

Tidbit 19

Only lead an Ace if you have the King except against slams

Interpretation:

The thinking is that, for most hands, Aces are intended to capture Kings not to be waved in the thin air. One acknowledged exception is when the opponents have bid a slam and you only require two tricks on defence to take them down. Leading your unsupported Ace may avoid a trick in that suit running away or even, occasionally, find partner with the King. It can also, in any contract, set a trick up in declarer's hand that she was not designed to win. A brief survey of recent play (see below) would suggest that there is not much for it or against. At least it often gives the defender on lead a chance to see the dummy before continuing.

Occasionally, it makes sense, in a trump contract, to lead an Ace and another holding a doubleton. This again carries the risk of allowing declarer to win her King when that was not deserved. The idea is best entertained when you hold poor values and partner, who is assumed to hold a better hand, is likely to hold a quick entry in the trump suit or the King in the suit led.

Examples: Leading an Ace against slams from recent play

Date	Board	Contract	Lead	Outcome	+/-/=
Dec 15 a.m.	14	6S	AD	Makes no difference	=
	16	6D	AH	Holds tricks to 12	+
	31	7S	AH	KC better lead but both make no difference	=
Dec 17 p.m.	10	6H	AC	Sets up KC, improves chance to make slam	-
	24	6S (South)	AC	Makes no difference	=
Dec 18 a.m.	9	6C	AS	Holds tricks to 12	+
	24	6D	AH	Facilitates an otherwise difficult contract	-

Exercise:



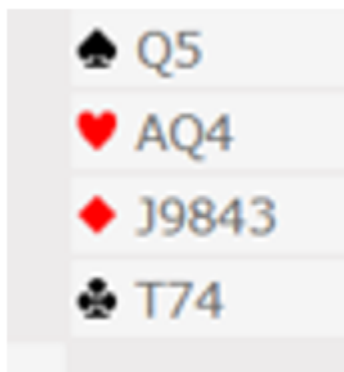
You are West, the Dealer. The bidding proceeds:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1S	2S*
4S	5C	5S	6C
Double			

**Michaels cue bid = 5+ 5+ hearts and a minor.*

This is an unusual hand from real life. What do you lead? Think carefully.

Answer to Exercise Tidbit 18:



East	South	West	North
1S	2D	4S	??

You are North and both sides are vulnerable? Do you pass, bid 5D or double 4S?

BOARD 10					
BD: 10	♠ Q5			Dir: E	
	♥ AQ4			Vul: ALL	
	♦ J9843				
	♣ T74				
♠ T9832			♠ AKJ764		
♥ K97			♥ J863		
♦ K5			♦		
♣ A95			♣ K86		
	♠				
	♥ T52				
	♦ AQT762				
	♣ QJ32				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	3	-	-	-
S	-	3	-	-	-
E	-	-	3	4	2
W	-	-	2	4	2

This is a difficult judgement.

What defence do you have? Possibly 2 x tricks in hearts, maybe a diamond trick and maybe a club trick. Your partner should have 10+ HCPs for her bid or very good diamonds to compensate. It is possible 4S will go one down.

The "Law" of Total tricks indicates that you should be safe in 4D if partner has 5 x diamonds and safe in 5D if partner has 6. It seems like you have 1 x spade loser at most, maybe 2 x club losers if your partner has a useful honour, probably 1 to 2 heart losers or 1 x diamond and 1 x heart loser. It looks like you will make 8-9 tricks.

Making 9 tricks doubled is OK if the opposition can make 4S even after losing 2 x hearts. Since the opposition is still likely to make 4S even if you win 2 x hearts and you might not even get doubled, a bid of 5D is reasonable...but, so is a pass.