

Active and Passive Leads

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

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All pass	

1 Sets up a game force

North could take the auction more slowly, e.g. 1♥ – 1♠; 2♦ – 2♥; 3♣ – 3♥; 4♥ ... but game will be reached again.

East may well lead a 4th best ♣2, partner playing the king and taken by North. North cashes ♠A to prepare for a possible second spade trick that will give declarer the contract (a club might get thrown on ♠Q and the diamonds being 3-3 will bring the tricks to ten). Three rounds of trumps follow and East is back on play. East cannot play a spade (he should have been helped, first, by declarer's early spade play and, secondly, by partner giving a count signal [♠3, to show an odd number, here five cards]); and he cannot play a club as that will set up North's ♣J. He cannot be sure of the club position so may find the winning continuation of playing a diamond. He plays ♦6 and, whilst partner's ♦Q is taken by the king, East still has J 9 of diamonds sitting over declarer's 10 8. A passive defence wins.

Had East led a second-from-a-bad-suit ♠8 (of top-of-rubbish ♠9) West should duck if dummy's ♠Q is played. Partner will not have underled ♠A so playing the king is futile and will cost the contract when declarer has the singleton ace of spades (as here).

<div><div><div>♠ J 6 5</div><div>♥ 10 6 5 2</div><div>♦ Q 10 9 4</div><div>♣ 7 2</div></div><div><div>♠ K 10 8</div><div>♥ K 4 3</div><div>♦ A J 2</div><div>♣ 10 9 6 3</div></div><div><div>♠ A 9 7</div><div>♥ A Q J</div><div>♦ 8 7 3</div><div>♣ J 8 5 4</div></div><div><div>♠ Q 4 3 2</div><div>♥ 9 8 7</div><div>♦ K 6 5</div><div>♣ A K Q</div></div></div>	<div>Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable</div> <div><div><div><div><i>West</i></div><div>2N</div><div>1 12-14</div></div><div><div><i>North</i></div><div>Pass</div><div></div></div><div><div><i>East</i></div><div>1N⁽¹⁾</div><div>All pass</div></div><div><div><i>South</i></div><div>Pass</div><div></div></div></div></div> <div><div>The opponents have conducted a tentative auction so South should be wary of giving away a trick on the lead. A spade lead would allow declarer to make three spade tricks (♠J taken by ♠A, then declarer can finesse against South's ♠Q). Declarer would be able to play on clubs to make eight tricks by way of three spades, three hearts, and one trick in each of the minors.</div><div>No. The better start is a passive heart. Now declarer has no chance of making the eighth trick. He can play on clubs for a seventh trick but is limited to six tricks in total in the other suits.</div></div>
<div><div><div>♠ K J 4</div><div>♥ 9 7</div><div>♦ A K 10 6 5</div><div>♣ A Q 9</div></div><div><div>♠ 10 9 7</div><div>♥ A Q 10 2</div><div>♦ Q 7 4</div><div>♣ J 8 7</div></div><div><div>♠ A Q 8 2</div><div>♥ 8 6 5 3</div><div>♦ 3 2</div><div>♣ 10 6 3</div></div><div><div>♠ 6 5 3</div><div>♥ K J 4</div><div>♦ J 9 8</div><div>♣ K 5 4 2</div></div></div>	<div>Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</div> <div><div><div><div><i>West</i></div><div>Pass</div><div>Pass</div><div>All pass</div><div>1 17-18, game invitational (might blast 3N instead)</div></div><div><div><i>North</i></div><div>1♦</div><div>2N⁽¹⁾</div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div><i>East</i></div><div>Pass</div><div>Pass</div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div><i>South</i></div><div>Pass</div><div>1N</div><div>3N</div><div></div></div></div></div> <div><div>Just as with hand 2, North South have little to spare for their invite(-and-accept) auction. West should start with a passive lead and that lead is ♠10. This lead works very well. With the layout of the spade and heart suits the defence is able to get both of these suits going such that eight tricks are taken before declarer gets in. The defence plays a “see-saw” defence with West always leading spades and East always returning hearts.</div><div>Had West led anything but a spade declarer would have made at least nine tricks. With the aid of the diamond finesse (necessary) and clubs breaking 3-3, nine tricks arise in the minors alone.</div></div>

<p> ♠ 6 2 ♥ A 5 4 ♦ A 5 3 2 ♣ A 9 8 6 ♠ A K J 4 3 ♠ Q 10 9 8 5 ♥ Q 7 2 ♥ K 6 3 ♦ K Q 8 ♦ J 10 9 ♣ J 10 ♣ K Q ♠ 7 ♥ J 10 9 8 ♦ 7 6 4 ♣ 7 5 4 3 2 </p>	<p>Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <table> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> <tr> <td>1♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♠⁽¹⁾</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4♠</td> <td>All pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>1 <i>Some might treat the hand as a game forcing spade raise and bid 2N, Jacoby. The auction will continue 3♠/N – 4♠ (responder unable to cue bid a side suit ace)</i></p> <p>Often the defence leads a trump because any other lead is unattractive. That's the case here where North has been dealt three aces but none of them is supported by a king. A lead of an ace from AK would have been very safe (see board 6 too). So North will lead a trump. Trumps are drawn and declarer will play on the minors. The crucial point for North is to keep defending passively. That means not cashing ♥A, setting up both ♥KQ as winners, or “flying” with ♥A should declarer play a heart towards the king. Aces are for beating kings (and queens) so if declarer plays a heart towards the queen North should, of course, take the ace.</p>	West	North	East	South	1♠	Pass	3♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♠	All pass		
West	North	East	South										
1♠	Pass	3♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass										
4♠	All pass												

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

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♠	Pass	2N ⁽¹⁾
Pass	3 ♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♣ ⁽³⁾	Pass	4 ♦ ⁽³⁾
Pass	4 ♥ ⁽³⁾	Pass	4 ♠ ⁽⁴⁾
Pass	5 ♥ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	6 ♠

All pass

1 *Jacoby, showing a game forcing (4+) spade raise*

2 *Natural* **3** *1st round control, generally an ace but 4 ♥ is a cue bid showing the void* **4** *Might cue bid ♦K because South can appreciate that the diamond suit is a source of side suit tricks* **5** *Shows 2nd round control*

This is a difficult auction with North reluctant to use Roman Key Card Blackwood with the void in hearts (e.g. a count on the number of aces will not tell North if partner has the important ♠A or the useless ♥A).

East is likely to try to cash ♥A (though if he trusts North's bidding he'll know that it will be ruffed). Declarer plays trumps with East winning at some point. The diamonds are threatening but is there any need to switch to a club? Declarer is marked with at least four clubs. If East takes the second round of spades he can count the hand a little better. He'll know that declarer started with six spades so North has (as winners) five spades, five diamonds and just one club (declarer having shown ♣A with the 4 ♣ cue bid). That's just eleven tricks. This sort of counting is very useful and it can never be right for East to switch to a club. East should sit back and wait for his club trick.

<div>♠ 6</div> <div>♥ K J 9 3</div> <div>♦ K 10 9</div> <div>♣ K 10 8 7 4</div> <div>♠ 10 9 8 7</div> <div>♥ A Q 10</div> <div>♦ J 5 3</div> <div>♣ J 5 3</div> <div>♠ J 3</div> <div>♥ 8 7 6 5</div> <div>♦ A 8 7 6</div> <div>♣ A 9 6</div>	<div>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</div> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>1♠</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>2♠</td><td>All pass</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> <p>South should be reluctant to cash either, or both, his minor suit aces at tricks one/two as they are both unsupported. i.e. they are not backed up with the touching kings which would, otherwise, make them pretty safe. A trump is a little dangerous if partner holds Q x x in spades (then declarer may work out the spade position and not lose a trump).</p> <p>The best lead is a passive heart. Declarer will try ♥Q (the only chance not to lose a heart) and North will win. North can safely return a trump. A second round of spades is drawn and, provided the defence does not get active, declarer will fail. The defence should follow the old whist adage of “second hand low”*. In this way declarer will not be able to make a trick with one of his “quackers” (i.e. queens or jacks) in the minors. Declarer will have been held to seven tricks.</p> <p><i>* but should cover if a queen or knave is led.</i></p>	West	North	East	South			1♠	Pass	2♠	All pass						
West	North	East	South														
		1♠	Pass														
2♠	All pass																
<div>♠ K Q 3</div> <div>♥ 10 9 8</div> <div>♦ A Q J 10</div> <div>♣ J 4 2</div> <div>♠ J 10 9 8 2</div> <div>♥ 7 4</div> <div>♦ 9 8</div> <div>♣ A Q 10 9</div> <div>♠ A 7 6 5</div> <div>♥ 3</div> <div>♦ 7 6 5 3 2</div> <div>♣ K 7 5</div> <div>♠ 4</div> <div>♥ A K Q J 6 5 2</div> <div>♦ K 4</div> <div>♣ 8 6 3</div>	<div>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</div> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1♥</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>2♦</td><td>Pass</td><td>3♥⁽¹⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>4♥</td><td>All pass</td><td></td></tr></table> <p>1 <i>Only a thirteen count but a great heart suit and fitting diamond honour</i></p> <p>West could start with an aggressive ♣A. That would work all right here but leading an ace, holding the potentially-promotable queen, is just too unilateral for most hands (yes, it often sets up ♣K as a winner in the South hand). It’s better to start with a top-of-a-sequence ♠J. Dummy’s ♠Q will be taken by East’s ace. East can see the danger of declarer taking winning diamonds (even if South doesn’t hold ♦K, diamonds can be established by finessing against this card). East brightly switches to a club and the defence will have taken the necessary four tricks (one spade and three clubs) to defeat the game.</p>	West	North	East	South				1♥	Pass	2♦	Pass	3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♥	All pass	
West	North	East	South														
			1♥														
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♥ ⁽¹⁾														
Pass	4♥	All pass															

♠ K Q 10 9
 ♥ 5 3
 ♦ K 7 5
 ♣ K 10 8 3
 ♠ J 7 6 5 ♠ 3
 ♥ 6 2 ♥ AKQJ1094
 ♦ Q 3 2 ♦ A 10 6
 ♣ 7 6 5 4 ♣ A Q
 ♠ A 8 4 2
 ♥ 8 7
 ♦ J 9 8 4
 ♣ J 9 2

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
2♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♥	Pass
3N ⁽³⁾	Pass	4♥	All pass

1 23+ or any game force (with nine clear tricks it's timid to bid otherwise) 2 Relay 3 Might raise to 4♥ though a 6card suit opposite is not guaranteed

Yes, this is one of those hands where the relay suit happens to be the big hand's main asset. As a result the weaker hand becomes the declarer.

North has an obvious lead in ♠K. That holds the trick and North can continue with a low spade (South is marked with ♠A). Two rounds of trumps are drawn and declarer has nothing better to do than play ace and another diamond. ♦Q loses to North's king. North can carry on with spades. Declarer wins and plays a third diamond. South wins but continues to defend in a very passive manner. A fourth spade is played. Declarer can ruff (again) but is locked in the dummy. His remaining chance is to cash the ace of clubs, hoping ♣K is singleton. Unsurprisingly it isn't.

Yes, the defence has prevailed by keeping declarer in dummy. It was important that South never switched to a club (a disaster irrespective of which defender held the king); and that North didn't switch to a club either (with ♣K in that hand, the free finesse of ♣Q would, again, have given away the contract).