

## What a Difference a Lead Makes.

That is not a revolutionary statement. Combine a poor choice of lead with an excellent piece of declarer play and you have a 12-imp swing. So, we had better give you the lead problem and see whether you are able to tie the board as your teammates had no chance of making the same contract.

**Board 22**  
East Deals  
E-W Vul



♠ 9 3 2  
♥ A Q J 10 7  
♦ Q 8  
♣ 10 9 3

Playing light opening bids, you effectively open 1♥. Your next opponent doubles and partner bids 2♥, a pretty minimum raise. You hear 2♠ on your right and a jump to 4♠ on your left. So, there you have it...all you need is your hand! The strong hand is certainly on your left.

Therefore, if your partner fails to produce the ♥K, it is pretty likely that that card will be in dummy. Actually, if the king is in dummy, it will not help your cause much as far as gaining 4 tricks. Nevertheless, it will guide you what to do at trick 2.

Well, that indeed was true but what should have been a routine four or five tricks for the defence became suddenly a lot harder...and the defence fell prey to a fine piece of declarer play.

Let's check out the four hands and the play at the other table.

For those who play transfer responses to 1♣ (1♥ showed 4+ spades), this board was not a great advertisement for this approach.

South was able to double for a heart lead, duly received.

Death for the contract was sudden as the defence took two heart tricks after which the declarer did well to escape for just down one.

**Board 22**  
East Deals  
E-W Vul

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

♠ A K 8 4  
♥ 6 5  
♦ A K 7 4  
♣ A 5 2



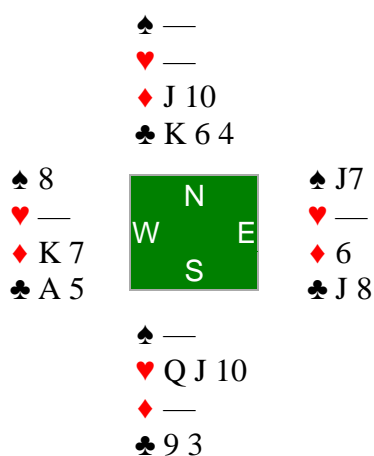
♠ Q J 7 6 5  
♥ K 3  
♦ 6 3 2  
♣ J 8 7

♠ 9 3 2  
♥ A Q J 10 7  
♦ Q 8  
♣ 10 9 3

	West	North	East	South
			Pass	Pass
1♣		Pass	1♥	x
3♠		Pass	4♠	All Pass

However, at the table where North-South were in the bidding, South chose the ♥A and then found a club switch. One would have to say that chances were still rather grim for declarer. He ducked the ♣10 to North's queen. North exited a heart to the king which was followed by three rounds of trumps, with North discarding two hearts.

Next came a low diamond from the East hand to the king in dummy and then the crucial small diamond which went to South's queen. Declarer would have been aiming for diamonds to break 3-3 enabling for a club to be discarded on dummy's fourth round of diamonds. However, he had an extra chance on the actual lie of the cards. When South scored their ♦Q, these cards remained:



South exited with a club won in dummy with the ace. On the first trump, North could throw a club. However, with dummy discarding their last club on the second trump, North was, as one says, "gone".

Well played by Malcolm Mayer even if South could have survived their poor choice of opening lead. With the ♦Q certain to fall under the top diamonds, South had to play ♦Q on the first round of the suit. There was no cost in doing so if, say, declarer had three or four diamonds headed by the jack. This time, North would have won the diamond exit and safely played another high diamond to break the squeeze.

A passive club or trump, or even an aggressive ♦Q opening lead would all have beaten 4♠ comfortably but the lead of the unsupported ace gave declarer a chance, indeed a certainty had diamonds broken evenly. No guarantees but not perhaps the best opening shot from the South hand. Nevertheless, a nicely played hand.

*Richard Solomon*