

# Opening Leads



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by Derek Patterson

## Turning on the 'Sat Nav'

CONSIDER the following scenario from a recent tournament. Sitting West and playing teams at Love All, you hold the hand on the right and the bidding proceeds as below:

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

| West | North | East     | South |
|------|-------|----------|-------|
|      |       |          | 1♦    |
| Pass | 1♥    | Pass     | 1NT   |
| Pass | 3NT   | All Pass |       |

What would you lead?

A club lead gives you the best chance of defeating the contract and to lead anything else would be very odd but there is no certainty that it will turn out well – you are merely trying to play the odds.

What about the same problem but with the added twist that partner doubles the final contract?

This has become a totally different proposition. Before, it was akin to navigating through an unfamiliar town with a vague idea of the required route, but now, as long as partner's message is understood, it is as if someone has turned on the Sat Nav!

The idea is that partner is directing you to lead a specific suit and the first task is to identify which one it is. When 3NT is doubled 'out of the blue', the usual interpretation is that partner would like us to lead dummy's first-bid suit. So, in this case, our Sat Nav has told us to lead a heart. Before analysing why this should be, let us look at the full deal (*see next column*):

On a heart lead, the contract is defeated easily but a spade or diamond lead will let it through and a club lead gives an over-trick. East's double is very risky but the rationale is that, although there is no guarantee of success, there is a much better chance of the defence prevailing if West can be persuaded to lead a heart than otherwise. Judging whether the risk is justified is a difficult issue but the focus of this series is on the opening lead and

certainly, if East does double, then West's interpretation of it is critical.

Love All. Dealer South.

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

While trying to deduce the meaning of the double, remember the silence that preceded it, which rules out the possibility of East having an all-round strong hand. Moreover, the lack of an overcall precludes the possibility of a hand including ♠A-K-Q-J-x or similar.

What does make sense, however, is that partner has a strong holding in dummy's first-bid suit. This would account for his initial silence and, furthermore, would explain the final double because there would be strong evidence of the cards lying badly for declarer.

The conclusion for this kind of auction is clear:

**Tip: Lead dummy's first-bid suit when partner's only contribution to the auction has been to double the final contract of 3NT!**

This principle can be extended to some other (usually game) contracts as well.

As a final note, the last time I made a lead-directing double against 3NT, partner was void in the suit I wanted him to lead... fortunately, the contract still failed by one trick! □

## CLUB PLAYER'S BIDDING QUIZ

ON each of the following problems, you are West. What should you bid with each hand on the given auction at pairs, Love All?

Julian Pottage gives his answers on page 54.

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Hand 1

|               |    |      |    |      |
|---------------|----|------|----|------|
| ♠ Q J 9 8 7 6 | W  | N    | E  | S    |
| ♥ A K 10      | 1♣ | Pass | 2♦ | Pass |
| ♦ K 8 7       | ?  |      |    |      |
| ♣ 8           |    |      |    |      |

Hand 2

|              |   |   |    |    |
|--------------|---|---|----|----|
| ♠ J 4 3      | W | N | E  | S  |
| ♥ Q 5 3      |   |   | 1♥ | 1♣ |
| ♦ K 10 9 5 2 | ? |   |    |    |
| ♣ A Q        |   |   |    |    |

Hand 3

|             |                   |   |   |                 |
|-------------|-------------------|---|---|-----------------|
| ♠ 4 2       | W                 | N | E | S               |
| ♥ A K Q 2   |                   |   |   | 2♠ <sup>1</sup> |
| ♦ A K 9 7 4 | ?                 |   |   |                 |
| ♣ A 2       | <sup>1</sup> Weak |   |   |                 |

Hand 4

|              |  |     |      |                 |
|--------------|--|-----|------|-----------------|
| ♠ A K Q 5 4  | W  | N   | E    | S               |
| ♥ 10 9 8 7 5 |  | 1♦  | Pass | 1♥              |
| ♦ 3          | 1♣                                       | 1NT | Pass | 2♠ <sup>1</sup> |
| ♣ J 9        | ?  |     |      |                 |
|              | <sup>1</sup> Asking for more information |     |      |                 |

Hand 5

|              |      |    |      |    |
|--------------|------|----|------|----|
| ♠ Q          | W    | N  | E    | S  |
| ♥ Q 2        | Pass | 1♣ | Pass | 2♣ |
| ♦ Q 7 6 4 3  | ?    |    |      |    |
| ♣ K Q 10 9 5 |      |    |      |    |

Hand 6

|             |                       |   |   |                  |
|-------------|-----------------------|---|---|------------------|
| ♠ K J 10 9  | W                     | N | E | S                |
| ♥ A 10      |                       |   |   | 3NT <sup>1</sup> |
| ♦ J 9       | ?                     |   |   |                  |
| ♣ A K J 8 6 | <sup>1</sup> Gambling |   |   |                  |