sources of tricks. It remains to choose between clubs and spades.

True, partner introduced spades in the bidding, but opponents heard him do that, too. If they nevertheless happily pursued the slam, they apparently are not afraid of the spade lead. On this basis we should decide in favour of the club lead.

	♠ A Q 8	
	♥ Q 6	
	♦ A J 10 9 4 2	
	♣ 9 7	
♠ 10 7 5		♠ K J 6 4 3 2
♥ 8 4 2		♥ A
♦ 5 3		♦ 8 7
♣ Q 10 8 5 2		♣ K 6 4 3
	♠ 9	
	♥ K J 10 9 7 5 3	
	♦ K Q 6	
	♣ A J	

The result fully vindicates our analysis.

14) W hand,
none vul.

♠ Q J 8 5 3
♥ A Q J 9
♦ 6
♣ K J 8

S	W	N	E
pass	1 ♠	2 NT	dbl
3 ♦	pass	pass	dbl
pass...			

Bidding info: 2NT shows a heart-diamond two-suiter.

The opening lead in this case should reflect closely our intentions. Since our primary obligation is to protect our heart tricks from being ruffed, the trump lead is obvious.

♠ K
♥ K 8 5 3 2
♦ A Q 8 7 5 2
♣ 2

♠ Q J 8 5 3
♥ A Q J 9
♦ 6
♣ K J 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 9
♥ 10 7 4
♦ K 4 3
♣ A Q 7 4 3

♠ 10 7 6 4 2
♥ 6
♦ J 10 9
♣ 10 9 6 5

Leading trumps three times results in two down, for +300.

In *Poland vs. Iceland* match at European Championships in 1969 in Oslo, **Sigurdson** led spades.

15) W hand, ♠ 7 2
 NS vul. ♥ K 9 6 2
 ♦ A 8 4
 ♣ K 10 7 3

S	W	N	E
2 ♣*	pass	2 ♦**	pass
2 ♥	pass	2 ♠	pass
3 ♦	pass	3 ♥	pass
4 ♥	pass...		

* – game forcing; ** – waiting, no 3 controls

Bidding info: South has 5+ hearts and 4+ diamonds and a game-forcing strength, while North is very weak, with 4+ spades and 2+ hearts.

Most likely, declarer's plan will be to draw trumps and then use side suits winners, mostly in diamonds.

We can try to counter it by developing additional trump tricks. This can be achieved by forcing declarer to ruff clubs. So we should definitely lead this suit – but which card?

As the auction reveals declarer is very likely to be short in clubs. If so, we ought to lead the king to make life easier for partner if he holds the ♣A-J and the queen appears in dummy. Moreover, leading the king will cater for the real layout:

	♠ Q 10 8 5 3	
	♥ 8 3	
	♦ 9 3	
	♣ Q 6 4 2	
♠ 7 2		♠ J 9 6 4
♥ K 9 6 2		♥ 4
♦ A 8 4		♦ 7 6 5 2
♣ K 10 7 3		♣ A 9 8 5
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ A K	
	♥ A Q J 10 7 5	
	♦ K Q J 10	
	♣ J	

Admittedly, this lead is both spectacular and effective, and so will present us with a golden opportunity to bother all our fellow players with endless stories. To do full justice to this hand, however, let us look at another, strikingly similar deal.

	♠ J 9 8 6 4	
	♥ 8 4 3	
	♦ 10 3	
	♣ Q 8 6	
♠ 7 2		♠ K Q 10 5
♥ K 9 6 2		♥ 10
♦ A 8 4		♦ 7 5 2
♣ K 10 7 3		♣ J 9 5 4 2
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ A 3	
	♥ A Q J 7 5	
	♦ K Q J 9 6	
	♣ A	

After identical auction we conducted the same analysis and, again, led the king of clubs, allowing this hopeless contract to make. Now it's our partner who will have a story to tell.

The purpose of this illuminating diptych of hands is not, to be sure, to invalidate the paths of reasoning we've followed. Rather, it is to show that **logical analysis is not always a guarantee of the accuracy of the opening lead, which is chosen in conditions of uncertainty**, often on the basis of hazy hypotheses and uncertain assumptions.

16) W hand, ♠ A J 7
 NS vul. ♥ K 9
 ♦ J 10 5 2
 ♣ A 10 6 4

W	N	E	S
1 ♣ pass...	1 NT	2 ♦	4 ♥

Bidding info: 1NT – 15-17 HCP, balanced; 4♥ – constructive.

The auction tells us partner cannot have more than 2-6 HCP. He is almost certain to hold six diamonds. We can also expect our king of hearts to be onside. What about suits distribution?

In addition to his diamond six-bagger, partner is likely to hold three or four spades. This statement is derived from a not entirely satisfactory clue that opponents made no attempt to find the spade fit (in reality, declarer wouldn't necessarily introduce spades even if he held 6-4 in majors). Finally, partner has two or three hearts. Adding all this up we may infer that he holds one or two clubs only. Therefore, instead of the instinctive, passive diamond lead, we should play the ace and the ten of clubs. Our conclusion is not, as noted, based on a hundred percent clues, but it is additionally supported by the first part of our reasoning relating to partner's strength and unlikelihood of scoring the trump king.

	♠ K 9 8 6	
	♥ A J 5	
	♦ A K	
	♣ J 9 7 5	
♠ A J 7		♠ 10 5 2
♥ K 9		♥ 6 3
♦ J 10 5 2		♦ Q 9 8 7 6 4 3
♣ A 10 6 4		♣ 8

	♠ Q 4 3	
	♥ Q 10 8 7 4 2	
	♦ —	
	♣ K Q 3 2	

TEST

“To be sure, good players lead better than weak players, but the level of opening leading always lags behind declarer play or bidding skills.”

Bidding analysis.

Anticipating declarer’s plan.

Preparing the counter-plan.

Trump lead (against a suit contract).

Active *versus* passive lead.

Leading own *versus* partner’s suit.

Conceptual lead.

Below you will find a hundred problems on the opening lead.

I evaluate the answers on the 0-10 scale.

In exceptional cases more than ten points may be awarded.

Thus, there are a little over 1000 points to be scored in the whole set.

In my opinion,

Grand master should score at least 950 points;

Master: 850 or better;

Expert: 750 or better;

Very good player: 650 or better;

Good player: 550 or better;

Average player: 450 or better;

Beginner: 350 or better.

PROBLEMS 1–10

1)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K J 10 9 7 3	2 ♠	pass	pass	3 NT
♥ 6 4	pass...			
♦ A 2				
♣ 8 6 5				

2)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q 5	1 ♥	3 ♦	dbl	3 NT
♥ Q J 9 8 5	pass...			
♦ 6 3				
♣ K J 8				

3)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 7 6 5 4	—	—	2 ♦*	dbl
♥ Q 10 7 5	3 ♥	3 ♠	pass	6 ♣
♦ Q 10 4 2	pass...			
♣ A	* – weak in ♥ or ♠			

4)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 6 5	—	—	1 ♥	dbl
♥ 10 7 5	pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
♦ K 10 6 5 3	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♦
♣ 4 3 2	pass	6 ♠	dbl*	pass...
	* – Lightner double			

5)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 10	—	1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♥*
♥ 7	3 ♣	4 ♥	pass...	
♦ K J 10 3 2				
♣ 8 7 4 2	* – one round forcing			

6)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K 10 9 5 4	—	1 ♣	1 ♠	2 ♥*
♥ J	4 ♠	5 ♥	dbl	pass...
♦ 10 7 4 3				
♣ 6 5 2				

* - one round forcing

7)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 5	1 ♣	2 ♣*	pass	2 ♥
♥ Q 3	pass	pass	dbl	pass...
♦ K J 7 6				
♣ K Q J 3 2				

* - majors

8)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 3	1 ♦	dbl	3 ♦	4 ♠
♥ K 10 9	5 ♦	5 ♥	pass	5 ♠
♦ K Q 10 9 8 7	pass...			
♣ J 7				

9)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 8 6	—	1 ♦	pass	1 ♥
♥ J 10 6 4	pass	1 NT	pass	3 ♥
♦ 9 7 3	pass	4 ♥	pass...	
♣ K Q 3 2				

10)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 7 4	—	—	—	3 ♥
♥ 6 4	pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣*
♦ A 7 3	pass	6 ♥	pass...	
♣ K Q 10 3 2				

* - cue bid

ANSWERS 1-10

1)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K J 10 9 7 3	2 ♠	pass	pass	3 NT
♥ 6 4	pass...			
♦ A 2				
♣ 8 6 5				

Sabine Auken started with the diamond ace, thus enabling the defense to cash five tricks. Here is the layout:

	♠ 8 6 5 4	
	♥ K Q 10 8	
	♦ Q 5 4	
	♣ 3 2	
♠ K J 10 9 7 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div> </div>	♠ 2
♥ 6 4		♥ 9 7 5 3 2
♦ A 2		♦ K J 9 7 6
♣ 8 6 5		♣ 10 9
	♠ A Q	
	♥ A J	
	♦ 10 8 3	
	♣ A K Q J 7 4	

Mahmood Zia decided to lead spades. He thoughtfully elected the king, providing his side with six tricks. Here is the full deal:

	♠ 8 6 5 4	
	♥ K Q 10 8	
	♦ 9 5 4	
	♣ 3 2	
♠ K J 10 9 7 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS</div> </div>	♠ Q
♥ 6 4		♥ 9 7 5 3 2
♦ A 2		♦ 7 6
♣ 8 6 5		♣ K J 9 7 6
	♠ A 2	
	♥ A J	
	♦ K Q J 10 8 3	
	♣ A Q 10	

Gabriel Chagas led the ♠J. The result – three down. Following is the complete layout:

	♠ 5 4	
	♥ K Q 10 8	
	♦ 10 8 5 4 3	
	♣ 3 2	
♠ K J 10 9 7 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS</div> </div>	♠ A 2
♥ 6 4		♥ 9 7 5 3 2
♦ A 2		♦ J 9 7 6
♣ 8 6 5		♣ 10 9
	♠ Q 8 6	
	♥ A J	
	♦ K Q	
	♣ A K Q J 7 4	

Bobby Wolf chose the club lead, setting the contract one trick. Here is the full deal:

	♠ 8 6 5 4	
	♥ K Q 10	
	♦ 9 5 4	
	♣ 4 3 2	
♠ K J 10 9 7 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ 2
♥ 6 4		♥ 9 7 5 3 2
♦ A 2		♦ 7 6
♣ 8 6 5		♣ K Q J 9 7
	♠ A Q	
	♥ A J 8	
	♦ K Q J 10 8 3	
	♣ A 10	

Finally, Eric Rodwell opted for the excellent heart lead. His partner took the ace and returned a spade through declarer's A-Q. Two off. The full deal:

	♠ 8 6 5 4	
	♥ K Q 10 8	
	♦ 9 5 4	
	♣ 4 3	
♠ K J 10 9 7 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ 2
♥ 6 4		♥ A 7 5 3 2
♦ A 2		♦ 7 6
♣ 8 6 5		♣ J 10 9 7 2
	♠ A Q	
	♥ J 9	
	♦ K Q J 10 8 3	
	♣ A K Q	

Not all opening leads are successful.

The purpose of the above example is to illustrate that it is always possible to imagine a lie of cards which justifies any particular lead.

What really counts, nonetheless, is the disciplined, logical analysis of the bidding and one's own hand as well as some imagination. It takes a lot of practice to correctly diagnose declarer's plan of play and to prepare the counter-plan, of which the opening lead is already the first step.

The score:

♠J - 10 ♠K - 8 ♥x - 5 ♣x - 5 ♦A - 3

3)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 7 6 5 4	—	—	2 ♦*	dbl
♥ Q 10 7 5	3 ♥	3 ♠	pass	6 ♣
♦ Q 10 4 2	pass...			
♣ A	* - weak in ♥ or ♠			

♠ K Q 10 9 3
 ♥ 9 6
 ♦ 8 6 5 4 3
 ♣ 4 2

♠ 7 6 5 4
 ♥ Q 10 7 5
 ♦ Q 10 2
 ♣ A 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 2
 ♥ K J 8 4 3 2
 ♦ 9 7
 ♣ 8 6 3

♠ A 6
 ♥ A
 ♦ A K J
 ♣ K Q J 10 9 7 5

Dummy should be expected to produce little more than five decent spades.

Declarer's plan will be to draw trumps and discard losing diamonds on dummy's spades.

There are two possible defense strategies:

a) The aggressive diamond lead, aimed at establishing a trick there. It is, however, hard to imagine that South would risk a slam without both the trump ace and the diamond king.

b) The communication-breaking spade lead. We hope to cut declarer off from dummy by leading spades twice before he draws all our partner's trumps.

♠x - 10 ♦x - 5 ♥x - 2

4)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 6 5	—	—	1 ♥	dbl
♥ 10 7 5	pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
♦ K 10 6 5 3	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♦
♣ 4 3 2	pass	6 ♠	dbl*	pass...

* - Lightner double

	♠ K Q 9 3	
	♥ 9	
	♦ A 4	
	♣ A 9 7 6 5 4	
♠ 6 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ 8 4 2
♥ 7 5 3		♥ A K Q J 8 4
♦ K 10 6 5 3		♦ J 9 7 2
♣ 4 3 2		♣ —
	♠ A J 10 7	
	♥ 10 6 2	
	♦ Q 8	
	♣ K Q J 10	

A diamond seems to be the obvious choice. Partner tells us he is void somewhere, so we lead our longest suit. However, if opponents' long suit - his source of tricks - is indeed diamonds, we have a practically sure stopper there and will probably defeat the contract without the ruff. The same does not apply to clubs.

♣x - 10 ♦x - 5 ♥x - 1

5)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 10	—	1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♥*
♥ 7	3 ♣	4 ♥	pass...	
♦ K J 10 3 2				
♣ 8 7 4 2				

* - one round forcing

♠ A K 9 3 2		
♥ K J 5 4		
♦ 8 6 4		
♣ 6		

♠ Q J 10		♠ 8 5 4
♥ 7		♥ Q 10 8
♦ K J 10 3 2		♦ A Q
♣ 8 7 4 2		♣ K J 10 9 3

♠ 7 6		
♥ A 9 6 3 2		
♦ 9 7 5		
♣ A Q 5		

Declarer's purpose will be to establish spades and use them to get rid of his hand's losers. Defeating the contract without any diamond tricks seems unlikely. Given the favorable, from declarer's point of view, spade brake, aggressive lead is in place. And that means the diamond lead.

♦J, ♦10 - 10 ♣7 - 8 ♠Q - 1

Why such narrow margin between the diamond and the club lead score?

The full deal may easily look like this:

	♠ A K 9 3 2	
	♥ K J 5 4	
	♦ 8 6	
	♣ 6 3	
♠ Q J 10	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="text-align: center;">N</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> WE </div> <div style="text-align: center;">S</div> </div>	♠ 8 5 4
♥ 7		♥ Q 10 8
♦ K J 10 3 2		♦ 9 7
♣ 8 7 4 2		♣ A K Q J 10
	♠ 7 6	
	♥ A 9 6 3 2	
	♦ A Q 5 4	
	♣ 9 5	

Now cashing two club tricks immediately is necessary to beat the game.

6)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K 10 9 5 4	—	1 ♣	1 ♠	2 ♥*
♥ J	4 ♠	5 ♥	dbl	pass...
♦ 10 7 4 3				
♣ 6 5 2				

* - one round forcing

	♠ —	
	♥ Q 10 5 4	
	♦ Q J 8 6	
	♣ A K J 10 7	
♠ K 10 9 5 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">N</div> <div style="text-align: center;">E</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">W</div> <div style="text-align: center;">S</div> </div> </div>	♠ Q 8 7 3 2
♥ 7		♥ A 8
♦ 10 7 4 3		♦ A K 5
♣ 6 5 2		♣ 9 8 3
	♠ A J 6	
	♥ K J 9 6 3 2	
	♦ 9 2	
	♣ Q 4	

Partner's double indicates values outside spades. The alternative meaning – the club void – is almost unimaginable.

Dummy will hit with long clubs and the spade shortness. The conclusion is clear: we must cash the diamond tricks.

♦x - 10 ♠x, ♠K - 3

7)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 5	1 ♣	2 ♣*	pass	2 ♥
♥ Q 3	pass	pass	dbl	pass...
♦ K J 7 6				
♣ K Q J 3 2	* - majors			
	♠ A 10 8 7 4 2			
	♥ K 9 8 7 4			
	♦ 8			
	♣ 7			
♠ K 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ Q J 9 3	
♥ Q 3			♥ A J 10 5	
♦ K J 7 6			♦ Q 10	
♣ K Q J 3 2			♣ 9 8 4	
	♠ 6			
	♥ 6 2			
	♦ A 9 5 4 3 2			
	♣ A 10 6 5			

The double was for penalty. Partner's initial silence in the bidding suggests he was ready to double both majors. If he needed help in punishing the opponents, he would have doubled 2♣.

The trump lead is mandatory.

♥Q - 10 ♥3 - 5 ♣K - 2

The seemingly safe club lead lets two tricks go.

8)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 3	1 ♦	dbl	3 ♦	4 ♠
♥ K 10 9	5 ♦	5 ♥	pass	5 ♠
♦ K Q 10 9 8 7	pass...			
♣ J 7				

	♠ K	
	♥ A Q J 8 7 4 2	
	♦ A 2	
	♣ A 10 5	
♠ A 3		♠ 8 5 4
♥ K 10 9		♥ 5
♦ K Q 10 9 8 7		♦ J 6 5 3
♣ J 7		♣ K 9 6 4 2
	♠ Q J 10 9 7 6 2	
	♥ 6 3	
	♦ 4	
	♣ Q 8 3	

We must play partner for a combination which will provide us with three tricks.

1. Diamond ace and a singleton heart.
2. Club ace – partner will hold up and later give us the ruff.
3. Club king and a singleton heart.

The club lead is more promising.

♣J – 10 ♦K – 5 ♥10 – 3

As it is, declarer has a nasty decision to make. If he wins the ace, he will concede the club ruff. If he ducks, the heart ruff is forthcoming.

10)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 7 4	—	—	—	3 ♥
♥ 6 4	pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣*
♦ A 7 3	pass	6 ♥	pass...	
♣ K Q 10 3 2	* - cue bid			
	♠ A K 10 5 3			
	♥ A 9 8			
	♦ K J 10			
	♣ A 7			
♠ 9 7 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ J 8	
♥ 6 4			♥ 10	
♦ A 7 3			♦ Q 9 8 4 2	
♣ K Q 10 3 2			♣ J 9 6 5 4	
	♠ Q 4 2			
	♥ K Q J 7 5 3 2			
	♦ 6 5			
	♣ 8			

Declarer's plan will consist of drawing trumps and using spades to dispose of losing diamonds. Bearing this in mind, the routine club lead would be wrong.

The ♦K is certain to appear in dummy, so leading the ace will do declarer no harm. It is thus a justified risk to underlead the ace.

♦x - 10 ♦A - 5 ♣K - 4

PROBLEMS 11-20

11)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A J 9	1 ♥	dbl	pass	1 NT
♥ J 7 6 5 4	pass	pass	dbl	pass...
♦ A J 2				
♣ Q 2				

12)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 9 8	—	—	1 ♠	2 ♥
♥ 4 3 2	2 ♠	pass	pass	4 ♥
♦ K J 9 2	dbl	pass...		
♣ K 9 8				

13)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 8 7	pass	3 ♠*	4 ♥	4 ♠
♦ J 8 7 5 4	5 ♥	pass	pass	5 ♠
♣ A K 4 3 2	pass	pass	dbl	pass...

* – preemptive

14)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K 9 8 6 3	—	—	3 ♥	4 ♦
♥ 8 6	pass	4 ♠	pass	5 ♦
♦ J 4	pass	6 ♣	pass	6 ♦
♣ Q 8 6 3	pass...			

15)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q 7 6	—	—	—	pass
♥ K J 9 8 5 4	1 ♥	3 ♥*	pass	3 NT
♦ 5	pass	pass	dbl	pass...
♣ A J 10				

*- asking about stopper

16)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 10 9 7 3	—	—	—	1 ♥
♥ 8	2 ♥	2 NT*	pass	4 ♥
♦ 6 5	pass...			
♣ A 9 6 5 3	*- game forcing with support			

17)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q 10 7	—	—	1 ♦	1 ♥
♥ 3	2 ♣	3 ♥*	pass	4 ♥
♦ 10 7	4 ♠	dbl	5 ♣	5 ♥
♣ A K 9 7 5 4	pass	pass	dbl	pass...
	* – preemptive			

18)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 8 6 2	—	—	1 ♦	1 ♠
♥ 9 7 6 5	pass	2 ♥	pass	3 ♣
♦ K	pass	3 ♦	pass	3 NT
♣ 9 7 6 3	pass...			

19)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 7 2	1 ♥	pass	pass	1 ♠
♥ K Q 8 6 4	pass	2 ♥	pass	3 ♦
♦ K 8	pass	3 ♥	pass	3 ♠
♣ A 3 2	pass	4 ♠	pass...	

20)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ J 8 6 3	—	—	1 ♣*	2 ♣**
♥ Q 6 5	pass	2 ♥	pass	3 ♠
♦ J 10 8 2	pass	3 NT	pass	4 ♠
♣ Q 3	pass	5 ♣	pass...	

* – at least two cards; ** – natural

ANSWERS 11-20

11)

Vul 1/1

♠ A J 9

♥ J 7 6 5 4

♦ A J 2

♣ Q 2

W	N	E	S
1 ♥	dbl	pass	1 NT
pass	pass	dbl	pass...

♠ K 6 5 2

♥ A 9 8

♦ K 10 7 5

♣ K 7

♠ A J 9

♥ J 7 6 5 4

♦ A J 2

♣ Q 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 10 8 3

♥ 3

♦ Q 8 4 3

♣ A 10 5 4

♠ 7 4

♥ K Q 10 2

♦ 9 6

♣ J 9 8 6 3

Partner's failure to redouble indicates that he holds fewer than 10 HCP. He risked a double with 8-9 HCP to dissuade us from the heart lead. We ought to comply. Our choice is between spades and diamonds.

Against the spade lead it can be said that dummy is certain to have four spades. If we elect to lead them anyway, we should consider leading an honor, to avoid blocking the suit.

♦A - 10 ♠J - 9 ♠A - 8 ♦J - 8 ♦2, ♠9 - 6

Leading the spade jack may assist in finessing against the ten:

♠ Q x x x

♠ A J 9

♠ K x x

♠ 10 x x

Leading the diamond jack, on the contrary, has no additional value.

12)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 9 8	—	—	1 ♠	2 ♥
♥ 4 3 2	2 ♠	pass	pass	4 ♥
♦ K J 9 2	dbl	pass...		
♣ K 9 8				

	♠ Q	
	♥ 8 6	
	♦ 10 8 7 5 4 3	
	♣ J 10 7 4	
♠ 10 9 8	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ K J 6 3 2
♥ 4 3 2		♥ 7 5
♦ K J 9 2		♦ A Q 6
♣ K 9 8		♣ A 5 4
	♠ A 7 5 4	
	♥ A K Q J 10 9	
	♦ —	
	♣ Q 6 2	

Odd auction. South is clearly pleased with us finding the spade fit. In all probability, he holds four spades himself and realizes his partner is short there.

If this analysis is correct, the trump lead has no alternative.

♥x - 10 ♠x - 4 Other - 2

13)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 8 7	pass	3 ♠*	4 ♥	4 ♠
♦ J 8 7 5 4	5 ♥	pass	pass	5 ♠
♣ A K 4 3 2	pass	pass	dbl	pass...

* - preemptive

♠ Q 8 6 4
 ♥ 6
 ♦ K 10 9 3 2
 ♣ 9 8 7

♠ 10
 ♥ 8 7
 ♦ J 8 7 5 4
 ♣ A K 4 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 2
 ♥ K Q J 10 5 4 3
 ♦ —
 ♣ Q J 10 5

♠ A K 9 7 5 3
 ♥ A 9 2
 ♦ A Q 2
 ♣ 6

It's inconceivable that partner is doubling because he has three defensive tricks. Far more likely he ruffs a minor. This looks familiar. If he is void in clubs, there is a considerable chance we will set the contract even without the ruff. If, on the other hand, his void is in diamonds, the club ace will serve as the all-important entry.

♦4 - 10 ♣A - 4 ♥x - 1

14)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K 9 8 6 3	—	—	3 ♥	4 ♦
♥ 8 6	pass	4 ♠	pass	5 ♦
♦ J 4	pass	6 ♣	pass	6 ♦
♣ Q 8 6 3	pass...			
	♠ Q J 10 7 5 2			
	♥ —			
	♦ Q			
	♣ A K J 10 9 2			
♠ K 9 8 6 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ 4		
♥ 8 6		♥ K Q J 10 5 4 3		
♦ J 4		♦ K 8		
♣ Q 8 6 3		♣ 7 5 4		
	♠ A			
	♥ A 9 7 2			
	♦ A 10 9 7 6 5 3 2			
	♣ —			

North will produce a huge black two-suiter. If the bidding is to make any sense, a heart void in dummy is to be expected. Dummy's only trump may be used to ruff a heart or as an entry to club winners.

♦J - 10 ♦4 - 8 ♥x - 3 Other - 1

Failure to lead trumps will allow declarer to make this crazy contract.

Why is the diamond jack considered better than small diamond, even though we lose a trick? Because the whole deal may well be:

	♠ Q J 10 7 5 2										
	♥ —										
	♦ 10										
	♣ A K J 10 9 2										
♠ K 9 8 6 3	<table border="1"><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>		N		W		E		S		♠ 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 8 6		♥ A K Q J 5 4 3									
♦ J 4		♦ 9 8									
♣ Q 8 6 3		♣ 7 5 4									
	♠ A										
	♥ 10 9 7 2										
	♦ A K Q 7 6 5 3 2										
	♣ —										

As the „goulash“ experience teaches, the highest trump should be led whenever possible.

15)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q 7 6	—	—	—	pass
♥ K J 9 8 5 4	1 ♥	3 ♥*	pass	3 NT
♦ 5	pass	pass	dbl	pass...
♣ A J 10	* – asking about stopper			

♠ K 5 3
 ♥ 10
 ♦ A K Q J 10 8 6
 ♣ K Q

♠ Q 7 6
 ♥ K J 9 8 5 4
 ♦ 5
 ♣ A J 10

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A J 10 4
 ♥ 7 3
 ♦ 9 4 2
 ♣ 7 5 4 2

♠ 9 8 2
 ♥ A Q 6 2
 ♦ 7 3
 ♣ 9 8 6 3

In numerous bidding situations penalty double serves a much more important function than merely maximizing the score. It conveys information that is supposed to assist partner in the defence. The risk connected with such an approach is usually handsomely rewarded.

Here the message is clear: “Do not lead hearts. But you can rely on my support elsewhere.” We don’t know where. We can find out, however, by leading the ♣A. As becomes evident immediately after examining dummy, partner meant spades. The switch to the ♠Q successfully concludes the defence.

♣A – 10 ♠Q, ♠x – 6 ♣J – 3

16)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 10 9 7 3	—	—	—	1 ♥
♥ 8	2 ♥	2 NT*	pass	4 ♥
♦ 6 5	pass...			
♣ A 9 6 5 3	* - game forcing with support			
	♠ K J 5			
	♥ K 10 5 2			
	♦ Q J			
	♣ K Q J 10			
♠ A 10 9 7 3	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>			
♥ 8				
♦ 6 5				
♣ A 9 6 5 3				
	♠ 4			
	♥ J 7 3			
	♦ K 10 9 8 4 2			
	♣ 7 4 2			
	♠ Q 8 6 2			
	♥ A Q 9 6 4			
	♦ A 7 3			
	♣ 8			

We have to choose between:

1. Passive diamond lead.
2. Active lead of one of the aces.

If we opt for the latter, the auction suggests it is more probable to find partner with the spade - rather than club - shortness.

Why? With spade support and club shortness partner might have ventured a 3♠ bid. Conversely, it is much less attractive to act with club fit and spade shortness, since the potential sacrifice would have to be on the five level.

♠A - 10 ♦x - 7 ♣A - 4

17)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q 10 7	—	—	1 ♦	1 ♥
♥ 3	2 ♣	3 ♥*	pass	4 ♥
♦ 10 7	4 ♠	dbl	5 ♣	5 ♥
♣ A K 9 7 5 4	pass	pass	dbl	pass...

* – preemptive

♠ J 9 6 5 4 2

♥ Q 9 8 2

♦ 5

♣ 6 2

♠ A Q 10 7

♥ 3

♦ 10 7

♣ A K 9 7 5 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 8 3

♥ K 6

♦ K 6 4 3 2

♣ Q J 10

♠ —

♥ A J 10 7 5 4

♦ A Q J 9 8

♣ 8 3

It's not easy to reconstruct all four hands. The bidding climbed to the five level and everybody should have some justification for that.

North's hand is a weak major two-suiter with a minor shortness.

Declarer has a side suit, which, as the auction reveals, is diamonds! Therefore, we must not lead this suit.

The standard trump lead will give declarer time to discard dummy's club losers on diamonds. So it is necessary to cash two club winners before switching to trumps (or even spades, for that matter – if you don't believe, look again).

♣A – 10 ♥3 – 4 ♦10 – 1

18)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 8 6 2	—	—	1 ♦	1 ♠
♥ 9 7 6 5	pass	2 ♥	pass	3 ♣
♦ K	pass	3 ♦	pass	3 NT
♣ 9 7 6 3	pass...			
		♠ K 3		
		♥ K 10 8 4 3 2		
		♦ 8 6 5		
		♣ K Q		
♠ 10 8 6 2			♠ Q J	
♥ 9 7 6 5			♥ A Q J	
♦ K			♦ J 10 9 7 4 2	
♣ 9 7 6 3			♣ J 8	
		♠ A 9 7 5 4		
		♥ —		
		♦ A Q 3		
		♣ A 10 5 4 2		

Partner did not double stopper-asking 3♦ bid. The only suit we can lead through dummy are hearts. Declarer is surely short there. At the table, East, upon winning the heart, wisely switched to spades. The diamond switch might have been ducked by declarer.

Declarer then relied on clubs. He took the ♠K, played off ♣K-Q and finessed in diamonds. The result – one down.

♥x – 10 ♦K – 5 Other – 2

19)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 7 2	1 ♥	pass	pass	1 ♠
♥ K Q 8 6 4	pass	2 ♥	pass	3 ♦
♦ K 8	pass	3 ♥	pass	3 ♠
♣ A 3 2	pass	4 ♠	pass...	

♠ J 3			
♥ A J 7 3 2			
♦ A 4			
♣ Q J 9 8			

♠ 10 7 2		♠ Q 8 6
♥ K Q 8 6 4		♥ 9
♦ K 8		♦ J 9 7 2
♣ A 3 2		♣ K 10 7 6 4

♠ A K 9 5 4			
♥ 10 5			
♦ Q 10 6 5 3			
♣ 5			

As the auction indicates, opponents hold a 5-2 spade fit. The routine trump lead, not favored by theoreticians in situations like this, seriously complicates the analysis. In any case, it gives declarer some chance at least.

After a ♥K lead, by contrast, declarer is destined to concede a trick in each suit.

♥K – 10 ♠2 – 5 ♣A – 2

Let's follow the likely course of the play after the ♠2 lead (East puts up the queen).

Declarer wins and plays a club. East takes his king and helplessly returns a spade, putting declarer in dummy. He now ruffs a club and draws trumps (a heart from dummy). This is followed by a heart to the ace (West inserts honor) and another club ruff, dropping West's ace.

This leads to:

♠ —
♥ J 7 3
♦ A 4
♣ Q

Declarer exits with the ♥10. If West wins his king, he will be endplayed. Ducking is no better, for declarer can overtake and play the ♣Q, squeezing and later endplaying West. South may as well duck the heart ten and lead to the ace of diamonds followed by a diamond to the ten.

20)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ J 8 6 3	—	—	1 ♣*	2 ♣**
♥ Q 6 5	pass	2 ♥	pass	3 ♠
♦ J 10 8 2	pass	3 NT	pass	4 ♠
♣ Q 3	pass	5 ♣	pass...	

* - at least two cards; ** - natural

♠ —		
♥ A J 10 4 2		
♦ K 7 6 5 4 3		
♣ 9 2		
♠ J 8 6 3		♠ A 10 9 2
♥ Q 6 5		♥ K 9 8
♦ J 10 8 2		♦ A Q 9
♣ Q 3		♣ 8 5 4
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ K Q 7 5 4	
	♥ 7 3	
	♦ —	
	♣ A K J 10 7 6	

French style bidding. This is how you show good 6♣-5♠ hand in France.

In modern bridge the jump to 3♠ is a Splinter with heart support. 2♣ overcall should deny five spades.

Declarer will strive to ruff spades in dummy. It is vital to lead trumps, even at the cost of losing a trump trick. Later, we have to be alert enough to insert the queen when declarer plays a low heart from his hand.

After the lazy diamond lead declarer will end up with overtrick. Why? Because he will have time to develop three diamond winners by means of ruffing the suit three times. The ♥A will become the access card.

♣Q - 10 ♣3 - 9 ♦J - 4

PROBLEMS 21-30

21)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 10 6 2	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ K 7 4	pass	1 ♥	pass	3 ♣
♦ 10 9	pass	3 ♦	pass	4 ♦
♣ J 8 4 3	pass	5 ♦	pass...	

22)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 8 7	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A Q J 7	pass	3 ♣*	pass	4 ♠
♦ 9	pass...			
♣ Q J 10 8 2	* - 8-10 with 6♣			

23)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 10	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ K 9 5 3 2	1 ♥	pass	2 NT	pass
♦ 7 4 2	3 NT	pass...		
♣ A 6 3				

24)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 7	—	1 ♣	2 ♦*	dbl
♥ J 10 5 4	2 ♥	3 ♣	3 ♥	3 NT**
♦ A 6 2	pass...			
♣ 9 8 4 3	* - 5-5 majors; ** - without hesitation			

25)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 9 7	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ K Q J 10	1 NT	2 ♣*	dbl	pass
♦ A J 10	pass	2 ♦	pass...	
♣ J 10 6	* - +4-4 majors			

26)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K 9 7 2	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ Q J 8 7	pass	2 ♦	pass	2 NT
♦ 6	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♣ 6 4 3 2				

27)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 9 7 3	—	—	—	1 ♥
♥ 10 3	1 ♠	2 ♣	pass	3 ♣
♦ A 4	pass	4 ♥	pass...	
♣ A J 8 5				

28)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K J 10	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ A 8 7 5	dbl	1 ♠	pass	3 ♣
♦ 10 9	pass	3 ♦	pass	4 ♦
♣ A 10 6 5	pass	5 ♦	pass...	

29)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 9	—	—	—	1 ♥
♥ A Q 9 4	pass	1 ♠	pass	2 ♣
♦ 8 7 2	pass...			
♣ Q 10 4				

30)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 7 5	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ K 10 8 7	pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♠
♦ A 9 8 3 2	pass	4 ♠	pass...	
♣ 10				

21)

♠2 - 10 ♠K - 5 ♦x - 3

22)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 8 7	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A Q J 7	pass	3 ♣*	pass	4 ♠
♦ 9	pass...			
♣ Q J 10 8 2	* - 8-10 with 6♣			
	♠ 5 3 ♥ 10 8 ♦ Q 6 3 ♣ A K 9 7 5 3			
♠ 9 8 7	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>			
♥ A Q J 7				
♦ 9				
♣ Q J 10 8 2				
	♠ A K Q J 10 6 2 ♥ K 6 ♦ A 10 8 ♣ 4			
	♠ 4 ♥ 9 5 4 3 2 ♦ K J 7 5 4 2 ♣ 6			

Bidding analysis: dummy will consist of little more than six clubs headed by A-K. Declarer holds six or seven strong spades and a generally decent hand.

Leading our singleton could be effective if partner holds either ace of spades or ace of diamonds.

A trump lead might be a killer, but it is nevertheless passive.

Imagination tells us we should attempt to destroy enemy's communication. This can be achieved by the club lead, which deprives declarer of one of his club tricks. Partner will ruff the second club, provided he isn't void in trumps. The only danger is South's having no clubs. In this case we will provide him with two quick discards.

On the other hand, the club void may as well be in our partner's hand.

♣Q - 10 ♠x - 6 ♦9 - 4

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 7	—	1 ♣	2 ♦ [*]	dbl
♥ J 10 5 4	2 ♥	3 ♣	3 ♥	3 NT ^{**}
♦ A 6 2	pass...			
♣ 9 8 4 3				

^{*} - 5-5 majors; ^{**} - without hesitation

♠ J 5 3
 ♥ 8
 ♦ K 9 8
 ♣ A K J 7 6 2

♠ 10 7
♥ J 10 5 4
♦ A 6 2
♣ 9 8 4 3

N
W E
S

♠	K Q 9 8 2
♥	A 9 8 3 2
♦	J 10
♣	10

♠ A 6 4
♥ K Q 7
♦ Q 7 5 4 3
♣ O 5

Bidding analysis: partner is at least 5-5 in majors, as his bold bidding makes clear. We, by contrast, were acting passively, for two aggressors in a partnership is one too many. The reasoning which led me to the spade attack may be, I admit, an example of wishful thinking.

From the pace of South's decision and his self-assurance it seemed evident he is in possession of two heart stoppers.

I hold only one stopper in minors. Partner's honours should be concentrated in the major suits. I decided to take a chance in spades and I succeeded. I'm not willing to recommend such wild shots, generally speaking, but sometimes, with the aid of our table presence, risky plays work out fine.

♠10 - 10 ♥J - 9

I assign high mark to the heart lead, too, since in the long run searching for inspired leads is a losing proposition.

25)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 9 7	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ K Q J 10	1 NT	2 ♣*	dbl	pass
♦ A J 10	pass	2 ♦	pass...	
♣ J 10 6	* - +4-4 majors			

♠ Q J 8 5 3
 ♥ 9 8 6 5 4
 ♦ Q 5
 ♣ 3

♠ A 9 7
 ♥ K Q J 10
 ♦ A J 10
 ♣ J 10 6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 6 4
 ♥ 7 3 2
 ♦ 7 6 2
 ♣ K 9 8 7

♠ 10 2
 ♥ A
 ♦ K 9 8 4 3
 ♣ A J 5 4 2

Bidding analysis: North will come up with a major two-suiter with a couple of diamonds and the club shortness. It's not hard to foresee what declarer will be up to. He'll try to ruff clubs in dummy.

Our response – leading trumps, even at the cost of losing a trump trick.

♦A, followed by ♦J – 10 ♦J – 7 Other – 2

26)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K 9 7 2	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ Q J 8 7	pass	2 ♦	pass	2 NT
♦ 6	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♣ 6 4 3 2				

♠ 10 5		
♥ K 9 6		
♦ K 9 8 5 2		
♣ A Q 10		

♠ K 9 7 2		♠ J 8
♥ Q J 8 7		♥ 5 4 3
♦ 6		♦ A Q J 7 4
♣ 6 4 3 2		♣ 9 8 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q 6 4 3
♥ A 10 2
♦ 10 3
♣ K J 5

Bidding analysis: it seems declarer will have to face bad breaks and unfavourable distribution of honours.

The theoretically sound approach is to lead the suit where we need a minimum contribution from partner for the lead to be effective. In our case this criterion is undoubtedly met by the heart suit. Nevertheless, both conclusions from the bidding and the features of our own hand suggest passive lead.

♣x - 10 ♥x, ♥Q - 5

27)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 9 7 3	—	—	—	1 ♥
♥ 10 3	1 ♠	2 ♣	pass	3 ♣
♦ A 4	pass	4 ♥	pass...	
♣ A J 8 5				
		♠ A 8 5 2		
		♥ A K 8		
		♦ J 8 7		
		♣ 9 7 2		
♠ Q J 9 7 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ 10 6	
♥ 10 3			♥ 5 4 2	
♦ A 4			♦ 10 9 6 5 3 2	
♣ A J 8 5			♣ Q 10	
		♠ K 4		
		♥ Q J 9 7 6		
		♦ K Q		
		♣ K 6 4 3		

All the tested players chose the ♣A. Their faith in opponents' sincerity is truly moving. What they fail to appreciate, unfortunately, is the principle of camouflage.

What's the use of introducing four clubs with a hand like this?

♠ A 8 5
♥ A K 8
♦ 9 8 7
♣ Q 10 9 7

Instead I recommend 2♠ – game forcing with heart support – and if opener bids clubs anyway, I will gladly support them, hoping for a slam! Game, however, ought to be reached without unnecessarily revealing too much about our hand.

North's cunning trick prevented his side from getting to the best spot – 3NT – but it made it difficult to assess the particular leads.

♠Q – 10 ♣A – 8 ♥10 – 5

28)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K J 10	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ A 8 7 5	dbl	1 ♠	pass	3 ♣
♦ 10 9	pass	3 ♦	pass	4 ♦
♣ A 10 6 5	pass	5 ♦	pass...	

♠ A Q 9 8 5		
♥ 6 5 4		
♦ J 5 3		
♣ 8 7		

♠ K J 10		♠ 7 6 4 3
♥ A 8 7 5		♥ K J 3 2
♦ 10 9		♦ 7 6 2
♣ A 10 6 5		♣ 9 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 2	
♥ Q 10	
♦ A K Q 8 4	
♣ K Q J 4 2	

Bidding analysis: declarer's Achilles' heel is hearts. Decent spades may be expected in dummy, since it is not advisable to show four spots over RHO's takeout double.

We are relatively strong, which suggests passive lead. The stack in declarer's side suit, in turn, calls for the trump lead. But, on closer examination, the trump lead loses much of its allure.

So, all things considered, the active heart lead seems to be justified.

♥A - 10 ♥x - 8 ♦10 - 5

30)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 7 5	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ K 10 8 7	pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♠
♦ A 9 8 3 2	pass	4 ♠	pass...	
♣ 10				

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

♠ A 7 5		♠ 10 3
♥ K 10 8 7		♥ J 6 5 4
♦ A 9 8 3 2		♦ J 5 4
♣ 10		♣ Q 9 3 2

♠ J 9 6 4		
♥ Q 9		
♦ K Q 6		
♣ A K 8 7		

Bidding analysis: partner won't be of much help, so we should tend to lead passively. Obviously, each lead may turn out to be winning.

1. ♣10 – we reach partner with the ♦K or the ♠K and get a ruff.
2. ♦A – partner trumps another diamond and we await the setting trick in hearts.
3. ♥7 – establishing two heart tricks.

This is all wishful thinking. According to theory, passive lead is the correct one.

The conclusion – we choose the most passive, viz. the spade lead.

♠x – 10 ♥7 – 5 ♣10 – 2 ♦A – 1

PROBLEMS 31-40

31)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 7 4	—	—	—	1 ♣
♥ K J 8 4	pass	1 ♦*	1 ♥	1 ♠
♦ K J 7 2	2 ♥	3 ♣	3 ♥	3 ♠**
♣ 9 5 2	pass	4 ♠	pass...	

* – negative; ** – +18 HCP, +5♠

32)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 6 4	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 4 2	pass	2 NT*	pass	3 ♥
♦ Q 8 3 2	pass	4 ♥	pass	4 NT
♣ 10 9 8 6	pass	5 ♥	pass	6 ♥
	pass...			

* – game forcing with support

33)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 6 5 4	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ J 8 7 5 4	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
♦ 8 5 3	pass	6 NT	dbl	pass...
♣ 6				

34)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ J 10 4	pass	1 NT	2 ♥	3 ♦*
♥ Q 3 2	4 ♣	pass	4 ♥	5 ♦
♦ —	pass	pass	5 ♥	6 ♦
♣ A J 10 9 7 3 2	pass...			

* – natural, forcing

35)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 10 8 6	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ Q J 10	pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♠
♦ 10 9 8 7	pass	3 ♠*	pass	4 ♦
♣ K 2	pass	4 ♥	pass	4 ♠
	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♥
	pass	5 NT	pass	6 ♦**
	pass	6 ♠	pass...	

* – forcing; ** – one king

36)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q 5 3	—	1 ♣	pass	1 ♠
♥ J 9 8 5	pass	3 ♠	pass	5 ♠
♦ 6 3	pass	6 ♠	pass...	
♣ Q J 10 8				

37)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 3	—	1 ♦	pass	1 ♠
♥ J 6 5 3	pass	4 ♣*	pass	4 ♦
♦ 6 5 4 2	pass	6 ♠	pass...	
♣ K 7 2				

* – splinter

38)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 9 6 2	—	—	1 ♠	pass
♥ J 10 9	2 ♠	dbl	pass	4 ♣
♦ 6 5 4 2	pass	5 ♣	pass...	
♣ 8 6				

39)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 4 2	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ J 4	pass	1 ♥	pass	1 NT
♦ Q J 8 7	pass	2 NT	pass	3 NT
♣ 9 7 4	pass...			

40)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 8 7 2	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ Q 9 7	pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
♦ 8 5 4 2	pass	6 ♠	pass...	
♣ K 9 8				

ANSWERS 31-40

31)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 7 4	—	—	—	1 ♣
♥ K J 8 4	pass	1 ♦*	1 ♥	1 ♠
♦ K J 7 2	2 ♥	3 ♣	3 ♥	3 ♠**
♣ 9 5 2	pass	4 ♠	pass...	

* - negative; ** - +18 HCP, +5♠

♠ 8 5 2

♥ 6

♦ 9 8 3

♣ Q J 10 7 6 3

♠ 7 4

♥ K J 8 4

♦ K J 7 2

♣ 9 5 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q J 10

♥ Q 10 9 5 2

♦ A Q 10

♣ 8 4

♠ A K 9 6 3

♥ A 7 3

♦ 6 5 4

♣ A K

Bidding analysis: a light game like this must be based on some shape and well fitting hands. Declarer will strive to use dummy's clubs, so the opening lead has to be aggressive. Without diamond tricks setting the contract is out of the question.

♦ 2 - 10 ♥ 4 - 6 ♠ x - 4

32)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 6 4	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 4 2	pass	2 NT*	pass	3 ♥
♦ Q 8 3 2	pass	4 ♥	pass	4 NT
♣ 10 9 8 6	pass	5 ♥	pass	6 ♥
	pass...			

* – game forcing with support

	♠ K 7 5	
	♥ A K 7 6	
	♦ J 10	
	♣ J 7 5 4	
♠ A 6 4		♠ 3 2
♥ 4 2		♥ 9 5 3
♦ Q 8 3 2		♦ K 9 7 6 5
♣ 10 9 8 6		♣ K 3 2
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> N E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> W S </div> </div>	
	♠ Q J 10 9 8	
	♥ Q J 10 8	
	♦ A 4	
	♣ A Q	

Bidding analysis: double fit should alert us to the danger of declarer's disposing of dummy's losers on spades.

It is of utmost importance to open the right suit. Our chances are considerably higher in diamonds. As it is, we found partner with a king in each of the minors. It did us no good in clubs. In diamonds, it's entirely different story.

♦x – 10 ♣x – 5 ♠A – 2

33)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 6 5 4	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ J 8 7 5 4	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
♦ 8 5 3	pass	6 NT	dbl	pass...
♣ 6				

	♠ A 7	
	♥ A 10	
	♦ J 5	
	♣ A K Q J 10 8 3	
♠ 10 6 5 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">N</div> <div style="text-align: center;">E</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">W</div> <div style="text-align: center;">S</div> </div> </div>	♠ 8 3 2
♥ J 8 7 5 4		♥ 3 2
♦ 8 5 3		♦ A K 10 2
♣ 6		♣ 9 7 5 3
	♠ K Q J 9	
	♥ K Q 9 8	
	♦ Q 9 6 4	
	♣ 2	

Bidding analysis: six or seven solid clubs in dummy, ideally with no shortness. Partner is asking for an unusual lead.

The most unusual is the diamond lead. It would never occur to us if it wasn't for the double. With A-K in one of the major suits, partner should restrain his impulse, pass and pray for us to guess the right suit.

♦x - 10 ♥x, ♠x - 5

34)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ J 10 4	pass	1 NT	2 ♥	3 ♦*
♥ Q 3 2	4 ♣	pass	4 ♥	5 ♦
♦ —	pass	pass	5 ♥	6 ♦
♣ A J 10 9 7 3 2	pass...			

* – natural, forcing

	♠ A Q 9 5	
	♥ 10 8 7 5	
	♦ K J	
	♣ K Q 4	
♠ J 10 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ K 8 3
♥ Q 3 2		♥ A K J 9 6 4
♦ —		♦ 10 2
♣ A J 10 9 7 3 2		♣ 8 6
	♠ 7 6 2	
	♥ —	
	♦ A Q 9 8 7 6 5 4 3	
	♣ 5	

Bidding analysis: a typical goulash. An attempt to collect the heart trick is bound to fail. It is tempting to cash the club ace, but it does not follow from the bidding that partner has club shortness. Our 4♣ – new suit plus support (we were a passed hand) did not discourage partner from saving.

I would try my luck in spades.

♠J – 10 ♣A – 7 ♥x – 3

35)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 10 8 6	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ Q J 10	pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♠
♦ 10 9 8 7	pass	3 ♠*	pass	4 ♦
♣ K 2	pass	4 ♥	pass	4 ♠
	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♥
	pass	5 NT	pass	6 ♦**
	pass	6 ♠	pass...	

* - forcing; ** - one king

♠ J 10 8 6	♠ A Q 9 5
♥ Q J 10	♥ A 8 7
♦ 10 9 8 7	♦ K J 5
♣ K 2	♣ A 9 6

♠ —	N	♠ —
♥ 9 5 4 3	W	♥ 9 5 4 3
♦ 4 3 2	E	♦ 4 3 2
♣ J 10 8 7 4 3	S	♣ J 10 8 7 4 3

♠ K 7 4 3 2
♥ K 6 2
♦ A Q 6
♣ Q 5

Bidding analysis: since opponents were heading for the grand slam, we may assume they have all the aces. ♣A should be expected to appear in dummy. This observation was sufficient for the majority of the questioned players to choose the ♣2. The supporting arguments were not too sophisticated. "Declarer is unaware of the bad trump break. Fearing the ruff, he will put up the ace".

Spectacular ideas are often backed by superficial analysis.

When opponents were contemplating grand slam, no competent defender would lead singleton, only to find that he actually assisted declarer in solving his main difficulty. In the diagram above, the clever club lead is the only one that lets the contract make.

♥Q - 10 ♦x - 8 ♣2 - 2

36)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q 5 3	—	1 ♣	pass	1 ♠
♥ J 9 8 5	pass	3 ♠	pass	5 ♠
♦ 6 3	pass	6 ♠	pass...	
♣ Q J 10 8				
		♠ A K J 6		
		♥ 10 2		
		♦ 7 5		
		♣ A K 9 6 3		
♠ Q 5 3				♠ 10 8
♥ J 9 8 5				♥ 7 6 4 3
♦ 6 3				♦ Q 10 9 8 4 2
♣ Q J 10 8				♣ 7
				♠ 9 7 4 2
				♥ A K Q
				♦ A K J
				♣ 5 4 2

Bidding analysis: after trump invitation, accepted by North, it is clear the ♠A and ♠K will appear in dummy. Great opportunity to lead declarer astray. The trump lead might discourage him from finessing in spades.

Significantly, the losing line of play seems quite attractive. Declarer can play two spade honors from the top, take the diamond finesse, cash all the remaining honors in side suits and exit with a trump. If the defender with the last spade holds two clubs, he is home.

True, declarer may adopt this line after any other lead, as well, but the trump lead is the most persuasive.

♠x - 10 Other - 5

37)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 3	—	1 ♦	pass	1 ♠
♥ J 6 5 3	pass	4 ♣*	pass	4 ♦
♦ 6 5 4 2	pass	6 ♠	pass...	
♣ K 7 2	* – splinter			

♠ K Q 8 6
 ♥ A 10 9 4
 ♦ A Q J 10 8
 ♣ —

♠ A 3
 ♥ J 6 5 3
 ♦ 6 5 4 2
 ♣ K 7 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 4 2
 ♥ Q 8 7 2
 ♦ 9
 ♣ A 9 8 6 3

♠ J 10 9 5
 ♥ K
 ♦ K 7 3
 ♣ Q J 10 5 4

Bidding analysis: North is apparently happy with his partner's diamond cue-bid. Bypassing Blackwood suggests the club void. Dummy will hit with ♠KQ, ♥A and ♦A.

We face a dilemma: starting hearts or hoping for a diamond shortness in partner's hand. After the diamond lead it may still not be too late to score partner's hypothetical ♥K. After the heart lead, by contrast, we may as well forget about the diamond ruff.

♦x – 10 ♥x – 7

38)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 9 6 2	—	—	1 ♠	pass
♥ J 10 9	2 ♠	dbl	pass	4 ♣
♦ 6 5 4 2	pass	5 ♣	pass...	
♣ 8 6				

	♠ 6	
	♥ A K 7 2	
	♦ K J 9 7	
	♣ K 9 5 3	
♠ K 9 4 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">N</div> <div style="text-align: center;">E</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">W</div> <div style="text-align: center;">S</div> </div> </div>	♠ A Q J 8 5
♥ J 10 9		♥ 8 6 4 3
♦ 6 5 4 2		♦ A Q 3
♣ 8 6		♣ 7
	♠ 10 7 3	
	♥ Q 5	
	♦ 10 8	
	♣ A Q J 10 4 2	

Bidding analysis: we must cash three tricks in a hurry, since some discards are imminent (diamonds on hearts or the other way round).

Do we need to guess which red suit to lead?

Not necessarily. Instead, we should try to hold on to the first trick and, upon examining dummy and partner's signal, choose the best continuation.

♠K - 10 ♥J, ♦x - 5 ♣2 - 1

39)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 4 2	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ J 4	pass	1 ♥	pass	1 NT
♦ Q J 8 7	pass	2 NT	pass	3 NT
♣ 9 7 4	pass...			
	♠ A 10 9 6 ♥ Q 8 7 2 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q 6 2			
♠ Q J 4 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ 8 5 3	
♥ J 4			♥ K 10 6 3	
♦ Q J 8 7			♦ 9 5	
♣ 9 7 4			♣ K W 8 3	
	♠ K 7 ♥ A 9 5 ♦ K 10 6 3 2 ♣ A 10 5			

Bidding analysis: declarer of this optimistic game will encounter unfavorable breaks and honors offside. As a matter of fact, the opponents should have got doubled.

On the other hand, double would warn against bad breaks and honors distribution. From this point of view, double would be somewhat risky.

Let's just let them lose. The best way to do it is to lead passively.

♣7 - 10 ♥x - 5 ♠x - 3

40)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 8 7 2	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ Q 9 7	pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
♦ 8 5 4 2	pass	6 ♠	pass...	
♣ K 9 8				

♠ 8 7 2	♠ A K 6
♥ Q 9 7	♥ A K J 10 4 2
♦ 8 5 4 2	♦ 7 6
♣ K 9 8	♣ 10 5

	N	♠ 5
W	E	♥ 8 5 3
S		♦ J 10 9
		♣ A J 7 6 4 3

♠ Q J 10 9 4 3
♥ 6
♦ A K Q 3
♣ Q 2

Bidding analysis: North holds six good hearts and strong trump support. Declarer will ruff heart, draw trumps and discard losers on heart. The conclusion: the lead must be aggressive. The ♣8 may mislead partner, especially if declarer drops the queen in Trick 1. From East's perspective club switch may be justified. The principle of helping one's partner whenever possible is no less valid when it comes to the opening lead.

♣K - 10 ♣8 - 5 ♦x - 2

PROBLEMS 41-50

41)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K Q 8 7 2	—	—	—	2 NT
♥ 8 7 6	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 ♦*
♦ 6 5 4	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♣ 9 8	* - no majors			

42)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 4	—	1 ♣*	pass	1 NT
♥ Q 5 3	pass	2 ♣**	pass	2 ♥
♦ 4 3 2	pass	2 ♠**	pass	3 ♥***
♣ A Q 9 3 2	pass	3 NT	pass...	

* - +17 HCP; ** - waiting;
*** - 8-10 HCP, 3-4-3-3

43)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q J 4 3	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ 6 4	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♦ 7 5 3				
♣ 8 6 5				

44)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 7 6 5	—	1 ♦	1 ♥	1 NT
♥ Q 8	pass...			
♦ Q 9 6 2				
♣ K 6 5 4				

45)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 8 7 4	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A 6 5	pass	2 ♦	pass	3 ♣
♦ 7 6 4	pass	4 ♠	pass	5 ♣
♣ J 10 9 8	pass	5 ♦	pass	5 ♠
	pass...			

46)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A K 10 4 2	1 ♠	2 NT*	pass	3 ♥
♥ A 6	pass	4 ♥	pass...	
♦ 7 4 3 2				
♣ Q 6				

* - minors +5-5

47)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 7 4 2	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ K J 10 5	pass	3 ♣*	pass	5 ♦
♦ 7 5 3	pass...			
♣ 4 2				

* - invitation 5-5 minors

48)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 6	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A 7 3 2	pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♥
♦ Q 10 3 2	pass	2 ♠*	pass	3 ♥
♣ 6 5 4 2	pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♠
	pass...			

* - game forcing with support

49)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 8 7 6 5	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ 9 6 5		1 ♥	pass	1 NT
♦ 10 4 2	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♣ J 5				

50)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 8 3	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ K 9 6	pass	2 ♦	pass	2 ♠
♦ 9 8 4	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 ♠
♣ 10 4 3	pass	3 NT	pass	4 ♠
	pass...			

ANSWERS 41-50

41)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K Q 8 7 2	—	—	—	2 NT
♥ 8 7 6	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 ♦*
♦ 6 5 4	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♣ 9 8	* - no majors			

♠ J 6

♥ 10 9 4 2

♦ K J 3 2

♣ K 6 5

♠ 10 9 5 4

♥ A J 3

♦ 9 7

♣ J 10 7 3

♠ K Q 8 7 2	<div><div>N</div><div>W E</div><div>S</div></div>	♠ 10 9 5 4
♥ 8 7 6		♥ A J 3
♦ 6 5 4		♦ 9 7
♣ 9 8		♣ J 10 7 3

♠ A 3

♥ K Q 5

♦ A Q 10 8

♣ A Q 4 2

The breaks and distribution of honors all work well for declarer. All partners' honors are under South's strong hand. The opening lead, therefore, ought to be active.

The spade lead was uncontroversial, but a heated debate evolved around the choice of the card. Vast majority of the tested players opted for a small spade. In my opinion, the king is worth considering.

We have no entry outside of spades. By leading low, we commit ourselves to ace-doubleton in partner's hand and 3-3 spade split among the opponents. Starting with the king will be effective in a layout such as the above.

Theory recommends leading low in such situations. However, the problem has to be considered in the appropriate context. We will never defeat the contract without spade tricks. If we needed all five tricks from this suit, leading low would indeed be the only chance. It may, however, be sufficient to get just four spades. Leading the king

offers the best chance to achieve it. We are hoping for partner to have a quick entry elsewhere.

♠K – 10 ♠x – 7

42)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 4	—	1 ♣*	pass	1 NT
♥ Q 5 3	pass	2 ♣**	pass	2 ♥
♦ 4 3 2	pass	2 ♠**	pass	3 ♥***
♣ A Q 9 3 2	pass	3 NT	pass...	

* – +17 HCP; ** – waiting;

*** – 8-10 HCP, 3-4-3-3

♠ K Q J 6
 ♥ A 10 9
 ♦ A K 10 9
 ♣ J 5

♠ A 4
 ♥ Q 5 3
 ♦ 4 3 2
 ♣ A Q 9 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9 8 5 2
 ♥ 6 4 2
 ♦ Q 8 7
 ♣ 10 7 3

♠ 10 7 3
 ♥ K J 8 7
 ♦ J 6 5
 ♣ K 8 7

Bidding analysis: we can't really count on partner's support in the struggle against declarer.

The suit of the opening lead is beyond dispute, but the choice of the card is not so obvious. Small club wouldn't work in the above layout. Queen, in turn, would fail if we swapped the king for the jack. The answer to most of these concerns is leading the ace. After examining dummy we will be in a position to choose the proper continuation.

♣A – 10 ♣x – 5 ♣Q – 3

Why does the queen receive lower score than small? Because in the following layout:

♣ H x
 ♣ A Q 9 3 2 ♣ x x x
 ♣ H 10 x

leading the queen would provide declarer with two club tricks.

43)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q J 4 3	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ 6 4	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♦ 7 5 3				
♣ 8 6 5				

♠ 6 2		
♥ Q 10 9		
♦ K 10 9		
♣ K J 10 9 3		

♠ A Q J 4 3	<table border="1"> <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>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 9
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 6 4		♥ K J 5 3 2									
♦ 7 5 3		♦ A 8 4 2									
♣ 8 6 5		♣ 7 4									

♠ K 8 7 5
♥ A 8 7
♦ Q J 6
♣ A Q 2

We are facing the very same problem: choosing the right card. Taking into consideration that partner must have an entry if we are to succeed, the theoretically correct lead is a small spade.

It caters for the following cases:

1. King-doubleton in dummy, four spades with South.
2. King-fourth in declarer's, doubleton ten in partner's hand.
3. Declarer's king-third; it'll be led through anyway.

It will lose if:

Dummy has ♠K10x or declarer has doubleton ten. In these cases the winning lead was the queen.

♠x - 10 ♠Q - 6

44)

Vul 1/2

♠ 7 6 5

♥ Q 8

♦ Q 9 6 2

♣ K 6 5 4

W

N

E

S

—

1 ♦

1 ♥

1 NT

pass...

♠ A J 9 3

♥ 6 5 4

♦ A K 8 7

♣ 10 8

♠ 7 6 5

♥ Q 8

♦ Q 9 6 2

♣ K 6 5 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 10 2

♥ A J 9 3 2

♦ 10 4

♣ A J 3

♠ K 8 4

♥ K 10 7

♦ J 5 3

♣ Q 9 7 2

Numerous among the tested players elected the ♥8. At the table, East ducked (**EW** played natural leads), signaling with the encouraging two. West's brilliant coup ended up like many a bright idea before it.

The reason why many players chose the ♥8 was, I believe, that they were given the hand as a problem. At once they pictured declarer holding ♥KJx and themselves applauded by the delighted audience. The reality is usually more prosaic than that.

♥Q - 10 ♠x - 6 ♣4 - 5 ♥x - 2

Vul 1/1			
♠ 8 7 4	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A 6 5	pass	2 ♦	3 ♣
♦ 7 6 4	pass	4 ♠	5 ♣
♣ J 10 9 8	pass	5 ♦	5 ♠
	pass...		
	♠ Q 10 9 3		
	♥ 9 7 4		
	♦ A K Q 9		
	♣ Q 5		
♠ 8 7 4		♠ 6	
♥ A 6 5		♥ K J 3 2	
♦ 7 6 4		♦ J 10 8 5 3 2	
♣ J 10 9 8		♣ 6 3	
	♠ A K J 5 2		
	♥ Q 10 8		
	♦ —		
	♣ A K 7 4 2		

Bidding analysis: opponents' sequence laid bare their weakness in hearts. This much should be obvious, also for our partner. We again face the question of choosing the right card. Leading low is better in that it provides additional chances. When **East** wins the king and returns a small heart, declarer will have to guess who of us is the clever one.

♥x - 10 ♥A - 5

46)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A K 10 4 2	1 ♠	2 NT*	pass	3 ♥
♥ A 6	pass	4 ♥	pass...	
♦ 7 4 3 2				
♣ Q 6	* - minors +5-5			
	♠ 6			
	♥ 8 2			
	♦ A K J 10 5			
	♣ K 9 5 3 2			
♠ A K 10 4 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>			
♥ A 6				
♦ 7 4 3 2				
♣ Q 6				
	♠ Q 8 7 5			
	♥ 5 4 3			
	♦ 8 6			
	♣ 10 8 7 4			
	♠ J 9 3			
	♥ K Q J 10 9 8			
	♦ Q 9			
	♣ A J			

Are you already among those in the know? Well, then listen anyway. I want to show this trick to those who have never heard about it.

Bidding analysis: dummy will hit with two hearts and a singleton spade. Declarer will attempt either to ruff a spade in dummy or to draw trumps and throw losers on one of the minor suit winners. We must counter both these variations. By leading the ♥6 we will shorten dummy's trump holding, without losing control over the trump suit.

♥6 - 10 ♥A - 4 ♠A - 2

47)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 7 4 2	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ K J 10 5	pass	3 ♣*	pass	5 ♦
♦ 7 5 3	pass...			
♣ 4 2	* – invitation 5-5 minors			
	♠ 9			
	♥ 8 3			
	♦ K 10 9 8 6			
	♣ A J 9 8 3			
♠ 10 7 4 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ Q 8 7 5	
♥ K J 10 5			♥ A Q 7 6 4	
♦ 7 5 3			♦ J	
♣ 4 2			♣ K 7 5	
	♠ A K J 3			
	♥ 9 2			
	♦ A Q 4 2			
	♣ Q 10 6			

Bidding analysis: declarer lacks stopper in one of the major suits. Our own hand tells us this suit is hearts. Again it all boils down to choosing the right card.

1. ♥K – we are making things easier for partner, although sometimes we will come across the following layout of hearts:

	♥ 8 4 3	
♥ K J 10 5		♥ A 7 6
	♥ Q 9 2	

We will have to bear ironic comments from spectators.

2. ♥J – the problem is we may mislead partner if we also normally lead the jack from J-10-x;
3. ♥10 – again, if we lead the ten from 10-9-x, partner may switch to spades;
4. ♥5 – will not work if we find dummy with:

♥ Q 8 4
♥ K J 10 5 ♥ A 3 2
♥ 9 7 6

Any competent East shouldn't find it difficult to continue hearts after virtually any lead. Basing on the auction, he should expect us to underlead an honour.

♥J, ♥10 – 10 (with competent partner)
♥K – 10 (with not-so-good partner)
♥5 – 6

48)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 6	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A 7 3 2	pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♥
♦ Q 10 3 2	pass	2 ♠*	pass	3 ♥
♣ 6 5 4 2	pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♠

pass...

* – game forcing with support

♠ 6	♠ Q 4 2	♠ 9 8 7 5
♥ A 7 3 2	♥ 8 4	♥ 10 6
♦ Q 10 3 2	♦ K 8 6 5	♦ A J 9 4
♣ 6 5 4 2	♣ A K J 9	♣ Q 8 3
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ A K J 10 3	
	♥ K Q J 9 5	
	♦ 7	
	♣ 10 7	

Bidding analysis: South has shown 5+ hearts and 5 spades.

The potentially unfavourable spade break points to the forcing defence. To this end we must use diamonds. The question of the right card arises once again.

1. ♦x – will be successful if South holds a diamond honour;
2. ♦Q – will be successful if there's a diamond honour in dummy which has to be led through.

♦Q – 10 ♦x – 7 (note that holding a diamond honour South might have offered to play in 3NT after 3♠).

50)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 8 3	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ K 9 6	pass	2 ♦	pass	2 ♠
♦ 9 8 4	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 ♠
♣ 10 4 3	pass	3 NT	pass	4 ♠
	pass...			
	♠ 9			
	♥ Q 8			
	♦ A K J 7 6			
	♣ A Q J 9 6			
♠ Q J 8 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">N</div> <div style="text-align: center;">E</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">W</div> <div style="text-align: center;">S</div> </div> </div>		♠ 3	
♥ K 9 6			♥ A J 7 5 4 2	
♦ 9 8 4			♦ 5 3 2	
♣ 10 4 3			♣ 8 7 5	
	♠ A K 10 7 6 5 4			
	♥ 10 3			
	♦ Q 10			
	♣ K 2			

Bidding analysis: North's bidding indicates A two-suited hand in diamonds and clubs. No good stopper in hearts. Could a diamond or club lead allow declarer to discard all his losers. Yes, it is possible. The auction seems to indicate a weakness in hearts.

♥x - 10 ♣,♦x - 3

PROBLEMS 51-60

51)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q 10 5 3 2	—	—	—	1 ♣
♥ A 9	2 ♠	3 ♦	pass	3 NT
♦ 6 3	pass...			
♣ 9 7 6				

52)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9	—	1 ♥	pass	2 ♠*
♥ Q 10 9 7 6 2	pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣
♦ J 7	pass	4 ♥	pass	6 ♠
♣ A 9 8 5	pass...			

* - 13+ HCP, 6+♠

53)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 6	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ J 8 4	pass	3 ♦	pass	3 ♠
♦ J 8 7 6 5 3	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♦
♣ 8 2	pass	5 ♠	pass	6 ♠
	pass...			

54)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 10 9 6	—	1 ♥	pass	1 ♠
♥ Q 5	pass	2 ♠	pass	2 NT*
♦ A 10 8 6 5 4	pass	3 ♠**	pass...	
♣ J				

* - waiting; ** - 4-5-2-2, minimum

55)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 6 5 4	—	—	3 ♣	4 ♣*
♥ 6 4 3 2	5 ♣	pass	pass	5 ♥
♦ Q J	pass...			
♣ A 7 6	* - any strong two-suiter			

56)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 6 5	—	—	—	1 ♥
♥ 7 5 4	pass	1 ♠	pass	2 NT
♦ K 9 6 5	pass	3 ♥	pass	3 ♠
♣ A J 10 2	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♦
	pass	6 ♥	pass...	

57)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 10 2	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ Q 10 9 8 6	pass	6 NT	pass...	
♦ —				
♣ 10 8 7 4 2				

58)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q J 10	—	1 ♦	pass	1 ♥
♥ 10 8 4 2	1 ♠	2 ♦	pass	2 ♠
♦ 6 5	pass	3 ♦	pass	4 ♥
♣ J 10 9	pass...			

59)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 7	1 ♦	pass	2 ♣	2 ♠
♥ K Q 4	3 ♣	3 ♠	dbl	pass...
♦ A K 3 2				
♣ 8 6 5 2				

60)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 7	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A 9 5 4 3	pass	2 ♣	2 ♦	3 ♣
♦ 10 6 4	pass	4 ♦*	pass	4 ♥
♣ 10 7 3 2	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♥
	pass	6 ♠	pass...	

* – splinter

ANSWERS 51-60

51)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q 10 5 3 2	—	—	—	1 ♣
♥ A 9	2 ♠	3 ♦	pass	3 NT
♦ 6 3	pass...			
♣ 9 7 6				

Sabine Auken set off with the ♠A and the defence promptly cashed 6 tricks. This was the full deal:

	♠ J 4	
	♥ Q J 8	
	♦ A K Q 10 2	
	♣ 8 5 3	
♠ A Q 10 5 3 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ 7 6
♥ A 9		♥ 7 6 5 3
♦ 6 3		♦ 9 8 4
♣ 9 7 6		♣ K J 10 2
	♠ K 9 8	
	♥ K 10 4 2	
	♦ J 7 5	
	♣ A Q 4	

Mahmood Zia led a small spade. It turned out to be a good decision. On getting in with the king of diamonds, partner led a spade through declarer.

The full deal:

	♠ J 4										
	♥ Q J 8										
	♦ A Q 10 4 2										
	♣ K J 5										
♠ A Q 10 5 3 2	<table border="1"><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>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 9		♥ 7 6 5 3									
♦ 6 3		♦ K 9 8									
♣ 9 7 6		♣ 10 8 3 2									
	♠ K 9 8										
	♥ K 10 4 2										
	♦ J 7 5										
	♣ A Q 4										

Gabriel Chagas chose the heart ace, following up with another heart. The result – three down.

This is the layout:

	♠ 9 4										
	♥ J 8 4										
	♦ A K 10 4 2										
	♣ K J 5										
♠ A Q 10 5 3 2	<table border="1"><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>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 9		♥ Q 10 6 5 3									
♦ 6 3		♦ Q 9 8									
♣ 9 7 6		♣ 10 8 3 2									
	♠ K J 8 6										
	♥ K 7 2										
	♦ J 7 5										
	♣ A Q 4										

Bobby Wolf led diamonds and his partner switched to spades, setting the contract three tricks.

52)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9	—	1 ♥	pass	2 ♠*
♥ Q 10 9 7 6 2	pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣
♦ J 7	pass	4 ♥	pass	6 ♠
♣ A 9 8 5	pass...			

* - 13+ HCP, 6+♠

♠ Q J 2
 ♥ A K J 4 3
 ♦ Q 4 3
 ♣ 6 4

♠ 9
 ♥ Q 10 9 7 6 2
 ♦ J 7
 ♣ A 9 8 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 6 5
 ♥ 8 5
 ♦ K 9 6 5
 ♣ Q 7 3 2

♠ A K J 10 8 3
 ♥ —
 ♦ A 10 8 2
 ♣ K J 10

Bidding analysis: it may be inferred from South's failure to use Blackwood that he is void in hearts (we can draw the same conclusion from our own hand and lack of Lightner's double from partner).

Declarer's twelve tricks will probably have to come from all four suits. This suggests passive lead. Unfortunately, none of the leads is truly passive.

1. ♠9 - may help declarer finding partner's ♠Qxx.
2. ♥x - declarer may take a risk-free finesse.
3. ♦J - may solve all of declarer's problems in the suit.
4. ♣A - may establish opponent's honors.

Frankly, it was unclear to me what the proper score for this one should be.

♠9 - 10 ♣A - 7 ♥x - 6 ♦J - 3

53)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 6	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ J 8 4	pass	3 ♦	pass	3 ♠
♦ J 8 7 6 5 3	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♦
♣ 8 2	pass	5 ♠	pass	6 ♠
	pass...			
	♠ K 9 4			
	♥ 6			
	♦ A K Q 10 9 4			
	♣ K 6 5			
♠ A 6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 7		
♥ J 8 4		♥ 10 9 7 5 3 2		
♦ J 8 7 6 5 3		♦ 2		
♣ 8 2		♣ A 9 7 4 3		
	♠ Q J 10 8 5 3 2			
	♥ A K Q			
	♦ —			
	♣ Q J 10			

Bidding analysis: poor bridge. We may suspect two aces are missing. The opener probably bid slam because of void in diamonds and general positive impression of his hand, which, I think, attests to his incompetence.

The majority of my “students” cashed the ♠A to have a look at dummy.

They saw what was easy to imagine anyway.

They ended up guessing which ace partner holds. But there was no danger of discards, given that partner held one crucial trump. So there was enough time to try hearts first and then, after getting in with the trump ace, switch to clubs. By leading the ♠A we lost control over the play.

♥x - 10 ♣x - 10 ♠A - 5 ♦x - 1

54)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 10 9 6		1 ♥	pass	1 ♠
♥ Q 5	pass	2 ♠	pass	2 NT*
♦ A 10 8 6 5 4	pass	3 ♠**	pass...	
♣ J	* - waiting; ** - 4-5-2-2, minimum			

♠ A 5 4 3
 ♥ A K 7 6 4
 ♦ 9 3
 ♣ 6 5

♠ K 10 9 6
 ♥ Q 5
 ♦ A 10 8 6 5 4
 ♣ J

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7
 ♥ 10 9 8 3
 ♦ J 2
 ♣ A Q 8 7 4 2

♠ Q J 8 2
 ♥ J 2
 ♦ K Q 7
 ♣ K 10 9 3

Poor breaks call for a passive lead, according to the golden rule of: "let declarer lose".

We should choose between hearts and clubs. Neither of these leads is, however, entirely passive.

♥5 - 10 ♥Q - 8 ♣J - 8 ♦A - 5

55)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 6 5 4	—	—	3 ♣	4 ♣*
♥ 6 4 3 2	5 ♣	pass	pass	5 ♥
♦ Q J	pass...			
♣ A 7 6	* - any strong two-suiter			
	♠ 8 3			
	♥ 10 5			
	♦ 10 9 6 5 4 3			
	♣ Q 8 5			
♠ A 6 5 4	<div> <div>N</div> <div>W E</div> <div>S</div> </div>		♠ 9 7	
♥ 6 4 3 2			♥ 9	
♦ Q J			♦ A 8 2	
♣ A 7 6			♣ K J 10 9 4 3 2	
	♠ K Q J 10 2			
	♥ A K Q J 8 7			
	♦ K 7			
	♣ —			

Bidding analysis: declarer announced hearts and spades. Due to possession of merely one spade stopper it doesn't make sense to lead trumps. Spade ruff is unlikely, too. For the forcing defense to succeed, partner must have one trick himself. Now assuming he holds the ♦A, he can't possibly have ♣K-Q-J.

As a consequence, some club honor will appear in dummy.

♣x – 12 ♣A – 6 ♦Q – 4 ♠A – 2 ♥x – 1

Leading the ♣A would let the contract make provided declarer started the play from diamonds. To give himself a chance he must play East for the ace of diamonds. If so, it is correct from his perspective to cross to dummy via trumps and play a diamond as a protection against getting fatally forced by the defence.

56)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 6 5	—	—	—	1 ♥
♥ 7 5 4	pass	1 ♠	pass	2 NT
♦ K 9 6 5	pass	3 ♥	pass	3 ♠
♣ A J 10 2	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♦
	pass	6 ♥	pass...	
	♠ A J 9 8 7			
	♥ Q J 8			
	♦ Q J			
	♣ Q 8 5			
♠ 6 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">N</div> <div style="text-align: center;">E</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">W</div> <div style="text-align: center;">S</div> </div> </div>			
♥ 7 5 4				
♦ K 9 6 5				
♣ A J 6 2				
	♠ Q 10 4 2			
	♥ 6			
	♦ 10 8 4 3 2			
	♣ 10 4 3			
	♠ K 3			
	♥ A K 10 9 3 2			
	♦ A 7			
	♣ K 9 7			

Bidding analysis: we can't count on partner. There is little we can do. If the twelve tricks are there, declarer will duly get them. Let's just not help him. Passive lead is advisable.

♥x - 10 ♠x - 5 ♦x - 3 ♣A - 1

57)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 10 2	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ Q 10 9 8 6	pass	6 NT	pass...	
♦ —				
♣ 10 8 7 4 2				

♠ Q 9 7		
♥ A 7 4		
♦ A Q J 6 5		
♣ A 5		

♠ J 10 2		♠ K 8 6
♥ Q 10 9 8 6		♥ 5 2
♦ —		♦ 10 9 8 4 3 2
♣ 10 8 7 4 2		♣ J 3

♠ A 5 4 3	
♥ K J 3	
♦ K 7	
♣ K Q 9 6	

The auction has not revealed much. If diamonds were supposed to be the source of tricks, poor break of this suit may complicate things for declarer.

It is not entirely obvious that a passive lead should be the solution. The club lead is, doubtless, the most passive, while the heart lead – the most aggressive.

♣x – 10 ♥10 – 7 ♠J – 6

Vul 1/2			
♠ A Q J 10	—	1 ♦	pass
♥ 10 8 4 2	1 ♠	2 ♦	pass
♦ 6 5	pass	3 ♦	pass
♣ J 10 9	pass...		
	♠ 9 7 4 2		
	♥ 7 5		
	♦ A K Q J 3 2		
	♣ K		
♠ A Q J 10		♠ K 6	
♥ 10 8 4 2		♥ 9 6	
♦ 6 5		♦ 10 9 7	
♣ J 10 9		♣ 8 7 5 4 3 2	
	♠ 8 5 3		
	♥ A K Q J 3		
	♦ 8 4		
	♣ A Q 7		

♠Q - 10 ♠A - 5 ♣J - 3

Leading the ace of spades requires partner to unblock the king.

59)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 7	1 ♦	pass	2 ♣	2 ♠
♥ K Q 4	3 ♣	3 ♠	dbl	pass...
♦ A K 3 2				
♣ 8 6 5 2				

	♠ 9 8 6 4										
	♥ J 8 6 2										
	♦ Q 10 6 4										
	♣ J										
♠ J 7	<table border="1"> <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>		N		W		E		S		♠ 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K Q 4		♥ A 9 7									
♦ A K 3 2		♦ 9 8									
♣ 8 6 5 2		♣ A K Q 10 9 3									
	♠ A K Q 10 5										
	♥ 10 5 3										
	♦ J 7 5										
	♣ 7 4										

While choosing the opening lead, let's talk about bidding. What does East's double mean?

It shows a positive deviation in strength and performs the function of a waiting call with various possible meanings. The message is: "I need more information".

With spade stopper we can bid 3NT.

With spade shortness – 4♠.

With a better hand – cue-bid.

In view of this, pass is a dangerous decision.

Dummy will display a weak hand with four-card support and club shortness. The standard trump lead gains nothing. On the contrary, it runs the risk of losing a trick if partner can ruff a diamond.

♦A – 10 ♣6 – 5 ♠J, ♠7 – 4 ♥K – 1

60)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 7	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A 9 5 4 3	pass	2 ♣	2 ♦	3 ♣
♦ 10 6 4	pass	4 ♦*	pass	4 ♥
♣ 10 7 3 2	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♥
	pass	6 ♠	pass...	

*- Splinter

	♠ A Q 6 4	
	♥ Q J 6 2	
	♦ 5	
	♣ A Q 9 6	
♠ 7		♠ 10 9 2
♥ A 9 5 4 3		♥ K 10 7
♦ 10 6 4		♦ K Q J 9 8 7
♣ 10 7 3 2		♣ 5
	♠ K J 8 5 3	
	♥ 8	
	♦ A 3 2	
	♣ K J 8 4	

Bidding analysis: declarer's expected hand is 5♠-1♥-3♦-4♣. Why?

It follows from adding up to thirteen (diamonds).

We must predict the play. Two diamond ruffs in dummy will be necessary and some communication problems may arise.

The trump lead does not destroy the communication between declarer and dummy. The real killer is the club lead – provided, that is, that our partner's spades will prevent easy communication in the trump suit.

♣x – 10 ♠7 – 5 ♥A – 4 ♦x – 3

PROBLEMS 61-70

61)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A 10 9	—	—	—	6 ♦
♥ Q J 4 3	pass...			
♦ K 9 4				
♣ 7 3 2				

62)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q 8 6	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ 7	pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♥
♦ Q 8 7 6	pass	3 ♥	pass	4 ♥
♣ K 9 6 5	pass...			

63)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 10 9	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 9 8 7	pass	3 ♦*	pass	3 NT
♦ J 10 9 4 2	pass...			
♣ A 2				

* – natural, non-forcing

64)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 10 4	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ 9 8 7	2 ♣	pass	pass	dbl
♦ 6	pass	pass	2 ♠	pass
♣ A K J 9 6 4	3 ♠	4 ♠	pass	5 ♣
	pass	6 ♦	pass...	

65)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 9 7 3 2	—	1 ♣	pass	1 ♥
♥ Q 6	pass	1 NT	pass	2 ♥
♦ Q 7 5 3	pass	3 ♥	pass	4 ♥
♣ K 5	pass...			

66)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 9 4	—	1 ♦	pass	1 ♠
♥ 8 6 4	pass	2 ♥	pass	4 ♠
♦ 3	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♦*
♣ K J 7 6 5 2	pass	6 ♠	pass...	

* – one key card (out of five)

67)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K J 10 9 6 5 4	—	—	—	1 ♥
♥ 10 9	3 ♠	6 ♥	dbl	pass...
♦ 9 6				
♣ 9 2				

68)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 8 5	—	—	1 ♠	4 ♥
♥ J 7 4 3	4 ♠	pass	pass	5 ♣
♦ A 2	dbl	5 ♥	pass	pass
♣ Q J 9 6	dbl	pass...		

69)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 5	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ J 9 7 3	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♦ 8 7 6 5 4 2				
♣ 9				

70)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 9 8 3	—	1 ♣	pass	1 ♥
♥ K 10	pass	1 NT	pass	2 ♦*
♦ A 6	pass	2 ♥	pass	4 ♥
♣ J 9 8 6 2	pass			

* – waiting bid, game forcing

ANSWERS 61-70

61)

Vul 1/1

♠ A 10 9

♥ Q J 4 3

♦ K 9 4

♣ 7 3 2

W	N	E	S
—	—	—	6 ♦
pass...			

♠ Q J 8 6 4 2

♥ 10 9 6 2

♦ 8

♣ 6 5

♠ A 10 9

♥ Q J 4 3

♦ K 9 4

♣ 7 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 7 5 3

♥ 8 7 5

♦ 6 5

♣ J 9 8 4

♠ —

♥ A K

♦ A Q J 10 7 3 2

♣ A K Q 10

It's a "goulash" deal and, accordingly, we should apply "goulash", rather than bridge, logic here. Every experienced adept of this game knows to lead trumps in such situation, the highest affordable card. The rationale behind this is to prevent declarer from scoring a trick in dummy.

♦ 9 - 10 ♦ 4 - 8 ♠ A - 3

Vul 2/2			
♠ A Q 8 6	W	N	E
♥ 7	—	—	—
♦ Q 8 7 6	pass	2 ♣	pass
♣ K 9 6 5	pass	3 ♥	pass
	pass...		
	♠ J 4 2		
	♥ Q 8 6 2		
	♦ 10 9		
	♣ A J 10 2		
♠ A Q 8 6			♠ 10 7 5 3
♥ 7			♥ J 10 5 4
♦ Q 8 7 6			♦ K 5 3
♣ K 9 6 5			♣ 8 7
	♠ K 9		
	♥ A K 9 3		
	♦ A J 4 2		
	♣ O 4 3		

♦x - 10 ♣x - 7 ♥x - 5 ♠A - 3

63)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 10 9	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 9 8 7	pass	3 ♦*	pass	3 NT
♦ J 10 9 4 2	pass...			
♣ A 2				

* – natural, 6+♦, 9-11 HCP

	♠ 4										
	♥ J 6 2										
	♦ A K 8 7 5 3										
	♣ J 9 8										
♠ J 10 9	<table border="1"><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>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 7 6 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9 8 7		♥ A Q 5 4									
♦ J 10 9 4 2		♦ —									
♣ A 2		♣ Q 10 7 6 5									
	♠ A K Q 5 2										
	♥ K 10 3										
	♦ Q 6										
	♣ K 4 3										

This time it is not difficult to find a passive lead. We can choose between spades and hearts.

It may pay to venture an aggressive lead though – the clubs. It is supported by a simple argument: partner is very likely to hold more clubs than hearts.

♣A – 10 ♥x – 8 ♠J – 6 ♦J – 3

64)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 10 4	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ 9 8 7	2 ♣	pass	pass	dbl
♦ 6	pass	pass	2 ♠	pass
♣ A K J 9 6 4	3 ♠	4 ♠	pass	5 ♣
	pass	6 ♦	pass...	
	♠ 2			
	♥ A K			
	♦ K Q 5 4			
	♣ Q 10 8 7 5 3			
♠ K 10 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ Q 9 7 6 5 3	
♥ 9 8 7			♥ J 10 5 4	
♦ 6			♦ 8 7 2	
♣ A K J 9 6 4			♣ —	
	♠ A J 8			
	♥ Q 6 3 2			
	♦ A J 10 9 3			
	♣ 2			

Bidding analysis: dummy holds four diamonds, plenty of clubs and short majors. Declarer's strategy will be based on cross-ruffing.

The conclusion: we lead trumps. Partner should ruff the club whenever it is played and lead another trump.

♦ 6 – 10 ♣ A – 4

65)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 9 7 3 2	—	1 ♣	pass	1 ♥
♥ Q 6	pass	1 NT	pass	2 ♥
♦ Q 7 5 3	pass	3 ♥	pass	4 ♥
♣ K 5	pass...			
	♠ A J			
	♥ A K 3			
	♦ 10 9 6 4			
	♣ Q 9 8 7			
♠ 10 9 7 3 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ Q 8 5 4	
♥ Q 6			♥ 8 4	
♦ Q 7 5 3			♦ K 2	
♣ K 5			♣ A J 6 4 2	
	♠ K 6			
	♥ J 10 9 7 5 2			
	♦ A J 8			
	♣ 10 3			

Bidding analysis: a light game.

Presumably favorable location of honors. Good breaks.

The conclusion: aggressive lead.

♣K - 10 ♦x - 7 ♠x - 4

66)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 9 4	—	1 ♦	pass	1 ♠
♥ 8 6 4	pass	2 ♥	pass	4 ♠
♦ 3	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♦*
♣ K J 7 6 5 2	pass	6 ♠	pass...	

* - one key card (out of five)

♠ A 8
 ♥ A K J 3
 ♦ A K J 10 5 4
 ♣ 9

♠ 10 9 4
 ♥ 8 6 4
 ♦ 3
 ♣ K J 7 6 5 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 3
 ♥ Q 10 9 7 5
 ♦ Q 7 6
 ♣ A Q 10 8

♠ K Q J 7 6 5 2
 ♥ 2
 ♦ 9 8 2
 ♣ 4 3

Bidding analysis: North has shown strong red two-suiter, likely with singleton club. Unfavourable split of diamonds gives defenders some hope. Leading singleton diamond is very tempting. It takes strong reasons to abandon such simple, self-evident solutions.

Singleton club in dummy encourages the trump lead. If we indeed choose this attack, we should lead the four to indicate club values to partner. Declarer will take the ace and lead a club. Now East must duck, so that we can win and lead trumps again. True, double-dummy declarer may still win on a crisscross squeeze against East, but these things happen in books only.

♦x - 10 ♠4 - 9 ♥x - 4 ♣x - 1

67)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ K J 10 9 6 5 4	—	—	—	1 ♥
♥ 10 9	3 ♠	6 ♥	dbl	pass...
♦ 9 6				
♣ 9 2				

♠ A 8 7
 ♥ A K J 3
 ♦ Q J 10 8 5 4
 ♣ —

♠ K J 10 9 6 5 4
 ♥ 10 9
 ♦ 9 6
 ♣ 9 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ —
 ♥ 7 4
 ♦ A 7 3
 ♣ K J 8 7 6 5 4 3

♠ Q 3 2
 ♥ Q 8 6 5 2
 ♦ K 2
 ♣ A Q 10

An extremely difficult problem. Why? It's against our routines. The double asks for unusual lead.

For the majority of players the standard lead is the spade lead. If this is indeed so, double requires us to lead one of the minor suits.

It is hard to deny, however, that in most cases double indicates the ability to ruff. Which suit can partner be ruffing?

Would spades be led without the double? Yes, provided the opening leader will deem it safe. Those same players, who considered spades the standard lead, in our particular case led one of the minors.

I side with the proponents of the "I double, therefore I ruff" interpretation.

As an additional argument, after a mad auction like this, ace-king in a minor suit does not guarantee any tricks, while the spade void does.

♠x - 10 ♣x, ♦x - 5

68)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 8 5	—	—	1 ♠	4 ♥
♥ J 7 4 3	4 ♠	dbl	pass	5 ♣
♦ A 2	dbl	5 ♥	pass	pass
♣ Q J 9 6	dbl	pass...		

♠ Q J 10 7	
♥ 10 8	
♦ K 10 9 7 6	
♣ 8 5	

♠ K 8 5		♠ A 9 6 4 3 2
♥ J 7 4 3		♥ —
♦ A 2		♦ Q J 8 4 3
♣ Q J 9 6		♣ K 9

♠ —	
♥ A K Q 9 6 5 2	
♦ 5	
♣ A 10 4 3 2	

Bidding analysis: South has a two-suited hand with distinctly longer hearts. Declarer's plan – ruffing clubs in dummy.

Our counter-plan – leading trumps.

Question marks – this may lead to losing a trump trick.

The conclusion – nevertheless, we lead trumps. We take three clubs and a diamond. Without the trump lead we only get a heart, a club and a diamond.

♥x – 10 ♠x – 5 ♦A – 4

69)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 5	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ J 9 7 3	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♦ 8 7 6 5 4 2				
♣ 9				

♠ J 3 2		
♥ A 6		
♦ K J 9		
♣ Q 8 5 4 2		

♠ 10 5		♠ Q 9 6 4
♥ J 9 7 3		♥ Q 5 4 2
♦ 8 7 6 5 4 2		♦ 10
♣ 9		♣ A K J 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 8 7
♥ K 10 8
♦ A Q 3
♣ 10 7 6

Bidding analysis: despite decent hand, partner was shut out of the bidding.

He only might have doubled to indicate good suit with a side entry.

Declarer's plan – to put together nine tricks.

Counter-plan – to choose the effective lead from among:

1. a "help-myself lead" – hearts;
2. a "help-my-partner lead" – spades.

Partner's failure to double is somewhat discouraging as far as the second possibility is concerned.

♥x – 10 ♠10 – 6

As it happened, we found partner with very similar values in hearts and spades. But while the heart lead beats the contract, the spade lead lets it make.

The majority of players chose the spade lead. In the long run this is, in my opinion, a misguided strategy.

70)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ A 9 8 3	—	1 ♣	pass	1 ♥
♥ K 10	pass	1 NT	pass	2 ♦*
♦ A 6	pass	2 ♥	pass	4 ♥
♣ J 9 8 6 2	pass			

* – waiting bid, game forcing

	♠ Q 7 4	
	♥ A 6 3	
	♦ K 10 9	
	♣ K 10 5 4	
♠ A 9 8 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ 6 5 2
♥ K 10		♥ J 8 2
♦ A 6		♦ J 8 7 5 3
♣ J 9 8 6 2		♣ Q 3
	♠ K J 10	
	♥ Q 9 7 5 4	
	♦ Q 4 3	
	♣ A 7	

Bidding analysis: partner is not going to be of much assistance.

Declarer's plan: unspecified.

Counter-plan: partner's weakness suggests a passive lead.

The choice is not easy. We run the risk of losing a trick virtually in each suit.

The ♣9 is the safest card. Partner should be aware that we sometimes treat J98 or Q98 as an interior sequence holding.

♣9 – 10 ♣x – 7 ♠x – 5 ♦A – 3

PROBLEMS 71-80

71)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q 5 2	—	—	—	3 NT*
♥ K Q 10	pass...			
♦ 3 2				
♣ Q 10 9 8	* - gambling			

72)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 4 3 2	—	—	1 ♥	1 ♠
♥ K	pass	3 ♠*	pass...	
♦ K 10 7 4 3				
♣ J 8 7 6	* - preemptive			

73)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ Q 9 6 5	—	—	—	2 NT
♥ —	pass	3 ♣*	pass	3 ♥
♦ K 10 7 5	pass	3 ♠	pass	3 NT
♣ Q 10 9 3 2	pass	6 NT	pass...	
* - standard Stayman				

74)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 5	—	1 ♠	pass	3 ♦
♥ K 10 8 2	pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣
♦ 7 6	pass	4 ♥	pass	4 NT
♣ Q J 10 8	pass	5 ♥	pass	5 NT*
	pass	6 ♦**	pass	7 ♦
	pass...			

* - asking about kings; ** - one king

75)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 3	—	—	—	1 ♣
♥ Q 8 5 3	pass	1 ♥	pass	1 NT
♦ 9 7 2	pass...			
♣ K 10 6 3				

76)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 4	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 10 9 6	pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
♦ K 9 6	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
♣ Q 9 7 6 2	pass...			

77)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 7 4	—	—	—	2 ♥*
♥ K 10 7 2	pass	2 NT**	pass	3 ♠
♦ Q 7 5 3	pass	4 ♠	pass...	
♣ Q J 10	* - weak; ** - +5♠, one-round forcing			

78)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A Q 9 8 6	—	—	—	1 ♦
♥ A 5 2	1 ♠	pass	2 ♠	3 NT
♦ 9 8	pass...			
♣ Q 3 2				

79)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 7 5	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ K Q 9 8	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♦ 7				
♣ K 10 8 6 3				

80)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 8	—	1 ♠	pass	2 ♥
♥ Q 7 5 4	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
♦ A Q 8 7	pass	4 ♥	pass...	
♣ Q J 10 9				

ANSWERS 71-80

71)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S									
♠ A Q 5 2	—	—	—	3 NT*									
♥ K Q 10	pass...												
♦ 3 2													
♣ Q 10 9 8	* – gambling												
	♠ 10 9 7 4												
	♥ A 6 3												
	♦ 8 4												
	♣ K J 5 4												
♠ A Q 5 2	<table><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>				N		W		E		S		♠ J 8 3
	N												
W		E											
	S												
♥ K Q 10				♥ 9 8 7 5 2									
♦ 3 2				♦ 9 7									
♣ Q 10 9 8				♣ A 6 3									
	♠ K 6												
	♥ J 4												
	♦ A K Q J 10 6 5												
	♣ 7 2												

Bidding analysis: declarer's solid diamond suit is a strong indicator of the need for active lead.

Declarer's plan - to collect nine tricks, basing on diamonds.

Counter-plan - to cash five tricks before declarer gets in.

Many players stick to a simple rule - against gambling 3NT.

"I lead the highest card I have".

Leading the spade ace allows us to examine dummy and leaves open the possibility of switching. But it may establish their ninth trick. The king of hearts lead is optimal unless declarer has nine quick tricks.

♥K - 10 ♠A - 9 ♣10 - 3

72)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 4 3 2	—	—	1 ♥	1 ♠
♥ K	pass	3 ♠*	pass...	
♦ K 10 7 4 3				
♣ J 8 7 6				
	* - preemptive			
	♠ J 9 8 7			
	♥ 8 6 3 2			
	♦ 2			
	♣ K 10 5 4			
♠ 4 3 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>			
♥ K				
♦ K 10 7 4 3				
♣ J 8 7 6				
	♠ Q			
	♥ Q J 9 7 5			
	♦ A J 8			
	♣ A Q 6 3			
	♠ A K 10 6 5			
	♥ A 10 2			
	♦ Q 9 6 5			
	♣ 9			

Bidding analysis: dummy holds a weak hand containing four trumps and probably a minor suit shortness.

Declarer's plan - ruffing in dummy.

Counter-plan - leading trumps.

The heart lead is, no doubt, attractive. It has, however, one serious flaw. Too often will it be at the cost of losing the vital tempo (entry) necessary for leading trumps.

♠x - 10 ♥K - 6 ♦x, ♣x - 3

73)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ Q 9 6 5	—	—	—	2 NT
♥ —	pass	3 ♣*	pass	3 ♥
♦ K 10 7 5	pass	3 ♠	pass	3 NT
♣ Q 10 9 3 2	pass	6 NT	pass...	

* – standard Stayman

♠ Q 9 6 5	♠ K 8 7 4	♠ 10 3 2
♥ —	♥ Q J 6	♥ 10 9 7 5 3 2
♦ K 10 7 5	♦ Q 9 6 2	♦ 8 4
♣ Q 10 9 3 2	♣ A 5	♣ J 4
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ A J	
	♥ A K 8 4	
	♦ A J 3	
	♣ K 8 7 6	

Bidding analysis: the opponents are going to encounter poor distribution.

Declarer's plan – to use all four suits as trick sources.

Counter-plan – leading as passively as possible.

Actually, none of the opening leads is passive. Which, then, is the least dangerous?

We should start with the ♣10. To avoid losing a trick, we only need to find partner with at least jack, or even to find jack with a higher honor in dummy.

In the other two suits, we would require more from partner. At least J10 in spades or queen in diamonds. I should, perhaps, offer a more sophisticated analysis, but the point I'm making is clear, I believe.

♣10, ♣9, ♣x – 10 ♠x – 7 ♦x – 4

74)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ Q J 5	—	1 ♠	pass	3 ♦
♥ K 10 8 2	pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣
♦ 7 6	pass	4 ♥	pass	4 NT
♣ Q J 10 8	pass	5 ♥	pass	5 NT*
	pass	6 ♦**	pass	7 ♦
	pass...			

* – asking about kings; ** – one king

♠ A K 7 4 3 2

♥ A 9 4

♦ 5 2

♣ 9 2

♠ Q J 5

♥ K 10 8 2

♦ 7 6

♣ Q J 10 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9 8

♥ J 7 6 5 3

♦ 4

♣ K 6 5 4 3

♠ 10 6

♥ Q

♦ A K Q J 10 9 8 3

♣ A 7

Bidding analysis: North will produce the heart ace and five or six spades. South holds seven or eight solid diamonds and the club ace.

Declarer's plan – to establish spades through the ruff and reach them with the ace of hearts.

Counter-plan – since spades divide well for the declarer, assault on communication is imperative. With the king, just in case.

♥K – 12 ♥x – 8 ♣Q – 5 ♦x – 5

76)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 4	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 10 9 6	pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
♦ K 9 6	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
♣ Q 9 7 6 2	pass...			
	♠ 2			
	♥ A J 7 4 2			
	♦ 8 4			
	♣ A K J 7 4			
♠ 9 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ K J 8 7 3	
♥ 10 9 6			♥ K Q 3	
♦ K 9 6			♦ J 7 5 2	
♣ Q 9 7 6 2			♣ 10	
	♠ A Q 10 6 5			
	♥ 8 5			
	♦ A Q 10 3			
	♣ 5 3			

Bidding analysis: it's hard to determine the distribution of suits and honours. They are average – some good, some bad.

Counter-plan – there are no clear hints.

The club lead turns out to be effective, because partner holds the key ten. Moreover, it spoils opponents' communication.

The heart lead, by contrast, fails, since the suit is a goldmine of tricks for declarer. It assists declarer, too, if we select diamonds.

In my evaluation I can't help, I suppose, being biased by the real lie of cards.

♣x – 10 ♥10, ♥9 – 8 (declarer may hold singleton) ♦x – 5

77)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 7 4	—	—	—	2 ♥*
♥ K 10 7 2	pass	2 NT**	pass	3 ♠
♦ Q 7 5 3	pass	4 ♠	pass...	
♣ Q J 10	* - weak; ** - +5♠, one-round forcing			

♠ A K Q 9 8

♥ 4

♦ K 10 8 4

♣ A 7 4

♠ 7 4

♥ K 10 7 2

♦ Q 7 5 3

♣ Q J 10

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 6 5

♥ Q 8

♦ A J 9 2

♣ 9 8 6 2

♠ J 3 2

♥ A J 9 6 5 3

♦ 6

♣ K 5 3

Bidding analysis: declarer has spade support and, presumably, shortness in one of the minors.

Declarer's plan - to develop hearts and ruff the minor in hand.

Counter-plan - it will be hard for him to establish hearts; as for ruffs, their number may be limited by the opening trump lead.

♠x - 10 ♣Q - 7 ♦x - 4

Vul 2/1				
♠ A Q 9 8 6	W	N	E	S
♥ A 5 2	—	—	—	1 ♦
♦ 9 8	1 ♠	pass	2 ♠	3 NT
♣ Q 3 2	pass...			

	♠ 5 4 2	
	♥ 10 9 6	
	♦ 5 3	
	♣ J 10 7 6 4	

♠ A Q 9 8 6		♠ J 10 7
♥ A 5 2		♥ Q J 8 4 3
♦ 9 8		♦ 4 2
♣ Q 3 2		♣ K 9 8

	♠ K 3
	♥ K 7
	♦ A K Q J 10 7 6
	♣ A 5

Declarer's plan - to get in and cash seven diamond tricks.

Counter-plan - to reach partner for a spade through or start passively and see what develops. The majority of the tested players chose the ace of hearts. This is a simple chance play, hoping for partner to have the ♥K or the ♣A and something good in spades.

The experts were divided into two camps:

1) It is relatively easy to imagine partner holding one of the club honours. If so, the best lead is the club lead, preferably the queen. Why? It is partner who needs to retain entry.

On the other hand, leading the queen may sow plenty of confusion in our ranks. For instance:

♣Kxx
♣Qxx
♣A109xx
♣Jx

It would be hardly surprising if East returned a club.

2) The alternative is the passive diamond lead, trusting that we will get the discards right.

♣Q - 10 ♦9 - 8 ♥A - 5 ♣x - 4

79)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 7 5	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ K Q 9 8	pass	3 NT	pass...	
♦ 7				
♣ K 10 8 6 3				

♠ Q 4		
♥ J 6 4		
♦ A J 5 3		
♣ Q 7 4 2		

♠ 9 7 5		♠ J 10 8 6 2
♥ K Q 9 8		♥ 5 2
♦ 7		♦ K Q 9 4 2
♣ K 10 8 6 3		♣ 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 3
♥ A 10 7 3
♦ 10 8 6
♣ A J 9

Bidding analysis: nasty breaks may complicate things for declarer. Dummy might, to be sure, hit with the diamond six-bagger, in which case the active lead – hearts or clubs – would be the only effective one.

Counter-plan – where the breaks and location of honors work poorly for declarer, theory recommends a passive opening lead; in this case this equals the spade lead.

♠x – 10 ♣x – 6 ♥K – 4

80)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 8	—	1 ♠	pass	2 ♥
♥ Q 7 5 4	pass	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
♦ A Q 8 7	pass	4 ♥	pass...	
♣ Q J 10 9				

♠ A K 5 4 2
 ♥ A 10 6
 ♦ 5
 ♣ A 7 6 4

♠ 8
 ♥ Q 7 5 4
 ♦ A Q 8 7
 ♣ Q J 10 9

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 10 9 7 6 3
 ♥ 8
 ♦ 10 9 4
 ♣ 8 5 3

♠ J
 ♥ K J 9 3 2
 ♦ K J 6 3 2
 ♣ K 2

Bidding analysis: North described his hand as containing three-card heart support and diamond shortness.

Declarer's plan - to ruff diamonds in dummy or to establish spades.

Counter-plan - we lead trumps, leaving it to partner to take care of spades.

Both club and spade leads are attractive, but on the above analysis we should decide in favor of leading trumps.

In this particular deal, the only opening lead that gives declarer hard time is indeed the heart lead. The spade lead, on the contrary, warns declarer against bad split of the suit.

♥x - 10 ♣Q - 6 ♠8 - 4

PROBLEMS 81-90

81)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K Q 9 4 3 2	—	1 ♦	1 ♥	1 ♠
♥ 9	pass	2 ♦	pass	3 NT
♦ 10 9 8	pass...			
♣ K 9 8				

82)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q 6	—	—	—	1 ♣
♥ 10 7 5	pass	pass	1 ♠	3 NT
♦ A 9 7 5 3 2	pass...			
♣ J 5				

83)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 6	1 ♥	1 NT	3 ♠	5 ♦
♥ Q 10 9 6 5	pass...			
♦ A 8				
♣ A J 8 5				

84)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 7	1 ♦	pass	pass	1 NT*
♥ K 9 8	pass	3 NT	dbl	pass...
♦ A J 10 6 5				
♣ A 8 5				

* - 11-14 HCP

85)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 9 8 4 3	—	—	—	2 ♣*
♥ A 10	pass	2 ♦**	pass	2 NT
♦ 10 9 8 7 5	pass	6 NT	pass...	
♣ 4 3				

* - game forcing; ** - waiting

86)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 6 4	—	—	2 ♦*	dbl
♥ A 9 5 3	2 ♠**	3 ♣	3 ♥	3 ♠***
♦ 7 4 3 2	pass	4 ♠	pass...	
♣ A 10 2	* - weak in ♥ or ♠; ** - good ♥ support, bad ♠ support; *** - +16 HCP, + 5♠			

87)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 5	—	—	—	2 ♠
♥ K Q J 10	dbl	4 ♠	dbl	pass...
♦ K 7 3 2				
♣ K J 10 8				

88)

Vul 2/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 9 8	—	1 ♥	pass	2 ♦
♥ J 10 8 7 6	pass	2 ♥	pass	3 NT
♦ 5 3	pass...			
♣ A 7 3				

89)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 3 2	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ K J 10 2	pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
♦ J 5	pass	3 ♣	pass	4 ♠
♣ Q 9 7 4	pass...			

90)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 3	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 8 6 4	pass	2 ♦	pass	2 ♠
♦ A J 10 3 2	pass	4 ♥*	pass	4 NT
♣ Q 10 9 3	pass	5 ♥	pass	6 ♠
	pass...			

* - splinter

ANSWERS 81-90

81)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K Q 9 4 3 2	—	1 ♦	1 ♥	1 ♠
♥ 9	pass	2 ♦	pass	3 NT
♦ 10 9 8	pass...			
♣ K 9 8				
		♠ 10 7		
		♥ Q 6 2		
		♦ A K Q J 5 2		
		♣ 6 5		
♠ K Q 9 4 3 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ 8	
♥ 9			♥ K J 10 8 5	
♦ 10 9 8			♦ 6 4 3	
♣ K 9 8			♣ A 10 3 2	
		♠ A J 6 5		
		♥ A 7 5 4		
		♦ 7		
		♣ Q J 7 4		

Bidding analysis: dummy holds six diamonds.

Partner entered the bidding with little strength, hence his suit should be good.

We may please partner and lead hearts.

The spade lead can be a killer, but only assuming the layout of our dreams: ace doubleton in partner's hand, singleton honour in dummy.

The diamond lead may force declarer to cash all six diamond tricks, thereby squeezing himself.

♥9 – 10 (the reason behind such a high mark is the appreciation of partner's effort and taking care of good relations within the partnership).

♦x – 9 ♠x – 4 ♣x – 3

83)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 6	1 ♥	1 NT	3 ♠	5 ♦
♥ Q 10 9 6 5	pass...			
♦ A 8				
♣ A J 8 5				
	♠ A 5 2			
	♥ A J 4 2			
	♦ J 3			
	♣ K Q 6 4			
♠ J 6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ K Q 10 9 8 7 4		
♥ Q 10 9 6 5		♥ 3		
♦ A 8		♦ 5 4		
♣ A J 8 5		♣ 10 9 2		
	♠ 3			
	♥ K 8 7			
	♦ K Q 10 9 7 6 2			
	♣ 7 3			

Bidding analysis: it is rather inconceivable that partner has a defensive trick. The only realistic possibility is a ruff – but in which suit? Leading the ace of clubs is an attempt to combine chances. Partner's signal should tell us whether he ruffs clubs or hearts, if any.

♣A – 10 ♥x – 5 ♠J – 3

84)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 7	1 ♦	pass	pass	1 NT*
♥ K 9 8	pass	3 NT	dbl	pass...
♦ A J 10 6 5				
♣ A 8 5	* - 11-14 HCP			
	♠ A 5 4 2			
	♥ Q 5 2			
	♦ K 9 3 2			
	♣ K 3			
♠ J 7	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>		♠ Q 10 8 3	
♥ K 9 8			♥ J 10 4 3	
♦ A J 10 6 5			♦ 4	
♣ A 8 5			♣ J 10 9 2	
	♠ K 9 6			
	♥ A 7 6			
	♦ Q 8 7			
	♣ Q 7 6 4			

Bidding analysis: partner risked double to keep us from leading diamonds.

We should choose between hearts and clubs.

♥x - 10 ♣x - 9 ♠J - 4 ♦x - 1

85)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S									
♠ 9 8 4 3	—	—	—	2 ♣*									
♥ A 10	pass	2 ♦**	pass	2 NT									
♦ 10 9 8 7 5	pass	6 NT	pass...										
♣ 4 3	* - game forcing; ** - waiting												
	♠ 5 4 ♥ 5 2 ♦ Q 3 2 ♣ K Q 10 9 8 6												
♠ 9 8 4 3	<table border="1"><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>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 2 ♥ K 8 7 6 4 3 ♦ 4 ♣ J 5 2		
		N											
W			E										
		S											
♥ A 10													
♦ 10 9 8 7 5													
♣ 4 3													
	♠ A K Q 6 ♥ Q J 9 ♦ A K J 6 ♣ A 7												

Bidding analysis: the raise to 6NT should be based on a decent, long minor suit. This suggests an attacking lead. It seems declarer has enough tricks to make the contract. Our task is to cash two tricks before they get their twelve.

Sometimes the raise to slam relies on strength rather than tricks. In this case the aggressive lead may help declarer.

Searching for clues to support our analysis, we formulate hypotheses, sometimes of dubious accuracy. It is important, however, to get the upper hand in the long run.

♥A - 10 other - 4

86)

Vul 1/2	W	N	E	S
♠ 6 4	—	—	2 ♦*	dbl
♥ A 9 5 3	2 ♠**	3 ♣	3 ♥	3 ♠***
♦ 7 4 3 2	pass	4 ♠	pass...	
♣ A 10 2	* - weak in ♥ or ♠; ** - good ♥ support, bad ♠ support; *** - +16 HCP, + 5♠			

♠ J 2
 ♥ 4 2
 ♦ Q J 10
 ♣ K J 9 6 5 3

♠ 6 4
 ♥ A 9 5 3
 ♦ 7 4 3 2
 ♣ A 10 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 9 5
 ♥ K Q J 10 8 7
 ♦ 9 6 5
 ♣ 8

♠ A K Q 8 7 3
 ♥ 6
 ♦ A K 8
 ♣ Q 7 4

Bidding analysis: Partner bid for the second time. He must have been influenced by the quality of his hearts.

A typical example of opening lead problem where we are looking for the one and only chance to beat the contract.

It is difficult to imagine anything other than the club shortness in partner's hand that would enable us to take four tricks.

♣A - 10 ♥A - 5

87)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 5	—	—	—	2 ♠
♥ K Q J 10	dbl	4 ♠	dbl	pass...
♦ K 7 3 2				
♣ K J 10 8				

♠ 5	♠ A J 4	♠ 10 7 3
♥ K Q J 10	♥ 9 8 5 4 3	♥ A 7 6
♦ K 7 3 2	♦ A 10 4 3	♦ Q J 6
♣ K J 10 8	♣ 5	♣ Q 6 3 2

♠ K Q 9 8 6 2
♥ 2
♦ 9 8
♣ A 9 7 4

Bidding analysis: partner has points, so the opponents have to rely mostly on trump tricks. Very rarely will it be necessary to cash four tricks right away.

The opening lead of a singleton trump, far from being a bridge disgrace, is a part of our counter-plan. We anticipate ruffs in dummy, so we lead trumps.

♠5 -10 ♥K - 3

Ironically, the lead of the ♥K costs the defence no less than two tricks.

88)

Vul 2/2

♠ 10 9 8

♥ J 10 8 7 6

♦ 5 3

♣ A 7 3

W	N	E	S
—	1 ♥	pass	2 ♦
pass	2 ♥	pass	3 NT
pass...			

♠ K 6 4

♥ A K 5 4 3

♦ 8 7 4

♣ J 10

♠ 10 9 8

♥ J 10 8 7 6

♦ 5 3

♣ A 7 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 7 5 3

♥ 9 2

♦ K Q

♣ Q 9 6 4 2

♠ A J 2

♥ Q

♦ A J 10 9 6 3

♣ K 8 7

Taking into consideration that any diamond honors partner may have lie favorably for declarer, we should opt for an aggressive lead.

Our choice is between clubs and spades. In such situations we should stick to the guiding principle of the least support required from partner. Undoubtedly, we need to find partner with much less in clubs to make this lead successful.

Let's not forget, too, that East failed to avail of the opportunity to overcall in spades on the one level.

♣x - 10 ♠x - 7 ♥J - 4

89)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 3 2	—	—	—	1 NT
♥ K J 10 2	pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
♦ J 5	pass	3 ♣	pass	4 ♠
♣ Q 9 7 4	pass...			
		♠ Q 10 9 7 5		
		♥ 6 3		
		♦ Q 10		
		♣ A 8 6 2		
♠ K 3 2				♠ J 4
♥ K J 10 2				♥ Q 9 8 7 5
♦ J 5				♦ K 9 7 2
♣ Q 9 7 4				♣ J 10
				♠ A 8 6
				♥ A 4
				♦ A 8 6 4 3
				♣ K 5 3

Considerable strength suggests a passive lead. Unfortunately, none is entirely passive. To my surprise, the majority of players chose the diamond lead. The danger of heart losers from dummy being discarded on diamonds outweighs, in my view, the risk connected with the heart lead.

As it was, partner had similar values in both red suits. But whereas the heart lead poses some difficulty for declarer, the jack of diamonds... oh well.

♥J, ♥10 - 10 ♠x - 7 ♦J - 4 ♣x - 3

90)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 3	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ 8 6 4	pass	2 ♦	pass	2 ♠
♦ A J 10 3 2	pass	4 ♥*	pass	4 NT
♣ Q 10 9 3	pass	5 ♥	pass	6 ♠

pass...

* – splinter

♠ A K J 10

♥ J

♦ K Q 9 6 4

♣ K 5 4

♠ 3

♥ 8 6 4

♦ A J 10 3 2

♣ Q 10 9 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 6 4

♥ Q 10 9 7 5 3 2

♦ 7

♣ 7 2

♠ Q 9 8 5 2

♥ A K

♦ 8 5

♣ A J 8 6

Bidding analysis: all of partner's points should be in hearts. Why didn't he double the Splinter? This is a good question. With:

♠ 7 6 4

♥ Q J 9 7 5 3

♦ 7 5

♣ 7 2

he should double 4♥ since he is not interested in any other lead. As a consequence, the lack of double points to a club honour or diamond shortness.

The former seems far less likely.

♦A – 10 ♣10 – 3 ♥x – 2

PROBLEMS 91-100

91)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 8 6 5 3 2	—	1 ♦	1 ♠	3 ♥*
♥ 5	4 ♠	dbl	pass	5 ♥
♦ 4	pass...			
♣ A Q 9 6 3 2	* – natural, game forcing			

92)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q 7 2	1 ♣	pass	1 ♠	3 NT
♥ K Q 2	pass...			
♦ 9 6 2				
♣ A Q 10 8				

93)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 6 5 2	—	—	1 ♦	1 ♠
♥ J 10	pass	4 ♠	4 NT*	dbl
♦ Q J 4 3	5 ♦	pass	pass	5 ♠
♣ 10 9 8	pass...			

* – diamond and other suit

94)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A K Q 10 6 5	1 ♠	pass	2 NT*	3 ♥
♥ —	4 ♥	5 ♥	pass**	pass
♦ A J 9	6 ♠	pass	pass	7 ♥
♣ Q 10 6 5	dbl	pass...		

* – invitation with support;

** – forcing pass

95)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 9 3	—	—	—	2 ♣*
♥ Q J 9 3	pass	2 ♦**	pass	2 ♠
♦ J 5	pass	4 ♣***	pass	7 ♠
♣ 10 9 8 2	pass...			

* – forcing game; ** – waiting;

*** – splinter

96)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 9	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A 10 2	pass	2 NT*	pass	3 NT
♦ 10 9 6 2	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♥
♣ K 7 5 2	pass	6 ♠	pass...	

* – game forcing with suport

97)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 9 5	—	1 ♥	1 ♠	dbl
♥ Q 6 3	2 ♠	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
♦ K 10 6 5 3	pass	pass	dbl	pass...
♣ 8 2				

98)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 7 3	—	—	1 ♠	2 ♥
♥ K 10 5 2	2 ♠	3 ♥	dbl*	pass...
♦ Q 6				
♣ Q J 6 3				

* – invitational

99)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 8	—	—	—	4 ♠
♥ K Q 9 6 4 2	4 NT*	5 ♠	dbl	pass...
♦ 5				
♣ K Q J 10 2				

* – any two suiter

100)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 8 7 2	—	—	—	1 ♣
♥ 9 8	pass	2 ♦	pass	2 ♥
♦ 8 7 3 2	pass	3 ♠*	dbl	4 NT
♣ K 10 5	pass	5 ♦	pass	6 ♥

pass...

* – splinter

ANSWERS 91-100

91)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S								
♠ 8 6 5 3 2	—	1 ♦	1 ♠	3 ♥*								
♥ 5	4 ♠	dbl	pass	5 ♥								
♦ 4	pass...											
♣ A Q 9 6 3 2	* - natural, game forcing											
	♠ A K 10											
	♥ 6											
	♦ K Q 9 6 5 3 2											
	♣ J 4											
♠ 8 6 5 3 2	<table><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>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 9 7 4	
		N										
W			E									
		S										
♥ 5	♥ A 8 2											
♦ 4	♦ J 7											
♣ A Q 9 6 3 2		♣ 8 7 5										
	♠ —											
	♥ K Q J 10 9 7 4 3											
	♦ A 10 8											
	♣ K 10											

Bidding analysis: declarer may use dummy's spades for discards. We must cash clubs. This is the reasoning of the majority of the surveyed players.

There were, however, advocates of the diamond lead.

Nobody found the killing attack. And little wonder. It was indeed necessary to lead singleton – trump singleton, that is. The only sequence of plays that could beat the contract was heart to the ace followed by the club switch.

♥x – 12 ♣A – 10 ♦x – 6 ♠x – 5

My evaluation of the heart lead is either close to zero or exceeding the scale. Twelve, for example. Honestly, I wouldn't even consider this lead myself.

92)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ Q 7 2	1 ♣	pass	1 ♠	3 NT
♥ K Q 2	pass...			
♦ 9 6 2				
♣ A Q 10 8				
		♠ J 9 4		
		♥ 10 8 5 4		
		♦ 3		
		♣ K 7 5 3 2		
♠ Q 7 2				♠ K 10 6 5 3
♥ K Q 2				♥ J 7 6 3
♦ 9 6 2				♦ 7 5 4
♣ A Q 10 8				♣ 9
				♠ A 8
				♥ A 9
				♦ A K Q J 10 8
				♣ J 7 4

The creative search for the golden lead revolved around hearts and clubs.

The banal consideration that partner bid spades did not appeal to my "students".

"Declarer is prepared for the spade lead", they claimed.

Too often is this routine argument regarded decisive.

♠ x - 10 ♥ K - 5 ♣ A - 3

93)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 6 5 2	—	—	1 ♦	1 ♠
♥ J 10	pass	4 ♠	4 NT*	dbl
♦ Q J 4 3	5 ♦	pass	pass	5 ♠
♣ 10 9 8	pass...			

* – diamond and other suit

	♠ K 10 7 4	
	♥ 9 8 5 3	
	♦ —	
	♣ A K J 6 5	
♠ J 6 5 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div> </div>	♠ —
♥ J 10		♥ A K Q 7
♦ Q J 4 3		♦ K 10 9 8 6 2
♣ 10 9 8		♣ 4 3 2
	♠ A Q 9 8 3	
	♥ 6 4 2	
	♦ A 7 5	
	♣ Q 7	

Bidding analysis: the fundamental question is the interpretation of partner's 4NT. In my opinion it shows six diamonds with four clubs or hearts. A reasonable alternative was, no doubt, double of 4♠.

4NT should be reserved for dynamic hands containing few quick tricks, such as:

♠ —
 ♥ K Q J 4
 ♦ K Q J 10 8 6
 ♣ Q J 5

North showed good support and decent side suit. We must guess which suit, aside from diamonds, partner holds.

♥J – 10 ♣x – 8 ♦Q – 5 ♠x – 3

94)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ A K Q 10 6 5	1 ♠	pass	2 NT*	3 ♥
♥ —	4 ♥	5 ♥	pass**	pass
♦ A J 9	6 ♠	pass	pass	7 ♥
♣ Q 10 6 5	dbl	pass...		

* – invitation with support;

** – forcing pass

♠ A K Q 10 6 5	♠ 2	♠ J 8 7
♥ —	♥ Q 8 5 3	♥ J 9 7
♦ A J 9	♦ 10 5 4 3	♦ Q 8 6 2
♣ Q 10 6 5	♣ 9 8 4 3	♣ A K 2
	♠ 9 4 3	
	♥ A K 10 6 4 2	
	♦ K 7	
	♣ J 7	

Opponents decided to save. We must lead trumps. To achieve that, we must put partner on lead. It's safest to do it in clubs. Then, when a spade is played from dummy, partner has to insert the jack and switch to hearts again. Lack of quick access to hand will prevent declarer from trumping two spades. Cashing the ace of spades in Trick 1 is an error.

♣x – 10 ♠A – 3

95)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 9 3	—	—	—	2 ♣*
♥ Q J 9 3	pass	2 ♦**	pass	2 ♠
♦ J 5	pass	4 ♣***	pass	7 ♠
♣ 10 9 8 2	pass...			

* - forcing game; ** - waiting;

*** - splinter

♠ 10 7 2
 ♥ 10 8 5
 ♦ K 10 9 8 4 3
 ♣ 4

♠ J 9 3
 ♥ Q J 9 3
 ♦ J 5
 ♣ 10 9 8 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ —
 ♥ 7 6 4 2
 ♦ A Q 7 6 2
 ♣ K J 6 5

♠ A K Q 8 6 4 2
 ♥ A K
 ♦ —
 ♣ A Q 7 3

South is apparently happy with the club shortness in dummy. He hopes for some ruffs. We lead trumps. But it requires plenty of imagination to find the winning lead. We must not allow declarer to take the first trick in dummy. Why not? Because it will present him with an opportunity of a cheap club finesse.

♠ J - 12 ♠ 9 - 8 ♠ 3 - 5 ♥ Q - 3

96)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 9	—	—	—	1 ♠
♥ A 10 2	pass	2 NT*	pass	3 NT
♦ 10 9 6 2	pass	4 NT	pass	5 ♥
♣ K 7 5 2	pass	6 ♠	pass...	

* - game forcing with support

	♠ K Q 6 3	
	♥ K Q J	
	♦ K 3	
	♣ A 10 8 3	
♠ 10 9	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 8 2
♥ A 10 2		♥ 9 7 5 3
♦ 10 9 6 2		♦ Q 8 7 5
♣ K 7 5 2		♣ J 9 4
	♠ A J 7 5 4	
	♥ 8 6 4	
	♦ A J 4	
	♣ Q 6	

Nothing in the auction suggests the need for an aggressive lead. Our own strength makes it unlikely that partner has something of value. We should opt for a passive lead.

♠x - 10 ♦x - 9 ♣x - 4 ♥A - 3

97)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ J 9 5	—	1 ♥	1 ♠	dbl
♥ Q 6 3	2 ♠	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
♦ K 10 6 5 3	pass	pass	dbl	pass...
♣ 8 2				

	♠ 8 7	
	♥ K 8 5 4 2	
	♦ A 2	
	♣ A K 10 3	
♠ J 9 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> NE </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> WS </div> </div>	♠ Q 6 4 3 2
♥ Q 6 3		♥ A J 9 7
♦ K 10 6 5 3		♦ 9
♣ 8 2		♣ J 9 4
	♠ A K 10	
	♥ 10	
	♦ Q J 8 7 4	
	♣ Q 7 6 5	

Bidding analysis: the double strongly suggests the heart lead. Partner is certainly trying to discourage us from the spade lead. From the overall point count of the whole deal it doesn't look as if partner could have anything in diamonds in addition to his heart values.

♥Q - 10 ♥x - 8 ♦x - 5 ♠x - 5

98)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 10 7 3	—	—	1 ♠	2 ♥
♥ K 10 5 2	2 ♠	3 ♥	dbl*	pass...
♦ Q 6				
♣ Q J 6 3	* - invitational			

♠ 5 4 2
 ♥ J 4 3
 ♦ J 10 8 2
 ♣ K 4 2

♠ 10 7 3
 ♥ K 10 5 2
 ♦ Q 6
 ♣ Q J 6 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q J 9 6
 ♥ 7
 ♦ A 9 7 4
 ♣ A 8 7

♠ K 8
 ♥ A Q 9 8 6
 ♦ K 5 3
 ♣ 10 9 5

Bidding analysis: opponents were a little overactive. There seems to be no reason for an attacking lead. A considerable number of the surveyed players chose the aggressive lead of the ♦Q. The quiet start of a small spade, I believe, leaves all the possibilities open.

♠x - 10 ♦Q, ♣Q - 5 ♥x - 2

99)

Vul 2/1	W	N	E	S
♠ 8	—	—	—	4 ♠
♥ K Q 9 6 4 2	4 NT*	5 ♠	dbl	pass...
♦ 5				
♣ K Q J 10 2	* - any two suiter			
	♠ Q 7 5 4			
	♥ A			
	♦ 10 8 2			
	♣ A 9 7 5 3			
♠ 8	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"><div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"><div>N</div><div style="display: flex; width: 100%;"><div style="width: 40%;">W</div><div style="width: 20%;"></div><div style="width: 40%;">E</div></div><div>S</div></div></div>		♠ 2	
♥ K Q 9 6 4 2			♥ J 7 3	
♦ 5			♦ A K J 9 7 4	
♣ K Q J 10 2			♣ 8 6 4	
	♠ A K J 10 9 6 3			
	♥ 10 8 5			
	♦ Q 6 3			
	♣ —			

Bidding analysis: partner's double is not based on a trump stack. He most likely hopes for diamond tricks if he can infer from his hand that our suits are hearts and clubs.

♦ 5 - 10 ♣ K - 5

100)

Vul 1/1	W	N	E	S
♠ K 8 7 2	—	—	—	1 ♣
♥ 9 8	pass	2 ♦	pass	2 ♥
♦ 8 7 3 2	pass	3 ♠*	dbl	4 NT
♣ K 10 5	pass	5 ♦	pass	6 ♥

pass...
* – splinter

♠ 4
♥ Q 7 5 4
♦ A K Q J 10
♣ 7 6 3

♠ K 8 7 2
♥ 9 8
♦ 8 7 3 2
♣ K 10 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 9 5 3
♥ 10 6 2
♦ 9 5 4
♣ 8 4 2

♠ Q J 10 6
♥ A K J 3
♦ 6
♣ A Q J 9

Bidding analysis: double of the Splinter means that partner has nothing useful in clubs. Aggressive bidding by declarer indicates that he holds all the remaining honours apart from the spade ace. If we don't cash the spade trick, declarer will get rid of all his spades on diamonds and simply concede a club.

It takes some imagination to find the killing sequence of plays. We must start with the spade king in order to protect partner's ace. Then we must carefully foresee what happens in the following tricks. The trump switch will prevent two spade ruffs in dummy only if we find partner with the ♥J10. More likely scenario is declarer holding singleton diamond. In this case the diamond switch in Trick 2 destroys communication. As a consequence, declarer, short of one trick, will be forced to try the club finesse.

♠K followed by ♦x – 12 ♠x – 5 ♥x – 4 ♣x – 2