

Tips for the improver – opening leads – part 5

Following on from last month's article, this one focuses on the choices to be made when there is evidence which might signpost your choice from the bidding, eg

| W | N | E | S |
|----|----|----|----|
| 1S | X | 3S | 4D |
| 4S | 5D | P | P |
| X | P | P | P |

You are West with the following hand:

West

S QJ1075

H AKJ

D 3

C AQJ6

Before reading on, make your selection and make a note of it together with the reasoning for your choice. Now, let's look at each of the possibilities:

- **D3** – a trump lead might be the right choice when you believe declarer will need ruffs in dummy to make the contract but here NS are clearly well stocked with trumps and the best this choice will achieve is not to give a trick away.
- **HA** – Having doubled 1S, North will be expected to have strength and length in hearts. Also, South might be short in hearts allowing him subsequently to ruff out your other honours and discard losers on the established cards.
- **SQ** – If partner has SAK, this might allow you to look at dummy to inform a switch but East's pre-emptive raise suggests long spades and relative weakness. With SAK he might have bid just 2S.
- **CA** – Probably the best choice. CK is most likely to be with North and the lead of CA followed by CQ should establish two tricks.

The full hand was:

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| | North | |
| | S A | |
| | H Q10764 | |
| | D KQ72 | |
| | C K85 | |
| West | | East |
| S QJ1075 | | S K9642 |
| H AKJ | | H 8532 |
| D 3 | | D 84 |
| C AQJ6 | | C 93 |
| | South | |
| | S 83 | |
| | H 9 | |
| | D AJ10965 | |
| | C 10742 | |

As you can see, with best defence (cash SA, diamond switch to South and a club switch establishing a trick in each suit) 4S goes off. Against 5DX, attacking clubs at trick one ensures the setting trick is established before losing clubs can be discarded on HQ10.

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October 2019