



# Bath Replays

## 29 Always lead a heart against 3NT

Sylvia Stevens once advised me that a heart was often the best lead against 3 NT. I remember being very impressed with the logic of her argument at the time (which I am afraid completely escapes me at the moment - but see my attempted reconstruction below), and I was determined to try this out when our team played Pat Davies' team in the third round of the Wiltshire league.

The opportunity arose quite early in the match. Both sides were vulnerable, and South (Pat Davies) was the dealer. After a straightforward auction, Pat became declarer in 3NT:

<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
I ♦	Pass	I ♠	Pass
INT	Pass	3NT	All pass

As West, remembering Sylvia's advice, I led a small heart. This would confuse my partner, as we lead 4<sup>th</sup> highest, but that doesn't matter as neither of us bother to count or work out declarer's shape, as this is far too demanding at our age. Eureka! Maurice wins the first trick with the ♥A, and returns a low heart to Pat's King. All I have to do is to drop my Queen under the King, and when I come in with the ♠A, lead a low heart to Maurice's three winning hearts for one down.

♠ Q10852		
♥ 1094		
♦ A54		
♣ K6		
♠ AJ64		♠ 93
♥ Q63		♥ AJ752
♦ 963		♦ 108
♣ Q103		♣ J542
		♠ K7
		♥ K8
		♦ KQJ72
		♣ A987

To my great credit I worked this out 15 minutes later when I was dummy during the next hand. At the table I managed to block the heart suit by playing small and retaining the Queen. Which is one of the reasons why we lost the match 20-0 and I remain a mediocre club player. But more power to Sylvia's advice: lead a heart against 3NT.

*Roger Bendall*  
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### ♥fterword

Although I have written this slightly tongue in cheek, there is some logic in leading a heart against 3NT when neither opponent has bid hearts:

- With equal length touching red suits, opener will normally open I ♥.
- With Clubs and Hearts, and when the HCPs preclude a INT opening, opener will often favour a I ♥ opening.
- Responder will normally prefer to bid a four card major at the one level, rather than a five card minor at the two level, particularly with few HCPs.
- And finally, good old Stayman may be used to seek a major fit after a INT rebid by opener.

So when opener opens I ♦ and neither opponent bids hearts, the signs are good that neither one has a four card heart suit. This could be the killer lead, particularly if you are weak and short in hearts, and are looking for your partner to have the tricks to set the contract. But don't forget to unblock an honour from a three card suit if you are looking for a brilliancy prize.