

ATTACKING LEADS

Your opponents have bid thus:

| West | North | East | South |
|------|----------|------|-------|
| | | 3♥ | Pass |
| 6♥ | All Pass | | |

You are South, on lead, holding:

♠ K 10 2
♥ 6
♦ Q 6 4
♣ K J 9 8 6 5

What would you lead?

Many years ago, Benito Garozzo contributed a valuable tip to the Bols Bridge Tips competition:
"Against a (suit) slam contract, attack!"

This was a classic auction on which to apply such advice. Meike Wortel (from The Netherlands) thought along these lines: *For West to jump to 6♥, he will have a strong side suit, which appeared to be diamonds. He is also likely to have a void, since he didn't use Roman Key Card Blackwood, and the void suit is likely to be clubs.* So she felt she had to lead aggressively to set up a trick or cash out two tricks. Therefore, she led a spade.

Right she was:

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

Her partner produced the ♠A and returned the ♠3, then got a spade ruff for down two. The other table stopped in 4♥, received a diamond lead, and East played carefully to make 12 tricks.

This hand comes from the Alt-Mixed Invitational online tournament, which involved eight teams, so we have four match results.

In a second match, there was an identical auction but a less-experienced South player led a trump, allowing declarer to make all 13 tricks (establishing diamonds). This was a 13 IMP gain when the other table played 4♥.

In a third match, this was the auction:

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | 3♥ | Pass |
| 4♥ | 5♣ | Pass | Pass |
| 5♥ | Pass | Pass | 6♣ |
| 6♥ | Double | All Pass | |

When this West took the 'slow route' to slam (i.e. being pushed there), North's double told partner NOT to lead their bid suit. Therefore, South led the attacking ♠2, confident partner held something outside clubs, and North won the Ace. After the ♠3 was returned, South failed to give her partner the spade ruff, but they still gained 13 IMPs when the other table made their game.

The final table had one pair in 4♥, but the other table was pushed to 5♥ after North, once again, pushed the opponents higher with a fearless 5♣ bid. South doubled 5♥ but unwisely led a club (unwise with 6-card support; someone must have a void).

Having ruffed the club in dummy, he was fearful of a 3-0 heart break – in terms of reaching dummy's diamond suit, so he cashed the ♥K first to check the break. When both opponents followed, he cashed the ♦A, ruffed a diamond, returned to dummy and, when the 3-3 diamond break, he had 13 tricks. The score with two doubled overtricks was +1250, and 11 IMPs.

Here's a hand that Mark Horton reported, playing with Marc Smith (in an online tournament):

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

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Pass | 1♣ | Pass | 2♣ (forcing) |
| Pass | 2♠ (GF) | Pass | 3♥ |
| Pass | 3NT | Pass | 5♣ |
| Pass | 6♣ | All Pass | |

Horton was persuaded to bid 6♣ over his partner's 5♣ bid by both the 3♥ and 5♣ bids, convincing him that South must have held a heart stopper. East made a passive lead of the ♣4 and the contract made.

However, had East decided that the bidding suggested an attacking lead (which it, in fact, did), then the bidding has indicated that North has spades (2♠ bid) and diamonds held (3NT bid). Assuming that the ♦K is therefore a trick, it is plausible to lead a heart, following the principle of leading aggressively against slams.

West can't have a lot on this auction, so it may be reasonable to hope for the ♥Q opposite.

The other day, filling in for one hand (!), sitting West, I thought the auction called for an attacking lead. I held:

♠ Q 8 2
♥ 5 3
♦ A Q 10 6 5 4
♣ 9 3

| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | | 1♥ |
| 2♦ (not me!) | 3♦ | Pass | 3♠ (1) |
| Pass | 4♥ | All Pass | |

(1) 3♠ was alerted as showing 1st or 2nd round control, showing slam interest

It seemed to me that I should either lead a trump (passive) or the ♦A (active/attacking). Certainly a spade lead was off my radar, given South's control in the suit.

Eventually, I led the ♦A, dummy having three diamonds, and partner playing the ♦3. I continued with the ♦10 (high for spades), partner trumping! A spade back left declarer without recourse:

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

If she won the ♠A, she now had two spade losers. If she ducked the spade, the ♠Q would win then East would ruff another diamond!

My only regret about this hand? Deep Finesse tells me that the only other lead to defeat the contract was a trump – my other choice!

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