

## Ultimate Defence 09

Now let's have a look at some more examples of good defence, still focussing on the opening lead.

*Dealer North Nil Vul*

	♠ 6 5	
	♥ 10 8 7 6 2	
	♦ J 6	
	♣ K 8 6 2	
♠ Q J 8		♠ A 10 9 7 4
♥ A K 5		♥ Q J 3
♦ A K Q 10 3		♦ 4
♣ 10 6		♣ A J 9 4
	♠ K 3 2	
	♥ 9 4	
	♦ 9 7 5 3 2	
	♣ Q 7 5	

The bidding has been:

East	West
1S	3D
3S	4NT
5H	5NT
6C	6S

Before reading on, think about what you would have led if you were South.

What does the bidding tell South? West has made a jump shift to 3D, therefore most likely has a very good diamond suit and also at least 15 HCP. East has rebid spades, therefore West has decided to play the slam in spades. After West has asked for aces, West has asked for kings as well, therefore EW should have all four aces between them. There seems to be little chance of defeating the slam. South does have ONE potential, in fact probable, trick: the king of trumps. But what else?? South could lead a diamond, hoping that North can ruff at trick one, or possibly after declarer loses the spade finesse. That is not such a bad idea. But the odds favour North not being able to ruff the first or second round of diamonds, so establishing one more trick some other way may be necessary.

The heart lead is not a good idea. You lead doubletons because you're hoping for a third round ruff. That means partner would have to gain the lead after two rounds of hearts, and if that happens, the contract will be down. You should not expect to defeat slams by two tricks, one is the most you can hope for, so the heart lead would be based on hoping that partner has the king and queen of hearts. That means opponents have bid the slam with 30 HCP between them, possible but unlikely. More likely, opponents have their required 32 count and therefore partner can have no more than a two or three count. Where can that be if it is to be of any help? Yes, the obvious answer is: in clubs. If declarer makes a 'cheap' trick with the jack of clubs, that is not going to cost you the contract because West's diamonds should take care of that, but if partner has the one card that partner could have that might help, it has to be the king of clubs. So, lead the five of clubs and hope.

Making the opening lead is about thinking things through to start with, doing a bit of counting, deciding what each of the other hands might have, and where your best chances lie. It is not just about set rules. Against a Grand slam, you need only one trick, therefore cashing an ace is the obvious play. Against a Small slam, if you have e.g. an ace in one suit and KQ in another, setting up an extra trick is the most important thing to do. Cashing your ace will result in declarer being able to dispose of the other losers on the suit you have just set up for declarer. Set up *your* trick first, by leading the king from your KQ combination, and then wait to get the lead with your ace.

A similar argument applies to singleton and doubleton leads. Against a grand slam, your singleton lead is hoping partner has the ace, but opponents just don't bid grand slams unless they have all four aces so your lead will be totally ineffective. It will be more likely to pick up the one smaller honour card in partner's hand that could be vital, e.g. Jxxx or even Qxxx. But against a Small slam, the singleton lead is often your best chance of defeating a trump contract. Partner only needs the ace of the suit you have the singleton in, or the ace of trumps as long as you have more than one trump. You will defeat the small slam via a ruff, a cruel fate to befall declarer but certainly not one you would have much sympathy for!

Similarly, against the small slam the doubleton lead is generally futile, but against game contracts, because your side will have more high cards, the possibility of a ruff is definitely there. And against part scores, your chances of a third round ruff are greatest, but much depends on your holding, what you think declarer and dummy have, and what information you might have gleaned from your own partner's bidding as well as opponents'.

All these things come into consideration, which is why you must get into the habit of thinking about the hands and planning your strategy before you lead. Your partner, even if not on lead, should also be thinking, and then working out why you have made the lead you have. Partner then must cooperate with your strategy unless it is clearly not going to succeed based on the information that partner has.

Finally, a word about trump leads. These can be devastating or a disaster. Devastating if they rob declarer of a vital entry too early, or of later ruffing power in dummy when dummy has little of value other than a few trumps. A disaster when another lead might have done more damage. Generally, singleton trump leads are a no no, as are trump leads against a Small slam. You should always remember that trump leads normally do for declarer what declarer wants to do anyway, which is to draw trumps. That is, unless declarer has better use for their own, and dummy's, trumps. You have to work out which is the case.