

# 75. Hard start and easy start

*By Ron Klinger*

With neither side vulnerable, the opponents bid 1NT : 3NT. What would you lead as West from:

♠ 109  
♥ A975  
♦ 87543  
♣ 98

Today's deals are from Round 3 of the third Alt-Invitational, organized by bid72, bridge 24 and netbridgeonline, together with BBO (Bridge Base Online). These were the teams:

<b>Blass</b>	Josef Blass, Sjoert Brink, Bas Drijver, Jacek Kalita, Michael Nowosadski, Jacek Pszczola (Pepsi)
<b>Bridge Scanner</b>	Konrad Araszkiwicz, Krzysztof Kotorowicz, Wojciech Olanski, Vytautas Vainikonis, Erikas Vainikonis, Andrei Arlovich, Mirhail Krasnoselskii, Georgy Matushko
<b>De Botton</b>	Janet de Botton, Thomas Charlsen, Jason Hackett, Thor Erik Hoftaniska, Alexander Hydes, Artur Malinowski
<b>Donner</b>	Gary Donner, Cecilia Rimstedt, Frederik Nystrom, Johan Upmark, Marion Michielsen, Per Ola Cullin,
<b>Gupta</b>	Naren Gupta, Bauke Muller, Simon de Wijs, Huub Bertens, Cedric Lorenzini, Thomas Bessis
<b>Street</b>	Paul Street, Kamel Fergani, Nicolas L'Ecuyer, Ron Pachtman, Fred Pollack, Piotr Zatorski
<b>Team Rosenthal</b>	Andrew Rosenthal, Aaron Silverstein, Chris Willenken, Jan Jansma, Boye Brogeland, Espen Lindquist
<b>Team Russia</b>	Andrey Gromov, Anna Gulevich, Vadim Kholomeev, Yury Khuppenen, Yury Khokhlov, Alexander Dubinin

South dealer : Nil vulnerable

North  
♠ J2  
♥ K2  
♦ K96  
♣ KJ7654

South  
♠ K843  
♥ QJ  
♦ QJ10  
♣ AQ103

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT

West leads the ♠10. How would you play?

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ J2	
	♥ K2	
	♦ K96	
	♣ KJ7654	
West		East
♠ 109		♠ AQ765
♥ A975		♥ 108643
♦ 87543		♦ A2
♣ 98		♣ 2
	South	
	♠ K843	
	♥ QJ	
	♦ QJ10	
	♣ AQ103	

At six tables, the bidding went 1NT : 3NT, all pass. Three Wests led the ♠10. One South played the ♠2 from dummy, not best. East contributed the ♠5, low-like and South won with the ♠K. The ♦10 went to the ♦A. East played the ♠Q, followed by the ♠7: low from South. Then came the ♠A, ♠6 and a heart to the ♥A for two down, East-West +100.

At the other table, West led the ♦3: East took the ace and switched to the ♠Q. South won with the ♠K and finished with ten tricks, +430, +11 Imps.

‘On average, after an auction of 1NT : 3NT, the defenders hold 7.2 cards between them in each major. Declarer and the dummy hold only 5.8. This creates a significant bias towards major-suit opening leads. When you have similar holdings in a major and a minor suit, you should lead the major. It goes further than that. Even when a minor-suit holding is better, it may well be right to lead a major suit. In rough terms, a lead from a 4-card major is equivalent to a lead from a 4-5-card minor.’ (*Winning Notrump Leads*, by David Bird and Taf Anthias).

That puts a major suit lead ahead of the diamonds, but which major? In some of the examples by Bird and Anthias, ♠5-2 is ahead of ♥A-J-10-7 and ♥10-4 is ahead of ♠Q-9-6-5. Given that, one can readily understand those who chose the ♠10.

At one of those tables, it went ♠10: jack (best) – queen – king. After ♦Q to ♦A, East hoped West had started with ♠10-9-x and returned the ♠5: three – nine – two. West switched to the ♥5 and South made ten tricks, +430. At the other table, West led the ♥5: two – three – jack. South played off the clubs, but East retained all the hearts and West kept ♥A-9. When declarer played a diamond from dummy, the defence took the rest of the tricks, two light, East-West +100 and +11 Imps.

At the third table, where the ♠10 was led, it went jack – queen – king. After ♦10 to ♦K and ♦A, East returned the ♠6: three – nine – two. West switched to the ♥5 and South made 10 tricks, +430. At the other table:

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	2♣	3♣ <sup>(1)</sup>	3♠ <sup>(2)</sup>
4♥	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Majors

(2) Spade stopper

North led the ♦6, ace. Declarer returned the ♦2 and lost a trick in each suit, one off, –100 but +8 Imps

In the remaining match, after 1NT : 3NT, all pass, West led the ♥5 and 3NT went two down, East-West +100. At the other table, it went 1NT : Pass 3NT : Dble, Pass : Pass : 4♣ by North, all pass, ten tricks, +130, + 6 Imps. Some play East’s double asks for a spade lead and that is what it looks like here. Others play that the double asks partner to lead the shorter major.

North dealer : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2♥ <sup>(1)</sup>	Dble
3♥	Pass	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

(1) Weak two

What would you lead as West from:

♠ QJ2  
♥ J8  
♦ 76  
♣ AJ7543

Bd. 23: North dealer : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 8	
	♥ A10752	
	♦ 98432	
	♣ K2	
West		East
♠ QJ2		♠ 95
♥ J8		♥ KQ9643
♦ 76		♦ K10
♣ AJ7543		♣ Q98
	South	
	♠ AK107643	
	♥ --	
	♦ AQJ5	
	♣ 106	

After the auction above, West led the ♥J. That amazed me. With the suit quality at large these days for a weak two, unless East-West have an agreement that a vulnerable weak two must be better than Q-10-x-x-x-x, the heart lead was a huge risk. What if dummy had turned up with the ace and king of hearts? As West is almost certain to have a trump trick, the ♣A lead looks a standout.

Declarer took the ♥A, pitching the ♣6, and finessed the ♦Q. Then came ♠A, ♠K, but South could not prevent West from collecting the ♠Q and ♣A, East-West +100. At the other table, it went 2♥, 4♠, all pass, +650 and 13 Imps to [RUSSIA](#).

[BLASS](#) (P : P : 4♠, all pass) and [DE BOTTON](#) (2♥ – hearts + minor : Pass : 4♠, all pass) was flat at 650 each.

[GUPTA](#) scored 650 in 4♠ (P : 2♦ multi : 4♠, all pass). At the other table:

West	North	East	South
	2♥ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	2NT <sup>(2)</sup>
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Weak, 5 hearts, 4+ minor

(2) Asking for the second suit

South's action was bold (with two rag clubs), but successful. East led the ♠9 so that 6♦ would have made even if West had ace and king of clubs. Declarer ruffed a spade, cashed the ♥A, discarding ♣6, finessed the ♦Q, cashed the ♦A and had 13 tricks, +1390 and 12 Imps to [STREET](#).

[BRIDGE SCANNER](#) (P : 2♦ multi : Double : 2♥, P : P : 4♠, all pass) and [DONNER](#) (P : 2♥ : 4♠, all pass) were +680 each, no swing.

### Round 3 Results:

	Imps	Victory Points
<b>Donner – Bridge Scanner</b>	49 - 39	12.33 - 7.67
<b>Gupta - Street</b>	51 - 29	14.60 - 5.40
<b>Rosenthal - Russia</b>	35 - 75	2.87 - 17.13
<b>Blass - De Botton</b>	83 - 26	18.82 - 1.18

### VPs After Round 3

<b>1. Blass</b>	55.38
<b>2. Street</b>	35.36
<b>3. Russia</b>	33.30
<b>4. Donner</b>	31.71
<b>5. Gupta</b>	26.08
<b>6. Bridge Scanner</b>	23.46
<b>7. De Botton</b>	22.57
<b>8. Rosenthal</b>	12.14

### Problems for Tomorrow:

1. West dealer : North-South vulnerable

North

♠ KQ2

♥ K

♦ AJ7

♣ QJ10974

East

♠ A

♥ 98743

♦ K1065

♣ A86

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	1♦ <sup>(2)</sup>
1♥	2♣	4♥	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Artificial, strong

(2) Artificial, weak

West leads the ♥A: king – nine – two and the ♦4: seven from dummy. What would you play as East?

2. North dealer : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	2♦ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	4♣ <sup>(2)</sup>
Pass	4♦ <sup>(3)</sup>	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Weak two in hearts or in spades

(2) Transfer me to your major

(3) Weak two in hearts

What would you lead as West from:

♠ Q104

♥ 63

♦ AQ1076

♣ 642

**Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?**

*Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?*