**Olicana Bridge Club**

**Beginner’s Lessons**

**The Opening Lead**

The first card led at Trick 1 is referred to as ***“The Opening Lead”***

It is made by the defender on declarer’s left.

Declarer gains a significant advantage in playing the cards from his own hand and from dummy.

The defenders counter this by communicating with each by legitimate means through defensive signals.

These arise in several situations which you will learn as your bridge develops.

The first of these situations is the card led as The Opening Lead.

It transmits a lot of information.

Declarer is also entitled to know what it says.

The same principles apply later in the play when you lead a suit for the first time.

Your aims in making the opening lead are as follows:

**1.1. To avoid giving declarer a trick which he is not entitled to win by his own efforts.**

For example; if you lead a suit headed by A-Q and declarer holds the K he will make a trick with it.

He is not entitled to this trick.

Declarer’s king would lose to your ace if anyone else leads the suit.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 9 8 3 |  |
| A Q 4 2 |  | J 10 7 |
|  | K 6 5 |  |

**declarer**

**1.2. To Set up tricks for the defence.**

For example; if you hold K - Q in a side suit against a suit contract lead the King.

This may lose to declarer’s or dummy’s ace but the queen is set up immediately for a trick which you hope to cash before declarer can get rid of his losers in this suit.

Against no trumps generally lead the suit you consider to be your side’s longest and strongest.

You may lose an early trick or tricks but you hope to set up tricks with the long cards in your suit after you have exhausted declarer of his high cards in the suit.

Leading partner’s suit

When you reach the stage of bidding for the contract this comes into consideration.

For the moment just be aware.

If partner has overcalled a suit, one of the reasons was to indicate a lead.

You need a very good reason not to lead a suit in which partner has overcalled.

If partner opened the bidding with one of a suit there is less of an imperative to lead the suit.

**1.3. To give partner an indication of your holding in the suit**

Having decided which suit to lead, the card you lead gives partner an indication of the texture of your suit.

Defensive principles relating to the card led are as follows.

If you have a sequence of cards headed by an honour lead the top card

**K** Q J 3 **J** 10 9 3

The lead if an honour, therefore, promises the card immediately below and denies the card immediately above.

This is the best type of lead. It satisfies all the aims above.

If you have a suit headed by an isolated honour lead a low card.

By convention you lead the 4th card from the top.

This type of lead is dangerous. It can give declarer a trick he was not entitled to.

K 7 3 **2** Q 7 5 **4** 2

If the suit you are leading does not contain an honour lead a high card.

Partner will then know your high card assets lie in another suit.

9 **7** 5 3 9 **7** 5 3 2

There’s more to it than this but this will do for a start.

There’s also a lot more to defensive signals.

You need to understand defence - you spend 50% of your bridge career as a defender.