

## Ultimate Defence 15

I would now like to return to square one: the opening lead. Let's start with some opening lead problems, some of which you may recognise and others you may not. Did you know that there should be no such thing as a common system for leads based on your holding in a suit? You have probably been taught to lead “ace from ace king”, “king from king queen”, “fourth highest of longest and strongest” and so on. But serious defenders will know that there is no such thing as a 'standard' lead from any particular holding, so let me explain what I mean. Then I will give you some exercises which should help illustrate just what I mean.

Let me start with a brief discussion on why, and when, you should deviate from your “normal” leading methods. You have decided to lead the ace from a holding which includes the ace and king. But, as in one of the earlier chapters, you have seen that against a No Trump contract, it is often better to lead your lowest, or 'fourth highest' from a suit with at least four cards headed by the ace and king.

There are other things that good defenders will do when holding the ace and king. Such things are: with a DOUBLETON AK, against a trump contract, lead the KING. Once you follow with the ace, partner will know that you started with a doubleton AK.

There are also times when you want a COUNT in a suit, and you would lead the king instead of the ace. Such situations arise when defending a No Trump contract, or against a slam contract where you may need to know whether to try and cash your second honour, so lead the king not the ace and partner will give you a count in the suit. Against No Trumps, the lead of a king from a strong suit such as AKJ10x or KQ109x should be asking partner to UNBLOCK an honour or give count. But more on that later. The king instead of the ace lead from AK can also be used to show an outside singleton so that when the king holds and you switch to another suit, partner can diagnose the fact that you are looking for a ruff in the side suit. Because you should always be thinking about your opening leads and planning your defence from the word go, there should be no such thing as a 'standard' opening lead based on your holding in the suit.

As our discussion on ultimate defence will show, there are going to be times when you will be leading your TOP card, your second to top as in K from AK, your third highest, your fourth highest, your fifth highest, your sixth highest and maybe even your seventh highest if you have a suit as long as that, all depending on circumstances.

So let us start with a few opening lead problems. We'll put you in the SOUTH seat each time. And let us assume for the purposes of this exercise that you are playing MATCH POINTS at your local club.

### 1. Dealer East All Vul

♠ 10 9 8

♥ Q 7 5 2

♦ A Q

♣ K J 7 3

The bidding:

W	N	E	S
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		1NT	NB
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2C	NB	2D	NB
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3NT	NB	NB	NB
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 What would YOU lead?

### 2. Dealer West EW Vul

♠ K 9 7 5 2

♥ Q J 8

♦ 7

♣ A 9 7 5

The bidding:

W	N	E	S
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1NT	NB	3H	NB
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4H	NB	NB	NB
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 Your lead?

### 3. Dealer West All Vul

♠ J 10

♥ Q 10 7 5

♦ J 9 8

♣ A 9 5 3

The bidding:

W	N	E	S
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1H	NB	1NT	NB
----	----	-----	----

3NT	NB	NB	NB
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 Your lead?

We'll take a look at these problems and the suggested answers in the next issue.

