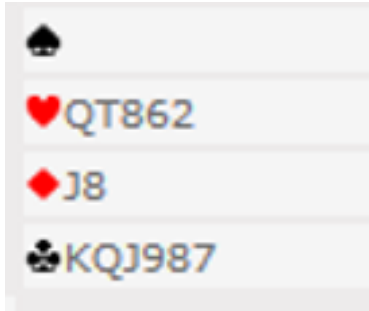


Let the Force be with You:

With East/West vulnerable and North the dealer, as East you hold the following hand:



North opens 1S and you decide to make a Michael's cue bid of 2S to show at least 5-5 in hearts and a minor with less than opening points.

The bidding then proceeds as follows:

North	East	South	West
1S	2S*	Double	4H
4S	Pass	Pass	Pass

*Michaels cue bid.

What do you lead?

Thoughts:

If you led the KC you would be in good company but North will then make 11 tricks. There are two indicators from the bidding that might persuade you to lead something else. Partner has strong support for your heart suit and South does not seem to have more than 2 x spades or else she might have supported her partner initially. If North has no more than 6 x spades, then your partner holds 5.

There is a defensive tactic, called a forcing defence, which can be effective if the defenders have their own suit and the trumps split badly for declarer. The defenders lead their own suit whenever possible to, hopefully, reduce declarer's trump length to fewer than one of the defenders so that the defence achieves trump control of the hand.

BOARD 16					
BD: 16	♠QJT976				
	♥				
	♦AKQ642				
	♣3				
♠AK542		♠			
♥KJ954		♥QT862			
♦95		♦J8			
♣4		♣KQJ987			
	♠83				
	♥A73				
	♦T73				
	♣AT652				
	♠				
	♥				
	♦				
	♣				
	NT				
N	-	5	-	3	2
S	-	4	-	3	2
E	1	-	3	-	-
W	2	-	3	-	-
					12
				11	9
					8

This is the full hand (adapted as far as the dealer from Board 16, Tuesday afternoon, Aug 21).

If East leads a heart, since West has both the top two spades plus three more, the lead gives the defenders just enough momentum to keep a step ahead of declarer. Declarer can win the AH and lead a spade but West wins and leads another heart. North must now ruff and her trump length is reduced to the same as West. She can drive out West's other spade winner but West now leads a third round of hearts which North must ruff again reducing her trump length to one fewer than West. Now the defenders have the momentum and can win a further two tricks in hearts or via diamond ruffs to hold declarer to nine tricks.

Incidentally, some may wonder why North opened only 1S with such a powerful two-suiter. If she opened 2C, for example, it uses up room to describe the hand. North had only 12 HCPS and feeling that the bidding would not die, she decided the best way to describe her hand would be to open 1S and then jump into 4D on her next bid but she never got the chance and opted for a game in her nearly solid six-card major rather than striving for 11 tricks in her minor.