

107. Lead off and lead on

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

North

♠ J8

♥ J105

♦ AK

♣ AKJ832

East

♠ A7

♥ AKQ8

♦ 10832

♣ Q106

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1NT ⁽¹⁾	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) 15-18 points, balanced in theory

West leads the ♠3: eight – ace – four. You switch to the ♥K: nine – two (odd number) – five. What do you play next?

Make up your mind before reading further.

Yesterday's first problem:

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1NT ⁽¹⁾	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) 15-18 points, balanced in theory

What would you lead as West from:

♠ K63

♥ 76432

♦ QJ

♣ 954

You have 6 HCP and partner has 15-18. That means that the opponents have contracted for game with 19 HCP or fewer. How do they expect to make ten tricks with so few points? South's 3♠ would be based on 6-7 spades and North will have 2-3. Clearly they must have shapely hands and expect to make extra tricks by ruffing. How do you counter that? By leading trumps and cutting down dummy's ruffing potential.

Today's deals come from the finals of the Spingold (USA K-O Open Teams). This one is from 2019.

Board 27: Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ J8	
	♥ J105	
	♦ AK	
	♣ AKJ832	
West		East
♠ K63		♠ A7
♥ 76432		♥ AKQ8
♦ QJ		♦ 10832
♣ 954		♣ Q106
	South	
	♠ Q109542	
	♥ 9	
	♦ 97654	
	♣ 7	

In practice West led the ♦Q and that was fatal. Dummy won with the ♦A and South, Bas Drijver of Netherlands, played ♣A, ♣K, discarding the ♥9. Then came ♦K; ♥5 ruffed; ♦4: ♣9 – ♠8 – ♦8; ♥10 ruffed; ♦5: ♥2 – ♠J – ♦10 and the ♥J, ruffed. Declarer had made nine tricks and still had to make one more with his remaining ♠Q-10-9. North-South +590.

At the other table it went:

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

(1) 15-18 points, balanced in theory

(2) Takeout

West led the ♦Q. The play went the same way and South made ten tricks for +170, but –9 Imps.

Suppose that West had led the ♠3 initially against 4♣ doubled. The defence is still very difficult. If East wins with the ♠A and returns a spade, West wins and can play a heart, but the rest is easy for South. If East plays a second heart or a diamond, declarer wins, draws the last trump sooner or later and plays ♣A, ♣K, club ruff. With the opposing trumps gone. South crosses to dummy with a diamond and pitches the diamond losers on the club winners.

The same thing happens if East wins the ♠A, cashes a heart and plays another heart or a spade. East has to consider what South would have for the 3♣ bid and the basis for West's double. West has no high-card values in hearts or in clubs. The most West can have in diamonds is the Q-J and that would not figure in a penalty double of 4♣. Therefore, West must have something strong in spades.

Seeing the danger in dummy clubs, East wins the ♠A, cashes the ♥K and now must switch to a diamond to knock out the entry to dummy's clubs. Declarer wins in dummy and plays ♣A, ♣K, club ruff and a spade. Now West must take the ♠K and play another diamond. Dummy wins, but West can ruff the next club from dummy. If declarer takes ♦A at trick 3, ♦K at trick 4, ♣A, ♣K, pitching a diamond, club ruff, diamond ruff, club, East or West can ruff this and South still has the ♠K and a diamond to lose.

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
1♦	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	4♦	4♣
5♦	Dble	Pass	5♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 6+ spades, 7-10 points

What would you lead as West from:

♠ A4
♥ K542
♦ KQJ542
♣ 2

Make your decision before reading on. This arose in the final of the 2017 Spingold.

Board 44: Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

	North		East
	♠ QJ9872		♠ 5
	♥ A10		♥ 9763
	♦ 93		♦ A1086
	♣ K107		♣ 9863
West			
♠ A4			
♥ K542			
♦ KQJ542			
♣ 2			
	South		
	♠ K1063		
	♥ QJ8		
	♦ 7		
	♣ AQJ54		

‘Side-suit singletons are excellent leads and should nearly always be chosen . . . Side-suit singleton are usually better leads than those from honour sequences such as K-Q-J or Q-J-10.’ (*Winning Suit Contract Leads*, by David Bird and Taf Anthias). West’s hand in the above deal is an ideal example for the Bird-Anthias thesis.

It is very likely that most players would choose the ♦K lead, but if you did that, 5♣ is unbeatable. The defence takes one diamond and one spade only. Antonio Sementa, West, followed the Bird-Anthias advice and began with the ♣2: seven – three (suit-preference for diamonds) – ace. South played the ♠3. West grabbed the ace and switched to the ♦J. East took the ♦A and returned a club. West ruffed. One down, +50.

That was unlucky for South, to be sure, but it would have been better for South to pass the double of 5♦ than bid 5-over-5. West figures to go one or two down in 5♦.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
1♦	1♥ ⁽¹⁾	3♦	3♣
Pass	4♣	All Pass	

(1) 4+ spades

West led the ♣2: king – three (suit-preference for diamonds) – four. The defence followed a similar path, with West receiving a club ruff, but South had ten tricks, +420 and +10 Imps.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

North
 ♠ K103
 ♥ KQ92
 ♦ K97
 ♣ 853

South
 ♠ 9
 ♥ J87643
 ♦ Q5
 ♣ AK74

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Limit raise with 4+ hearts

(2) Based more on hope and shape than on points

West leads the ♥10: king – ace – four. East returns the ♠7: nine – ace – three. West continues with the ♠Q. Plan the play.

2. Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

North
 ♠ A
 ♥ AK62
 ♦ AK1073
 ♣ 753

South
 ♠ J742
 ♥ J1074
 ♦ 54
 ♣ 1094

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

West leads the ♠6: ace – ten – two. You play ♦A, ♦K and ruff the ♦3. Both opponents follow. How do you continue?

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

Police are now saying, 'Come out with your hands washed!'