

Opening leader's next play

Reminder

26/8/15

Think carefully about what you learn from the first trick

You are defending against NT.

The spade suit is like this:

♠ 8 5

(Dummy)

♠ Q 9 7 4 3

(You)

You (West) lead ♠4, partner plays ♠J and declarer wins with ♠A. What is the spade situation?

Clue: remember that it is the duty of third player (i.e. partner, East) to play high in this situation.

We can work out that East's highest spade is ♠J, as if he held ♠K he would have played it.

Also partner does not have ♠T or he would have played it (third hand plays the lowest of a sequence)

Therefore declarer must hold ♠ A K T (x).

If you lead another spade you will give declarer a trick. Wait for partner to get in to lead towards your Q 9.

When to duck the second round of a suit

♠ A 6 3

♥ 7 2

♦ A Q J T 8 3

♣ Q T

North

South

♠ 9 8 4

1♣

♥ K 9 8 6 3

1♦

1NT

♦ 6 5 2

3NT

♣ T 9 2

You lead ♥6. Partner plays ♥A to trick one, declarer playing ♥T, and East returns ♥5, declarer playing ♥Q. Should you win this trick?

If partner had held ♥J (giving him an original suit of ♥AJ5) he would have returned ♥J, not ♥8. So do not be fooled by declarer's play of ♥Q, he also has ♥J. He probably started with ♥QJT (he did not bid 1♥ over 1♦ so he probably does not hold four hearts). Therefore partner started with ♥A54.

How do we know that partner does not have four hearts and that declarer's Queen is not his last one? In that case partner would have returned ♥4, his original fourth best.

You have no entry, so you must duck the second round of hearts, i.e. play a low card, allowing declarer's ♥Q to win.

Now, if partner gains the lead later in the hand (perhaps after declarer takes a losing finesse in diamonds, or perhaps with the King of spades) he will be able to play his third heart. You will then make ♥K and two more winners in the suit to beat the contract (four tricks in hearts plus partner's winner in diamonds or spades).

When ducking the second round of hearts, play ♥3. Partner will be able to read that you led from a five-card suit.

Remember: East leads back his higher remaining card if he started with three, but his original fourth highest from a longer suit (four or more).

Showing partner where your entry lies

♠ K 5 3				
♥ T 7 2				
♦ A Q J T 9				
♣ 8 3	West	North	East	South
♠ 6 4 2				1♣
♥ K Q J 6 3	1♥	2♦	pass	3NT
♦ 7 2	all pass			
♣ A 7 2				

You lead ♥K. Dummy plays ♥2. Partner plays ♥5 to trick one, declarer playing ♥8. At trick two you lead ♥Q, partner playing ♥4 and declarer playing ♥9. What do lead to the third trick?

You cannot win this trick, and with only two hearts outstanding (dummy's ♥10 and declarer's ♥A) it does not matter which heart you play to trick three. So which heart should it be?

In order to beat this contract, partner will almost certainly need to have a trick in diamonds. When he wins this trick, you need him to play a club so that you may gain the lead and cash those heart winners.

Lead ♥3. It does not cost a trick, and it should make partner lead a club if/when he gets in. (If your entry was in Spades you would have led ♥J at this point)

When you can play any card in the suit without giving away a trick, give a suit preference signal.

The full hand:

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

If partner fails to switch to a club when he gets in with ♦K, declarer easily makes his game, with four spade tricks, four diamond tricks and the Ace of hearts. If you told him where your entry was by playing the ♥3 at the third trick the contract goes two off (four hearts, the King of diamonds and the Ace of clubs)