

TRUMP LEADS...WHEN THERE'S NO ALTERNATIVE?

The problem was that there was an alternative, a very real one. Three small trumps and a side-suit singleton. That was enough for everyone to avoid a trump lead on the following:

<p>Board 13 North Deals Both Vul</p> <p>♠ K Q 9 3 ♥ A J ♦ J 9 5 4 ♣ 10 6 3</p> <p>♠ A 5 ♥ K Q 10 9 ♦ 8 5 ♣ A K 8 2</p> <p>♠ 8 ♥ 7 6 2 ♦ Q 10 3 ♣ Q 9 8 7 4 2</p>		<table border="0"> <tr> <td><i>West</i></td> <td><i>North</i></td> <td><i>East</i></td> <td><i>South</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>1 NT</td> <td>Dbl</td> <td>Rdbl</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>2 ♣</td> <td>3 ♥</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 ♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4 ♥</td> <td>All pass</td> </tr> </table> <p>South was running to clubs and although West did get to mention their spade suit, it was East's hearts which won the day.</p>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>		1 NT	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass	2 ♣	3 ♥	Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♥	All pass
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>															
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With no expectation of any heart length or ruffing value in dummy, there seemed no reason to lead a trump but to hope that their partner held the ace of either major. They did but by the time North got in to play a second spade, East had disposed of their spade loser on the ♣K and ruffed both losing diamonds in dummy..well, South actually could ruff the fourth round of the suit before dummy. However, the defence could take only that ruff and the ♥A, a meagre reward from what an initial trump lead and continuation would achieve. The three side-suit losers would all remain losers...one down.

Not surprisingly, no-one defeated 4♥.

<p>What though about this next board?</p> <p>The popular contract was 4♥ played by either North or South. Reaching 4♥ would be a bit of a challenge against a third seat 4 card major 1♥ from West, though for the majority, West either did not open or opened 1 of a minor.</p>	<p>Board 6 East Deals E-W Vul</p> <p>♠ J ♥ K Q J 5 ♦ A K J 3 ♣ Q 8 5 4</p> <p>♠ K Q 4 3 ♥ 8 7 3 2 ♦ Q 9 2 ♣ K J</p> <p>♠ 8 7 2 ♥ 6 ♦ 10 6 4 ♣ A 10 9 7 3 2</p> <p>♠ A 10 9 6 5 ♥ A 10 9 4 ♦ 8 7 5 ♣ 6</p>
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Thus, East would probably lead whichever minor West called and would certainly never (not in good company!) lead a singleton trump. Yet, were West on lead, a little trump might well and indeed was by far the best lead for the defence. South will win in hand to play their club with West hopping up to play a second trump.

This happened at one table with South slipping up in the subsequent play. South needs to make 6 trump tricks (by ruffing two clubs) and make three diamond tricks and the ♠A. So, three rounds of diamonds it has to be...and all is well for South with the 13th diamond even providing an overtrick.

However, the sky was the limit if the defence never attacked trumps. 12 tricks were made at two tables (8 trumps, 3 diamonds and ♠A) with one pair having the audacity to bid and make the small slam. With declarer needing a very favourable diamond position, those defenders who led a trump deserved a better reward.

However, if there is no reason to lead a trump, and a valid alternative, leading a passive trump is not a good idea. One North player paid a heavy price for their trump lead on the following:

<p><u>Board 19</u> South Deals E-W Vul</p> <p>♠ 10 3 ♥ 10 7 6 2 ♦ A Q ♣ K Q 10 5 2</p> <p>♠ A K 2 ♥ A J 9 3 ♦ K 9 7 5 ♣ 6 4</p> <p>♠ 9 5 ♥ K Q 8 ♦ J 8 6 4 ♣ J 9 7 3</p>		<p>♠ Q J 8 7 6 4 ♥ 5 4 ♦ 10 3 2 ♣ A 8</p>	<table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1 NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2 ♥</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 ♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3 ♠</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 ♠</td> <td>All pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>				Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All pass		
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We may all get sick of leading the king from the club holding above and see declarer have the ace and dummy Jxx. It happens. So, do bad trump breaks. This time, the defender who chose a passive trump lead was soon to write down -620 while those who made the “normal” club lead were recording +100.

Our North who led the trump might have survived had South ducked the first round of hearts smoothly. West had a losing option of finessing the ♥10. However, when South put up a high honour, West ducked. A diamond was played to the queen...and, too late the ♣K was played. Dummy’s club loser

disappeared on the third round of hearts (after the marked finesse) and playing diamonds for just two losers did not prove too hard.

So, what's the moral of all this? Lead a trump when it is right but not otherwise! The normal lead may not always work but it did not work at the other tables, either.

Richard Solomon