

## BREAKING 'THE RULES'

"A blind lead means you've had a deaf auction." Ishmael Del'Monte used this pertinent line when giving a lecture about opening leads, and I've been quoting it ever since.

Those times when I 'break the general lead rules' are often when I have several defensive tricks, so I want to have a look at dummy rather than making a "riskier" lead that might allow discards. Last week's final hand falls into that category, where I led the ♠A, followed by the ♠K, awaiting a signal from partner.

You are West and hold:

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

West	North	East	South
			2NT (20-21)
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

South has a big hand, and is unlikely to be a 4-3-3-3 shape or they may have passed 3NT. They may have some shortage, meaning there may be a long suit that could allow dummy some discards.

West, meantime, has two or three heart winners, plus the ♠A. It's time to lead the ♠A, to get your signal from partner, and also giving you the chance to see dummy. Partner played the ♣2 on my Ace, encouraging. Therefore, I continued with the ♣6, finding partner's ♣K, then waiting for my heart winners.

This was the full hand:

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

As you can see, listening to the auction and thinking about my hand both combine to guide West to a different lead from the norm. On a non-club lead, South had those delightful spades which, otherwise, would have given dummy the opportunity to discard a club loser (having cashed the ♥A first).

Similarly, in the Spring National Open Teams 2019, you had to find a lead to RHO's 4♥ opening bid when holding this hand:

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

You seem to have three defensive tricks – 2 aces and the ♥K. It's time to make an attacking lead, not a defensive lead. I would lead the ♦A first (the shorter suit), and watch for partner's signal, and meantime you will also get to see dummy.

*Dummy*

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

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

Partner discourages on your ♦A lead, so you try the ♣A, receiving an encouraging ♣2. You continue with another club, then await your heart trick.

Most defenders led a fourth-highest ♠4 but now declarer made the contract. They won the spade lead, led the ♥10 on which your partner showed out, so they won the ♥A and cashed two more spades discarding a loser.

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

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

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

Keep listening to the auction. Keep analysing your hand. Then start thinking what the most appropriate lead may be. Obviously, you can't find the right lead all the time, but the more you think about the lead, the more often you will find a good lead.

**Barbara Travis**

[www.bridgewithbarbara.com](http://www.bridgewithbarbara.com)