

# Opening Leads

Patrick, June 2016

# OUR PLAN

- Talk about the theory
- Do some paper exercises
- BID and PLAY two hands
  - >> break for tea & coffee
- Talk about special cases
- BID and PLAY two hands
- Summary and recap

# EXPECTATIONS

- Do we ever know the best lead ?
- Will the best lead always deliver ?
- How good might we be ?

# EXPECTATIONS

- Do we ever know the best lead ?
- Will the best lead always deliver ?
- How good might we be ?

## – MY TARGET

- after seeing dummy, I would not change my mind

# KEY QUESTIONS (1)

- What are we trying to achieve ?
  - beat the contract, or
  - minimise the overtricks, or
  - maximise the penalty

# Diversion : lead conventions

- Would have to be another seminar
  - stick to what you have agreed with partner
  - false carding on opening leads is rare
    - safest if partner will not be involved
- But I will cover one example later ...
  - and can do questions at the end if time

# KEY QUESTIONS (2)

(Apart from “what is my hand?” )

- What is the contract ?
- What was the bidding ?
- What is the form of scoring ?

very, very important

# COMBINING KEY QUESTIONS

- What is the target ?
  - defeat, overtricks, penalty
- What position is declarer in ?
  - confident, stretched, shaky, ...
- Only now I can work out my tactics ...
  - which suit
  - which card in the suit



# LIKELY TACTICS

- Against a lowly 1NT ?
  - set up some tricks for the defence
- Against a fast-bid slam?
  - ensure we don't miss our two tricks
- Against an easy / confident contract ?
  - find the unexpected attack
- Against a tentative contract ?
  - be careful and give nothing away

# INFLUENCES ON THE TARGET

- Whether or not trumps are breaking
- Whether or not finesses are working

# INFLUENCES ON THE TARGET

- Whether or not trumps are breaking
- Whether or not finesses are working
- How much we know about the two hands
- Your judgement on the soundness of the bidding

# TACTIC 1 : setting up winners

- Long suit is a prerequisite at no-trumps
  - target might be smaller number of winners at a suit contract
- This target includes preserving my winners by cutting down on ruffs
  - so it could be a trump lead
- Honour sequence in my suit is ideal

# TACTIC 1 : setting up winners

- Long suit at no-trumps
- Trumps leads also count
- Honour sequence is ideal

## ALSO SOMETIMES

- Cashing winners before they vanish

♠ T 9 8 4 2

♥ J 7 6

♦ 8 7

♣ K T 9

### Choices :

♠ low 12

♠ high 5

♦ 8 6

♣ T 3

any ♥ 2

PARD	RHO	YOU	LHO
	2N	P	3♣
P	3♠	P	3N
p	P	P	

# TACTIC 2 : don't give away tricks

- Tricky to know, but ask “which suits would declarer like you to play” ?
  - AT2 opposite K93 ?
  - Q32 opposite J54 ?
- Safest are
  - sequences
  - low cards

♠ T 4  
 ♥ K 8 3  
 ♦ J 4 3  
 ♣ A T 8 4 3

Choices :

♠	15
♦	7
♣	1
♥	4

PARD	RHO	YOU	LHO
	1N	P	2♣
P	2♠	P	3♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			



# UNSAFE LEADS

- Underleading aces
  - almost a “no no” at SUIT contracts
  - but there are acceptable occasions
- Leading from honours into strong NT hands
  - eg from KJ9x into a 2N opener
- Single, unsupported honours
  - Kxxxx particularly risky at suit contracts

# TACTIC 3 : maximise the penalty

- Against NO TRUMPS
  - set up tricks for the defence
- Against SUIT contracts
  - eliminate the trump threat

♠ J T 9 2

♥ A 9 7 6 5

♦ K Q 8

♣ K

Choices :

♣ K 24

♦ K 4

♠ J 1

PARD	RHO	YOU	LHO
P	P	1♥	X
XX	2♣	P	P
X	end		

# COMBINING TARGETS

- The reality – often not so clear
- Can we combine targets ?
  - Sequences good for many reasons
  - Any reason for not leading a KQJ ?
  - Any reason for not leading a KQ2 ?

# COMMON SPECIAL LEAD POSITIONS

- When 3N has been doubled
- When slam has been doubled
- When I have 4333 shape
- When they have bid the suit I would have led
- When I have a singleton to lead
- When I might lead a doubleton
- When I search for partner's suit
- When my holding is very strong

# When 3N has been doubled

- What's the message ?
  - “things are lying unexpectedly badly”
- Why is that?
  - defenders sitting over declarer's suits
- So leading dummy's suit is a favourite

# When slam has been doubled

- Penalty size not an issue (usually)
- LIGHTNER double
  - asks for an unusual lead
  - usually a ruff or a cashing AK
  - often a “now or never” chance

♠ T 4 3

♥ T 9 3

♦ Q 6 3 2

♣ 5 4 3

---

PARD	RHO	YOU	LHO
		P	1♣
3♥	3♠	P	4♠
5♦	5♠	P	6♠
X	P	P	P

---



# When I have 4333 shape

- A three card suit is often the winner
- But you have no idea which
- The 4-card suit works best

## MORE GENERALLY

- “Making the boring lead”

# Leading Trumps

- Allowed to under-lead an ace
- Dangerous to under-lead a king
- Leading small trumps
  - often used as trick-one suit preference ...

# When I have a singleton to lead

- A very positive lead
- Should have prospects of partner getting in
  - but worth it even against a slam
- Works well with a trump stopper

# When I might lead a doubleton

- A positive reason, so good
- Can be difficult for partner to read
  - partner will generally assume a singleton
- Increasing evidence it is worthwhile
  - BIRD and ANTHIAS books on leads

# When I search for partner's suit

- Where my “suit” is not a good prospect
  - perhaps I have no entries
  - perhaps they have bid my suit
- More evidence from BIRD & ANTHIAS
  - increasing occurrence
  - but not without dangers (doing declarer's work)
  - style of leads

# When my holding is very strong

- When all I am missing is one card
  - I need partner to tell me about that
  - KQT98 AKJT2
- Most common : **STRONG KING** at **NOTRUMPS**
  - only at trick one
  - only for an unprovoked lead

# SUMMARY

- Have (a target and) a chosen tactic
  - think of your plan and of declarer's plan
  - think if the defence were declaring
- Watch for the special situations
- Note and study the cases where dummy makes you wish to change your mind

# FURTHER LEARNING

- Many books on the subject
- Bridge Magazines have quizzes on leads
  - often a bid obscure and indecisive
- Bridge Magazines have match reports
  - much better, test your bidding too
- Look over the travellers to see what others do



## SELECTING A LEAD WITH A REASON : Thu 9 June

<b>HAND 1</b>	<b>BIDDING 1 (starts with RHO)</b>	<b>TARGET</b>			
♠ JT98 ♥ Q9753 ♦ A65 ♣ 9	3N* P P P  3N is a solid minor, little else	SET UP	low	medium	high
		SAFETY	low	medium	high
		MAXIMUM	low	medium	high
		MY LEAD :			
<b>HAND 2</b>	<b>BIDDING 2 (starts with RHO)</b>	<b>TARGET</b>			
♠ 764 ♥ 874 ♦ KJ9 ♣ JT98	3H P 6H P P P . .	SET UP	low	medium	high
		SAFETY	low	medium	high
		MAXIMUM	low	medium	high
		MY LEAD :			
<b>HAND 3</b>	<b>BIDDING 1 (starts with RHO)</b>	<b>TARGET</b>			
♠ T98 ♥ QT98 ♦ A52 ♣ K72	1S P 1N P 2D P P P	SET UP	low	medium	high
		SAFETY	low	medium	high
		MAXIMUM	low	medium	high
		MY LEAD :			
<b>HAND 4</b>	<b>BIDDING 4 (starts with RHO)</b>	<b>TARGET</b>			
♠ AKJ76 ♥ 982 ♦ AJ ♣ Q43	2H* 2S 4H 4S P P 5H X P P P .  2H is a weak two	SET UP	low	medium	high
		SAFETY	low	medium	high
		MAXIMUM	low	medium	high
		MY LEAD :			
<b>HAND 5</b>	<b>BIDDING 5 (starts with RHO)</b>	<b>TARGET</b>			
♠ T54 ♥ QJT ♦ T98 ♣ QT92	P P 1C P 1D P 1H P 1S P 3S P 4S P P P  1S natural, opener sounds 4414	SET UP	low	medium	high
		SAFETY	low	medium	high
		MAXIMUM	low	medium	high
		MY LEAD :			
<b>HAND 6</b>	<b>BIDDING 6 (starts with RHO)</b>	<b>TARGET</b>			
♠ 3 ♥ 8765 ♦ KJ32 ♣ KJ32	1N P 2C P 2S P 3S P 4S P P .	SET UP	low	medium	high
		SAFETY	low	medium	high
		MAXIMUM	low	medium	high
		MY LEAD :			

## SELECTING A LEAD WITH A REASON : Thu 9 June

HAND 13	BIDDING 13 (starts with RHO)	
♠ 8 ♥ K J 5 2 ♦ J T 8 2 ♣ A 9 3 2	1S P 1N P 4S P p P	Danger of tricks getting lost here, so preferred choice is a heart as any one honour with partner sets up two or three tricks. In practice it was one trick better than any other suit.
HAND 14	BIDDING 8 (starts with RHO)	
♠ J 7 4 3 ♥ A Q 8 6 ♦ T 9 8 ♣ Q 7	1D P 1S P 2N P 3N P P P . .	From Stratford in a strong, large field this hand and those below : the most common choice was a diamond (17 times) over a heart (14 times).
HAND 15	BIDDING 9 (starts with RHO)	
♠ A 8 3 ♥ 7 6 5 ♦ T 8 6 5 ♣ A 8 6 2	1N P P P	14/18 led a diamond in preference to a club – setting up tricks but keeping the entry. Also less likely to give away a trick and better chance of DT being a winner than the C8.
HAND 16	BIDDING 10 (starts with RHO)	
♠ Q 6 ♥ 3 ♦ J 9 5 3 ♣ K Q 9 6 5 4	1S P 3S P 4S P P P	Leading the singleton H3 got 21/26 while the CK got 5/21 and it was worth a trick to do so.
HAND 17	BIDDING 11 (starts with RHO)	
♠ Q 9 7 4 ♥ 8 7 ♦ Q T 8 3 ♣ 9 7 6	1H P 2N(supp) P 3H p 4C(cue) P 4H P (varies) P some ended 4H some ended 6H	Against game in hearts the majority led a trump and 1/15 led a diamond. But against a suit slam it is better to be aggressive, so we find 8/26 led a diamond and 5/26 led a spade.
HAND 18	BIDDING 12 (starts with RHO)	
♠ K 8 4 ♥ J 7 ♦ T 8 6 4 2 ♣ 7 6 5	1H P 2D P 2S P 4H P P P . ..	The majority (18/32) led a club as a safe lead, with 11 leading a diamond, and only 1 led a spade and 2 a trump (both those might easily give away a trick)

<p>           ♠ A43            ♥ A109            ♦ Q64            ♣ K652              ♠ J105                      ♠ 9876            ♥ Q62                        ♥ J543            ♦ J1098                     ♦ K72            ♣ 743                         ♣ AQ              ♠ KQ2            ♥ K87            ♦ A53            ♣ J1098         </p>	<p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>All Pass</p> <p>Leading away from an unsupported jack is never attractive: you need partner to hold a lot of high cards in the suit to make it work and you are far more likely to open up a frozen suit, as shown here. The best lead is a passive ♠8. Declarer has only 8 tricks: Defenders now have to avoid giving him a ninth.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>		1NT	Pass	3NT				
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
	1NT	Pass	3NT										
<p>           ♠ 754            ♥ 53            ♦ J764            ♣ KJ32              ♠ 832                         ♠ A 106            ♥ A1084                    ♥ KQ9            ♦ A9                         ♦ K 1053            ♣ AQ109                   ♣ 754              ♠ KQJ9            ♥ J762            ♦ Q82            ♣ 86         </p>	<p>Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Listen to the bidding. Defenders clearly have nothing to spare for their game. North should aim to give nothing away. If North decides on a passive lead, prefer the longer holding (spades). You will see that either minor gives a trick away, while a heart lead picks up ♥J for declarer. As it happens a spade lead strikes gold, but the important thing is that it gives nothing away.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass										
3NT	All Pass												
<p>           ♠ K 108            ♥ 765            ♦ A98            ♣ AK32              ♠ J5432                     ♠ Q7            ♥ 943                        ♥ QJ102            ♦ 7642                     ♦ QJ10            ♣ J                            ♣ Q 1098              ♠ A96            ♥ AK8            ♦ K53            ♣ 7654         </p>	<p>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>West can lead a spade, his longest suit, but with no entries he will need a very favourable spade layout to set up and cash the suit. More likely, a spade lead will only succeed in opening up a frozen suit (as here) and giving declarer his ninth trick. A diamond lead is likely to be passive, with just the chance of setting up a length trick.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>				1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
			1NT										
Pass	3NT	All Pass											
<p>           ♠ J1094            ♥ 1087            ♦ A86            ♣ 743              ♠ 852                         ♠ K3            ♥ AKQ                        ♥ J432            ♦ KQJ10                    ♦ 753            ♣ J109                       ♣ AKQ2              ♠ AQ76            ♥ 965            ♦ 942            ♣ 865         </p>	<p>Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>It would not be completely silly for South to lead a spade, but as you see that just presents declarer with a ninth trick. If South leads passively (a heart) North will gain the lead with ♦A and North will see that the only realistic chance is a spade switch. Underleading honours is far more attractive with a 5-card suit than with a 4-card suit.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>			1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
		1NT	Pass										
3NT	All Pass												

<p> ♠ Q10987  ♥ 107  ♦ AK  ♣ 10742    ♠ 32                      ♠ KJ4  ♥ AQJ                    ♥ K43  ♦ QJ1098                ♦ 432  ♣ AKQ                    ♣ J953    ♠ A65  ♥ 98652  ♦ 765  ♣ 86 </p>	<p>Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1♦</td> <td>1♠</td> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>South is going to lead partner's suit, but which card? If South leads ♠A declarer has 9 easy tricks, including 2 spade stoppers. If South leads ♠5 declarer takes partner's ♠Q with ♠K, but needs to set up diamonds. North wins ♦K and returns ♠10. Whether declarer covers with ♠J or not, the defence gets 6 tricks.</p> <p>Once you decide to lead partner's suit, lead the same card as you would have led if you had chosen to lead that suit without partner bidding it: in this case the lowest from three to an honour.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	1♦	1♠	1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
1♦	1♠	1NT	Pass										
3NT	All Pass												
<p> ♠ 65  ♥ A106  ♦ K9  ♣ AKQ876    ♠ 4                        ♠ AJ10973  ♥ 5432                   ♥ KJ7  ♦ AQJ1032             ♦ 54  ♣ 92                     ♣ 103    ♠ KQ82  ♥ Q98  ♦ 876  ♣ J54 </p>	<p>Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>1♣</td> <td>1♠</td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>It is not always right to lead partner's suit. Declarer seems well prepared for a spade lead, West's spade singleton will not help set spades up, and West does have an excellent alternative: ♦Q. Dummy wins ♦K but East should realise that West's failure to lead his suit marks West with a very poor spade holding. East should grab the lead as soon as possible with ♠A or ♥K and return a diamond.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	Pass	1♣	1♠	1NT		3NT	All Pass	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
Pass	1♣	1♠	1NT										
	3NT	All Pass											
<p> ♠ 62  ♥ 765  ♦ 5432  ♣ J1098    ♠ KJ109                ♠ 8543  ♥ J1098                ♥ 432  ♦ A8                     ♦ 976  ♣ K42                   ♣ AQ5    ♠ AQ7  ♥ AKQ  ♦ KQJ10  ♣ 763 </p>	<p>Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>2NT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>All Pass</p> <p>West should try to picture the South and North hands. South has a very good hand: 20-22 HCP. North has practically nothing, so it will be hard for declarer to get to dummy to take finesses. Often the best defence when an opening 2NT is passed out is to go completely passive and hope declarer has to continually lead from broken honour sequences in his hand. On this hand declarer has more solid sequences that would normally be the case and a spade lead gifts him his 8<sup>th</sup> trick. A better passive lead is ♥J.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>				2NT				
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
			2NT										
<p> ♠ A875  ♥ QJ654  ♦ 9  ♣ Q62    ♠ 96                     ♠ KQ43  ♥ 2                        ♥ AK3  ♦ AKQJ654             ♦ 872  ♣ 874                    ♣ K53    ♠ J102  ♥ 10987  ♦ 103  ♣ AJ109 </p>	<p>Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th><i>West</i></th> <th><i>North</i></th> <th><i>East</i></th> <th><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>3NT shows a solid 7-card minor suit and no card higher than a queen outside: called a Gambling 3NT.</p> <p>Declarer has solid diamonds so North must arrange to take his tricks quickly. A heart lead would be fatal. It is normal to lead an ace against a gambling 3NT. North leads ♠A and sees that the only chance is to now take 4 club tricks. He should switch to ♣Q at trick 2 to keep the lead if dummy withholds ♣K.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	3NT	All Pass						
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
3NT	All Pass												