

HARDEST PART of the GAME is DEFENSE

		QJ9	2 Spades		
		K104	4 Spades		
		873			
		K1076			
A876				5	
86	PASS			9532	Pass
KJ62	Pass			A1054	Pass
J52				Q984	
		K10432			
		AQJ7	DEALER 1 Spade		
		Q9	3 Hearts		
		A3			

3 Hearts is a game try, North accepts the game try. Your lead, how do you defend?

		Q102			
		K10	2 Clubs		
		842	4 Spades		
		AQJ63			
A				8753	Pass
A653	PASS			QJ972	Pass
10975	Pass			QJ63	
10872				VOID	
		KJ964			
		84	DEALER 1 Spade		
		AK	3 Clubs		
		K954			

Your lead against 4 spades, what do you lead and why?

Whoever said defense was the hardest part of the game was right on. More tricks are dropped on defense than on bidding and play combined. You can muddle through the bidding, and playing the hand has to be easier than defending because you can see your partner's hand. Not so on defense.

When defending a hand, you are dealing with a partner: a partner whose leads, signals and discards you must trust implicitly. A tall order. Most defenders don't know how to organize their thinking. They haven't learned to project the necessary cards in partner's hand that are vital to defeating the contract.

		AQ102		
		QJ3	2 Clubs (Stayman)	
		Q872	3 NT	
		109		
KJ865				3
7	PASS			86542 PASS
103	PASS			9654 PASS
KJ865				A42
		743		
		AK109	DEALER 1 NT	
		AKJ	2 Hearts	
		Q73	PASS	

Your lead against 3 NT after a stayman auction, what do you lead?

		62	BOTH VUL.	
		98	DEALER 3 Clubs	
		54	PASS	
		KQJ10987		
J1098				KQ53 PASS
AQ4	PASS			K10753 PASS
Q832				KJ
53				62
		A74		
		J62	3 NT	
		A10976		
		A4		

The vulnerability tells you that dummy has 7 good clubs and South is likely to have any missing club honors. You have to find some way to cash a fast 5 tricks, What's your lead and why?

The conventional wisdom is that selecting an opening lead is a two-part decision. you choose the suit first, then the specific card. The "which card?" decision is usually automatic once you've decided on the suit, so the main challenge is "which suit?". This decision will be easier – and more successful – if you back up and ask yourself a broader question. Does this auction call for a passive lead or an aggressive lead? An aggressive lead may give declarer a "gift" if partner has no help in that suit but offers you the best chance to beat the contract if partner has an honor or two. A passive lead isn't likely to give declarer an extra trick. How do you know when an aggressive lead is the best choice? One of your strongest clues comes when the opponents have identified a long suit for tricks.