

## Review of defensive plays -returning partner's suit

As a beginner you learned to *return your partner's lead* ; in fact it was made clear to you that it was little short of a sin not to. As you got better at the game you realised that that blanket rule wouldn't do .For one thing partner sometimes had no high cards in the led suit ; othertimes the dummy or declarer were unexpectedly strong in the led suit. At such times it seemed more sensible to try your suit(s) rather than plug away with partner's.

We are going to look at the various possibilities that arise and see if we cant get a "feel" for when to return or *not* return partner's lead.

## No Trumps

The belief that you should always return partner's suit/lead originated from No Trump play. Generally partner led from a long ( and hopefully long *and* strong ) suit.\*

Thus if the auction was 1NT -3NT and partner led a heart it would be reasonable to believe that partner had 4 or more hearts. By leading back and continuing to lead back partner's suit ,partner might be in a position to make tricks even out of their low cards. e.g if the auction was 1NT-----3NT and partner was on lead with any of the following hands then they would lead a heart.

{i} Axx K8542 Jxx xx	{ii} Qxxx KQJ3 xx Axx	{iii} AKx 98743 xxx Qx	{iv} xxx AQ43 xxxx Kx	{v} Axx J1093 J10x Jxx	{vi} Qxx 8632 AKx xxx
-------------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------

Their lead might well lose the first trick but later in the hand they might make a *number* of tricks.

The actual card partner led would tend to suggest their strength in that suit.

A *low card* led would promise at least one Hon :- hands {i} + {iv}

A *high card* led would suggest no Hons :- hands {iii} + {vi}

An *Hon card* led would suggest three Hon cards :- hands {ii} + {v}

We are going to look shortly at how the dummy's cards and our own will influence the decision to return the initial lead ; for the moment we can at least say that if the lead was an Honour then we should without exception return partner's lead.

\*I said that generally partner led from a long suit at No Trumps and that that should be relied on if there is an auction like (1NT -----3NT) or (2NT -----3NT).

If the auction was more complex though, say the opponents bid two or three suits along the way before bidding NTs then it would not be so certain that partner had a long suit. Partner might simply be avoiding leading one of the opponent's suits or have decided that leading an unbid suit was the best bet. If an opponent had themselves bid hearts and partner had to lead from our six hands here :-

{i} A43 K8542 J43 93	{ii} Q732 KQJ3 96 A43	{iii} AKx 98743 983 Q3	{iv} 976 AQ43 8654 K2	{v} A76 J1093 J10x J83	{vi} Qxx 8632 AK3 952
-------------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------

The lead probably *shouldnt* be a Heart in most cases. Which suit to lead is debatable {your next longest probably} but again the *card* led is important. A low card led would promise an Hon (or Hons) and a high card led would suggest no hons .

