

Presentation 22nd August - Leading against NT contract

Hand 9 from Thursday 12th July

The auction has gone

North	East	South	West
1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT			

You are on lead with this hand and it'll help if you can think it through

♠ Q J 6
♥ K 6 4 3
♦ 9 8 5 2
♣ Q 5

1. Your first consideration must be to conclude that the NT Game is tight. Opponents are probably holding 25 HCP between them. We know from Andy's Double-Dummy analysis that these are predicted to succeed 50% of the time.
2. So it is in your interest to find a good lead because you have an evens chance to defeat the contract.
3. With this auction it looks as though opponents have balanced hands or perhaps have Minor suit length somewhere that they hope will bring in length tricks for them. So your first consideration is that a Major suit lead is probably better than a Minor.
4. With the known HCP distribution it is reasonable to assume your partner has 8 HCP and therefore opportunity for entries.
5. There is no obvious play to set up length tricks in your own hand. Your Heart suit is only 4-card length. Andrew Kambites second principle on NT leads argues "your chances of developing length tricks from a 4-card suit are considerably less than they are from a 5-card suit". More of Andrew Kambites next week.
6. What are the chances that partner has a 5-card Heart suit? I would say partner is more likely to have length in a suit that you have fewer cards in. Statistically, partner is more likely to hold 5 Spades than 5 Hearts because there are more Spades out there in the mix. Partner might have an entry or two and so you want to try and develop tricks in partner's hand if you can. So an attacking lead in Spades could be the winning line. Also, you might have an entry too in Hearts or Clubs and your ability to lead the Spade suit a third time could be useful if partner is having difficulty getting in.

I chose to lead ♠Q and this held so I realised I had probably hit the jackpot. I followed with the ♠J. Chris eventually got in twice and made the last two Spade tricks to defeat the contract for a handsome score of 90%. From the discussion afterwards it is clear that declarer completely misread the hands expecting me (not Chris) to hold Spades length.

Here is the full deal.

♠ A K 2	Dealer N E/W Vul
♥ 10 7 2	
♦ A 7 4	
♣ K 9 6 3	

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

14
6 8
12

♠ 9 3
♥ A Q 9
♦ K Q J 6
♣ 8 7 4 2

