

## Defensive play - bread and butter stuff

One way the defenders can beat trump contracts is to obtain ruffs.  
Imagine you are on lead against 4sp with :-

xxx  
x Well a lot of players would lead the singleton heart; they are hoping their  
Axx partners will win with the Ace and return the suit for a ruff. Even if their  
xxxxxx partner hasn't got the Ace there may still be chances.

|        |         |           |
|--------|---------|-----------|
|        | (dummy) |           |
|        | KJxx    |           |
|        | AKxx    |           |
| (you)  | xx      | (partner) |
| xx     | Axx     | Ax        |
| x      |         | Jxxxx     |
| Axxx   |         | xxx       |
| xxxxxx |         | Kxx       |

Here you lead the singleton heart ; unfortunately dummy wins with the Ace. When declarer tries to draw trumps your partner must *jump* quickly with the Ace of trumps and return a heart to give you a ruff.

This is all fair enough and worked ok on the above hand ; in general though the singleton lead is full of promise but is seldom that successful. It should really only be led when things feel desperate (!) and there are no sensible alternatives.

Perhaps this is such a hand and you decide to try the lead of the single diamond vs 4S.

|       |         |
|-------|---------|
|       | (dummy) |
|       | KJxx    |
| (you) | Qxx     |
| Ax    | xxxx    |
| Kxxxx | Ax      |
| x     |         |
| xxxxx |         |

You lead the singleton diamond; declarer wins in his hand with the Ace and leads a spade towards the dummy; NOW you must rise quickly with your Ace of spades; you must now get your partner in { so he can return a diamond for you to ruff}-not so easy really. You will probably have to hope partner has the Ace of hearts and lead a heart .Well partner *might* have the Ace of hearts but it is all a bit uncertain.  
That's why singleton leads are only so so as leads.

Another problem is that you may be clear in your mind that you have led a singleton and are expecting partner to return it to give you a ruff but things may not be so clear to partner - partner may think you are leading a "top of nothing " type lead and will lead another suit when they get in.

N.B. word of warning -- don't lead a single Q or single K;  
such leads invariably go badly wrong.

