

TALES OF AKARANA

INSPIRED LEADERS

Does that description fit you? Jacinda Ardern or Winston Peters, perhaps? Maybe they had other things on their minds last Wednesday evening.

There were plenty of imps available on the following two boards....Will you do as well as our politicians and play the right card? What is your choice to be after the following two auctions:

West	North	East	South
		You	
		1♥	2♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT

All Pass

You have "10 and 2 10's"

♠ AT6

♥ AJ832

♦ 74

♣ JT2

Opening the bidding did not seem to be a great success. Can you do better with your opening lead?

Or try this one:

West	North	East	South
	You		
2NT ¹	Pass	3♣ ²	Pass
3NT ³	Pass	6NT	All Pass

¹ 20-22

² major suit enquiry

³ no 4/5 card major

You have far less to look at this time:

♠ QJ75

♥ 9863

♦ 863

♣ 62

On the outset, both problems seem fairly random. When the sun is shining, you choose well but you may have noticed it has not shone much lately!

With the lead to 3NT, could your partner produce either heart honour and declarer not enough tricks without losing one to your ♠A first? While the ♥Q could be partner's only honour, the lack of a 2♥ or even a pre-emptive 3♥ from partner, lessens the chance of this being correct...and if partner has nothing in the minors, surely declarer can get enough tricks from those two suits without touching spades? Let's look elsewhere.

♣J? Safe enough but is this really going to beat the contract? Partner has 6 clubs to the king. Maybe...or maybe not! What about looking at the suit they have ignored...spades? They have shown no interest in that suit. Could partner indeed hold it? Seems a chance. Which spade to lead? That 10 could get in the way. Put it on the table at trick 1!

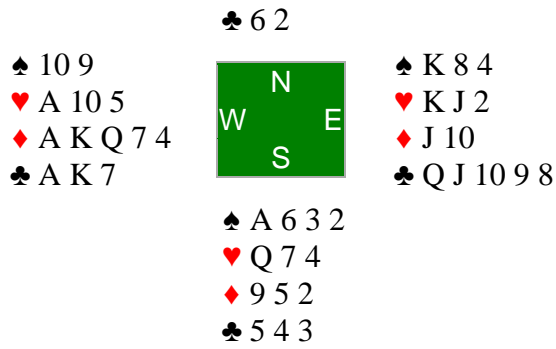
Board 2		♠ K 4 3										
East Deals		♥ K 9 7 4										
N-S Vul		♦ 10 6 2										
		♣ K Q 3										
♠ Q 9 8 5 2		<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 10 6
	N											
W		E										
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♥ 6			♥ A J 8 3 2									
♦ K 8 5			♦ 7 4									
♣ 8 6 5 4			♣ J 10 2									
		♠ J 7										
		♥ Q 10 5										
		♦ A Q J 9 3										
		♣ A 9 7										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>									
		1 ♥	2 ♦									
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT									
All pass												

The ♠10 spells certain defeat whether or not North holds up for one round. Even the ♠6 will work as long as West does not insert the queen on the first round. North may well expect the ♦finesse to work and will get a rude shock.

Were East to hold AKx of an unbid suit, especially a major, they would lead that suit. So why not ATx? The only declarers who failed in 3NT were those who received a spade lead from West. It was harder but not impossible for East to find the killing lead too.

What then to 6NT? Unless we have a good suit holding, we normally go defensive to this contract, selling out occasionally when an attacking lead was called for. The bidding indicated that East, the dummy, had greater length in the majors than West. That would put me off a heart lead, fearful that I will give West a free finesse at trick 1. Partner has around 3-5 hcps. East and West have some length in the minor suits. A diamond lead should be passive. Is that what you want to do?

Board 23	♠ Q J 7 5
South Deals	♥ 9 8 6 3
Both Vul	♦ 8 6 3



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			2 NT
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 NT
Pass	6 NT	All pass	

Well, not on this night! All bar two pairs played no-trumps from the wrong side, but only one North-South pair recorded a plus score. At that table, North led the ♠5 and West must have felt that the chance that North had underled the ♠A was greater than South having neither the queen nor the jack.

One other North found the same lead with West holding their nerve, shutting their eyes, and when they re-opened them, found that the ♠A had been played. A good duck by declarer. Others in 6NT survived thanks to the wrong major being led.

Time will tell whether our new political leaders will make the grade. There was a bucket load of imps to be gained if you found the right lead while others sought the right leader! Were they, the imps that is, in your "in tray"?

Richard Solomon