

Strong Suit, Your Lead -- Problem

**Board 12**  
South Deals  
E-W Vul

♠ Q 8 2  
♥ A K 10 9 5  
♦ 10 5 2  
♣ J 9



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♣	Pass	Pass
All pass			1 N
1 NT by South			

*[deal rotated for convenience]*

Playing standard leads, what would the lead of the ♥ A ask of partner? The ♥ K?

As West, playing matchpoint pairs, would you lead one of them, or something else?

Decide before reading on...

The standard lead of the ♥ A asks partner to unblock an honor, or lacking one, to give count. The standard lead of the ♥ K asks for an attitude signal.

**Board 12**  
 South Deals  
 E-W Vul

Strong Suit, Your Lead -- Solution

♠ J 10 9 3		♠ A K 7									
♥ J 3		♥ 7 6 4 2									
♦ K J 7		♦ Q 6 3									
♣ A K 8 4		♣ 7 5 3									
♠ Q 8 2	<table style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6 5 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K 10 9 5		♥ Q 8									
♦ 10 5 2		♦ A 9 8 4									
♣ J 9		♣ Q 10 6 2									

West	North	East	South
<i>Pete</i>		<i>Andrew</i>	
			Pass
Pass	1 ♣	Pass	1 N
All pass			
1 NT by South			

I stopped dithering and chose the lead of the ♥ 10. Was this an inferior lead, or just one that did not work out?

I ran a "double dummy" opening lead simulation, as described in my article "Practice Deals & Opening Leads" from last February. Then I modified the tools to play all the deals with GiB, which takes extra steps and runs over 100 times as long. (I'll update the article soon.)

	----- Double Dummy -----				----- GiB Play -----				
1000 Deals	♥ A or K	♥ 10	♦ 5	♠ 8	♥ A	♥ K	♥ 10	♦ 5	♠ 8
Total Tricks for Defense	6,238	5,980	6,049	6,140	5,866	5,891	6,133	6,007	6,013
Average Tricks for Defense	6.24	5.98	6.05	6.14	5.87	5.89	6.13	6.01	6.01
Lead sets 1 NT Contract	38.0%	29.3%	34.6%	36.7%	29.6%	31.3%	36.6%	34.7%	35.4%

Double dummy assumes that if you win the opening lead, you will make the best continuation. There is no difference to double dummy between the lead of the ♥ A and ♥ K, but this choice could be everything in real life. For example, on the layout above, the lead of the ♥ A gets the ♥ 7, an "even" signal, from partner. With the ♥ J on dummy, it's a no-brainer to continue with the ♥ K to either establish or run the suit. However, suppose a small doubleton is on dummy. If East plays an honor on the ♥ A, does declarer have the other honor protected, or bare? You don't have the count. After the lead of the ♥ K, is life any better? You can go round and round on this. The second highest ♦ 5 and ♠ 8 leads suggest partner should shift -- I dismissed these OK leads as pusillanimous at the table.

Double dummy says my ♥ 10 lead was the worst. Robot play says it was best! That's because, in an opening lead simulation, double dummy highly favors the side that wins the first trick. The conclusions are the same at matchpoints, where average tricks is the metric, or at IMPs, where setting the contract is the goal.

David Bird and Taf Anthias wrote a couple of books on opening leads based on double dummy simulations. Hoping to write *Double Dummy Is Not Bridge*, I did many GiB simulation testing their results for notrump leads, back in the day. I mostly found GiB produced similar results. Not so with this problem.

By examining the play, it became clear that GiB does not signal on defense. The various bots make different choices throughout the play; the smallish difference between the ♥ A and ♥ K results has no useful meaning.