

Opening Leads—When Partner Has Bid  
(February 1, 2021)

When your partner bids a suit, you need to give consideration to leading that suit—especially if s/he has overcalled. Overcalled suits tend to be reasonably strong, five or six card suits. In fact, many overcalls are made with one thought in mind—to direct the opening lead.

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
	1C	1S	1N
P	2N	P	3N
P	P	P	

You are West and hold the following hand:

Q5  
QJ5  
107432  
1087

Lead the queen of spades.

What would you have led if partner had not overcalled one spade?

Normally, you want to lead your partner's suit. However, if you hold something like AKQx, AKJx, or KQJx in another suit, you could not be faulted if you chose to lead that suit.

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The bidding has proceeded as follows:

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
P	1D	1S	2H
P	3H	P	4H
P	P	P	

You are West and hold the following hand:

843  
743  
J84  
QJ95

Lead your partner's suit, either the eight (8) or the four (4), if you play MUD (middle-up-down). You might not want to lead the three (3) as it would tend to show honor, third in the suit. If your partner had not bid, what would you have led?

But, look at the example below:

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1H	1S	2H	P
3H	P	4H	P
P	P		

Below is the complete spade holding of the four hands:

	North		
	1097		
West		East	
J64		AK852	
	South		
	Q3		

Here, you should lead the four (4) of spades, If you incorrectly lead the jack, East will have to win with the king. S/he can then cash the ace of spades. But, dummy's ten (10) will provide declarer with a discard.

## Lead Directing Doubles

All doubles of artificial bids such as Stayman, Jacoby Transfers, responses to Blackwood/Gerber, 2-Club openings, etc. are lead directive—never for takeout. When your partner doubles such a bid, s/he is asking you to **lead** that suit should you be the opening leader.

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1NT	P	2C	???

You are West and hold the following hand:

xx  
Ax  
Jxx  
KJ10xxx

When South bids 2C (Stayman), you need to double asking your partner to lead a club should s/he be on lead. Unless you double, your partner will never “find” the club lead.

CAUTION: It is better NOT to double an artificial bid, i.e., two-club Stayman bid, if you have length in the suit but no strength.

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The bidding has proceeded as follows:

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
1C	P	1S	P
3S	P	4NT*	P
5H**	DBL	5NT***	P
6D****	P	6S	P
P	P		

\* = Keycard Blackwood

\*\* = Shows two key cards; denies the queen of spades

\*\*\* = Asks for outside king

\*\*\*\* = King of diamonds

Based on East's double of the "5H artificial bid", West should lead a heart.

Below is the complete hand:

	North	
	AJ103	
	108	
	K2	
	AQJ109	
West		East
4		62
J7652		KQ43
QJ107		9543
863		K42
	South	
	KQ9875	
	A9	
	A86	
	75	

When East doubles the artificial five heart response, he is showing strength in the heart suit. West should lead the five (fourth best) of hearts. When declarer finesses for the club king, East can now cash the setting heart trick.

NOTE: If East does not double the artificial five heart response, West probably will lead the Q of diamonds. Without East's lead-directing double, South will make his six spade contract.

## Practice Exercise

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
	1D	1S	2H
P	4H	P	P
P			

You are West and hold the following hand:

93  
J64  
1085  
J10932

Holding a **doubleton** in your partner's spade suit, lead the nine (9). Partner wins with the queen and returns the king. When you follow with the three (3) of spades, partner knows that you held a doubleton in his suit. He continues with the ace of spades on which you discard the two (2) of clubs.

Is it possible to set this hand?

Let's look at the complete hand given below:

	North	
	J107	
	9852	
	AKQJ4	
	A	
West		East
93		AKQ54
J64		3
1085		762
J10932		Q876
	South	
	862	
	AKQ107	
	93	
	K54	

East has taken the first three tricks with the ace, king, and queen of spades. East notes (1) your discard of the two of clubs when he led the third spade; (2) the solid, powerful diamond suit residing in the dummy. Things look bleak for setting the contract.

However, never give up. East should see that the only chance for setting the contract lies in the promotion of a trump trick in your hand. In addition, East can see that a ruff/sluff will not help the declarer. He has no losers in the diamond or club suits. When East leads a fourth spade. If the declarer does not ruff high, West will win with the jack of hearts. If declarer ruffs high, West should simply discard either a club or diamond. He can sit back and wait for his jack of hearts; thus, setting the contract.

NOTE: If West had led anything but the spade, the declarer makes 13 tricks!

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Next week, I want to begin looking at leads against notrump contracts. A couple of you have asked what to lead when your hand holds all of the outstanding points; and, what to lead when you determine from the bidding that your partner holds all of the outstanding points.

The bidding has proceeded as follows:

<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
		1N	P
2N	P	3N	P
P	P		

Hand 1.  
109  
K1076  
K103  
AJ109

Here, you want to make the **passive** lead of the 10 of spades.

Hand 2.  
J103  
65  
985  
J6542

Here, there is zero chance of establishing your long club suit. Try to hit your partner by leading the jack of spades. Note that North did not bid Stayman, an indication that s/he

has no four-card major.

Assignment:

As you play in games this week, mark the hands on which you were the opening leader. Go back and critique your leads. On what did you base your lead? Was it effective? Would another lead have been better? And, so forth.