

West	North	East	South
2♣	1♥	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass

Hand 9

East-West Game, Dealer North

♠ 6 4 2
♥ A K Q J 10 4
♦ A Q
♣ Q 5

N	E
W	S

♠ A Q 10 9 8 7
♥ 9
♦ 6 5
♣ A 6 4 3

♠ K
♥ 5 2
♦ 10 9 8 7 2
♣ 10 9 8 7 2

♠ J 5 3
♥ 8 7 6 3
♦ K J 4 3
♣ K J

North reaches 4♥ after West has stuck his oar in with a Spade overcall. Naturally enough East leads the ♠K and then the play gets interesting. West might save us all some time if he overtook with the Ace, cashed the ♠Q, took the ♣A and then gave East a Spade ruff. Job done. However, suppose East is on lead at trick two? What should he lead – a Club or a Diamond? Players sometimes argue (fatuously) that West's Spade at trick one should be suit-preference. Really? What happened to encourage/discourage or count? You can't have it both ways. Anyway, what happened to the use of brains? It is usually right to attack the short suit here (Clubs) as they may get discarded on the long suit (Diamonds). A Club switch from East beats 4♥, a Diamond lets it through. Reverse North's minor holdings and a Club still beats it. You **can** construct hands where a Diamond at trick three is right but it isn't easy.

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	3♥	All Pass

Hand 10

Game All, Dealer East

♠ A J 10 9 3 2
♥ 10 6
♦ Q 9 2
♣ A 5

N	E
W	S

♠ K Q
♥ A Q 9 5 2
♦ A 6 5
♣ Q 6 4

♠ 8 7 5
♥ K J 7
♦ J 7
♣ J 10 8 7 3

♠ 6 4
♥ 8 4 3
♦ K 10 8 4 3
♣ K 9 2

A real-life deal – it comes from this year's Gimson semi-final. Twelve tables played it, seven times in Hearts by West. Every West made at least nine tricks, four times on the ghastly lead of the ♣A followed by another Club. A Diamond lead beats 3♥ as declarer has nowhere to do. True, after a Diamond, ducked, and an inevitable Spade return North has to find the Club ruff but is that so hard? Apparently so... The bidding varied so much that some pairs were allowed to play in Spades by North, escaping cheaply, and one pair in 3♣ as East (nope, me neither). Still, the hand is included to act as a warning against the random lead of Ace from A x. It works on this deal (sort of) because partner has the King. However, after taking the Club ruff East's two Clubs become set up and that is crucial to the hand as a whole. It is a clear case of winning the battle and losing the war.

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♠

Hand 11

Love All, Dealer South

♠ Q 10 3
♥ 4
♦ A 7 5 2
♣ A 10 8 6 3

N	E
W	S

♠ 8 7 5
♥ A Q 10 7
♦ Q J 10 3
♣ J 5

♠ 9 4
♥ 8 6 3 2
♦ 9 8 6
♣ K Q 9 2

♠ A K J 6 2
♥ K J 9 5
♦ K 4
♣ 7 4

What should you lead against 4♠ from the West hand after the auction above? It may seem "automatic" for West to lead the ♦Q (for two reasons – it's the top of a sequence and it's the unbid suit). However, the defence have Hearts (declarer's second suit) all stitched up and there is a clear risk that declarer will ruff his losers on table. This auction calls for a trump lead and another trump when on lead with a Heart. The idea is to cut down South's potential ruffs in dummy. After this defence declarer has only five Spades, one ruff on table and three top tricks in the minors. After a Diamond lead it would be a trivial matter to concede a Heart and ruff two Heart losers in the dummy. It may be right on some deals to lead trumps as a *passive defence* (see Hand 5) but it can also be an *active defence*, removing the trumps from the short trump hand.

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	3♣	Dble
4♣	Dble	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Hand 12

North-South Game, Dealer West

♠ 10 2
♥ A 8 4 2
♦ A 10 8 6
♣ 6 5 3

N	E
W	S

♠ A J 4
♥ J 10 3
♦ 2
♣ Q J 10 8 7 4

♠ K Q 9 8 7 5 3
♥ 9 6
♦ J 9 7 5
♣ None

♠ 6
♥ K Q 7 5
♦ K Q 4 3
♣ A K 9 4

East-West create a certain amount of havoc on this deal by pre-empting the bidding. South has an obvious take-out Double of 3♣ and North has to Double 4♣ holding two Aces. Right, what should South lead? The "safe" ♣A? (*God dealt you an Ace-King so you wouldn't have a problem with your opening lead*). Nope, that's as about as safe as swimming in shark-infested waters. It's clear that East-West are not bidding on high-card values, they are bidding on **shape**. In these circumstances it is usually wise to lead trumps. Yes, it's a singleton – but it's hardly likely to hit ♠Q x x in the North hand, the usual objection to leading a singleton trump. A trump lead hold 4♣ Doubled to nine tricks (assuming East plays to set up a Club trick). The "obvious" ♣A lead would let the game through – declarer ruffs, crosses to the ♠J and runs the ♣J, pitching a Heart. Oops!

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♣	All Pass	

Hand 13

Game All, Dealer North

♠ A Q J 3
♥ 10 6 5
♦ 9 7
♣ K J 9 3

N	E
W	S

♠ 9 5
♥ K J 3
♦ K 10 5 3 2
♣ 8 6 5

♠ 10 4
♥ 8 7 4
♦ A Q 8 4
♣ A 7 4 2

♠ K 8 7 6 2
♥ A Q 9 2
♦ J 6
♣ Q 10

A hand with a history, having been defended by Jeremy Flint some 40 odd years ago. West led a Diamond against 3♣ and East had to **read the lead** and plan the defence. At the time, East got it right – he won the **Queen** of Diamonds at trick one and switched to a Heart. That scuppered declarer who could not avoid losing two Hearts, two Diamonds and a Club. Had East taken the ♦A it would have been very difficult for West to have underled the King of Diamonds at trick three to East's ♦Q. Note the Diamond lead – why not? Some Wests, obsessed by this foolish notion that you must not lead away from a King, might lead a Club. Sorry, but leading from three low cards is a real no-no – such a negative strategy costs tricks galore. Here, it allows declarer to get the Clubs going for discards. It takes sharp defence to beat 4♣ after a silly Club lead. True, a Diamond lead may cost a trick but that is true of any lead. Passive defence is not often right!

West	North	East	South
2♣	Pass	1NT	Pass
4♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

Hand 14

Love All, Dealer East

♠ 6 5
♥ A 8 3 2
♦ K 4 2
♣ Q 8 5 3

N	E
W	S

♠ Q 10 7 4
♥ K Q J 10
♦ A J
♣ J 9 2

♠ K J 9 3
♥ 7 5 4
♦ Q 10 6 5
♣ A K

♠ A 8 2
♥ 9 6
♦ 9 8 7 3
♣ 10 7 6 4

East plays in 4♣ after a Stayman sequence and South has to find a lead. Well, with a near worthless hand it may be right to play for a Heart ruff – holding the Ace of trumps does guarantee you can get on lead again. So the ♥9 opening lead from ♥9 x is not an unreasonable shot. Now it should be easy – East calls for a card from dummy and North... must duck. This is not difficult as the ♥9 can only be from ♥9 x. The bidding makes it clear that East does not have four Hearts and the Nine must be from shortage, so what can South have but a doubleton Heart? North must play the ♥8 at trick one, to keep communications open and to signal encouragement. (Thinking, fidgeting and finally playing the ♥2 or ♥3 is not on. In any standard. Really!) Now it's easy enough for the defenders to negotiate a Heart ruff and two Aces. Eventually East has to try the Diamond finesse and that's Goodnight Vienna.

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♣	All Pass	

Hand 15

North-South Game, Dealer South

♠ K Q 10 6 3 2
♥ J
♦ A Q 6
♣ Q J 9

N	E
W	S

♠ A
♥ Q 5 3
♦ J 10 8 5 2
♣ A 5 4 2

♠ 8 5
♥ 10 8 7 6 4 2
♦ 3
♣ K 8 7 3

♠ J 9 7 4
♥ A K 9
♦ K 9 7 4
♣ 10 6

This hand has echoes of Hand 1. East has a miserable hand to lead from against 4♣ and the singleton Diamond is a standout choice. North takes that and plays a trump, won by West. Now what? Well, West gives his partner a Diamond ruff and now? I assume that West will have made some sort of signal so that East knows to lead a Club (if East plays a Heart declarer has enough tricks). If East does lead a Club to the Ace might not West lead another Diamond.? Oops! Well, East might lead the ♣3 at trick four (contrast that with the defence on Hand 1 where East played the ♣8) to show Club interest. That **might** get the job done. It **might** be possible to signal length in trumps by means of an echo, (upside down from normal high-low to show an even number), although no one seems to do that these days. However, if you are going to lead a Club at trick three from the East hand it can hardly cost to lead the King of Clubs, can it? That gets the job done...

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♥	2♣
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Hand 16

East-West Game, Dealer West

♠ 2
♥ Q 5 2
♦ 8 6 5 3
♣ K 9 6 3 2

N	E
W	S

♠ K Q
♥ A K 9 7 6
♦ K Q 9 7 2
♣ 4

♠ J 8 6 5
♥ J 10 8 4
♦ A J
♣ J 10 5

♠ A 10 9 7 4 3
♥ 3
♦ 10 4
♣ A Q 8 7

A compare-and-contrast deal. Compare this one with Hand 15. West reaches 4♥ and North leads the ♠2, an obvious singleton, in response to his partner's overcall. South takes the and, presumably, leads back the ♣3 as a suit-preference signal for Clubs. So North ruffs and plays...? Well, no marks for suggesting a Club – the key question is **which Club**? If North leads a low Club South may well play another one, knowing North has the King. West ruffs, draws trumps and claims. North may, having absorbed the lessons of the previous deal, lead the ♣K at trick three. Nope, no cigar for that one. South will surely play low and then we are as we were before – West ruffs the next Club and laughs all the way to the bank. North can see the winning defence – the ♥Q can become promoted. So at trick three he should lead the ♣9. "Knowing" there is no future in Clubs South should take the ♣A and play another Spade. And that is the end of West. One off.