

WHAT WOULD YOU LEAD?

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥ (1)	Pass	3♥ (2)
Pass	4♥ (3)	All Pass	

You are West, on lead, holding:

♠ K Q 10 6

♥ 2

♦ Q 10 9 4

♣ Q J 8 2

What would you lead?

Before you lead, you should think about the auction:

- (1) False preference, showing 6-9 HCP and 2 hearts
- (2) Pushy, but the 6-4 with all the values in the two suits makes the hand better
- (3) North has a good a hand as he could. Two aces and a doubleton in opener's second suit. This bid may also have been made with a minimum hand but honours in opener's suit – eg. ♥ A-x and ♣ Q-x, with no other significant HCPs. The 3♥ asks responder to look at what their values are: Aces in the outside suits or values in opener's suits are good for 4♥, otherwise pass.

As I mentioned in the previous column, when the opponents have bid three suits, it is often correct to lead a trump. At the table, my partner led the recommended trump, finding this layout:

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

I won the ♥A and returned a heart, removing dummy's ruffing ability. Declarer decided his best option was to work the club suit by finessing. When both club honours were off-side, the contract failed by a trick.

This was a teams competition. More than half the teams made 11 tricks in their heart contracts, which is the outcome on any lead but a trump, because declarer can ruff the two club losers in dummy.

Here's another lead question:

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Double	Pass	Pass	Pass

West is on lead holding:

♠ Q J 8 7
♥ 3
♦ A K Q 2
♣ J 10 9 8

Partner has converted your takeout double into a penalty double. The only lead you should make is a trump, regardless of your solid diamonds.

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

On a high diamond lead, declarer will ruff, then cash the ♠A and ♠K before trumping a spade. Another diamond is ruffed to hand, then declarer can trump another spade with the ♠10. If East overtrumps, then declarer will still make another two trump tricks; if East discards a club, then declarer has already made 4 spades, 2 trumps, and has another diamond ruff available.

On the other hand, on a trump lead, East wins the ♥A and ♥K, then switches – probably to the ♠10 through declarer's spades (which is likely to be a 4-card suit based on the bidding). Declarer now has 2 heart tricks (and probably a ruff), 2 spade tricks and 1 club trick.

The trump lead is mandatory when partner converts a low-level takeout double into penalties. Either it stops declarer ruffing with their low trumps or, in this case, restricts the ability to cross-trump.

Keep listening to those auctions.

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