249. A lucky guess

By Ron Klinger

This was yesterday's problem:

Pairs: Dealer East: North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

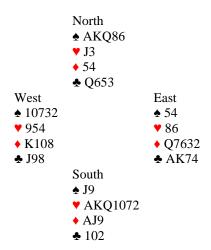
What would you lead as West from:

- **★** 10732
- **9**54
- ♦ K108
- **♣** J98

When you do not have a very good lead (a singleton or an A-K suit or an honour sequence) against a trump contract, you should start by weeding out the worst choices. Leading from an A-K-high suit is usually an excellent choice. Leading from a suit headed by the ace or king without a touching honour is often a very poor choice. You could delete •K-10-8 first. A spade lead, a suit bid by dummy, has no appeal from your holding of 10-7-3-2.

That leaves a trump or a club as likely to be the preferable choice. Both are relatively safe. A trump lead could trap partner's ♥Q-x or ♥K-x, but that holding was probably doomed anyway. The downside of a heart lead is that it gives the tempo to declarer, who might be able to draw trumps and set up a spade winner or two in dummy to pitch a loser or two from hand. Imagine dummy has K-Q-J-x in spades and the ♣A, with the ♣K-Q with East. My vote would go for the ♣8, but on any given day, any of the leads might work.

This was the full deal:



As it happens, declarer makes 12 tricks on any lead but a club. After the $\clubsuit 8$ lead: three . . . East can score a top board by taking the $\clubsuit K$ and $\clubsuit A$. East should figure that is a good idea, given that South jumped to $3 \checkmark$ and North has a huge hand including those powerful spades.

The club turned out to be lucky. A diamond lead could have worked if East had the $\ A$ and South the $\ A$. Top East-West was for a club lead, holding South to 11 tricks, +650. Another West also led a club, but East switched at trick 2, South +680. Five other Souths scored 680, three times after a trump lead, twice after a diamond lead. Second top for North-South came for 3NT by South, +690 on the $\ 2$ lead. The North-South top went to $\ 4$ by South, +1430, after West led the $\ 9$.

Pairs: Dealer East: North-South vulnerable

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North
         ♦ AKQ86
         ♥ J3
         ♦ 54
         ♣ Q653
West
                      East
★ 10732
                      ♦ 54
954
                      v 86
♦ K108
                      ♦ Q7632
♣ J98
                      ♣ AK74
         South
         ♦ J9
         ♥ AKQ1072
         ♦ AJ9
         ♣ 102
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To reach $6 \checkmark$, North-South would probably have bid something along this line $1 \checkmark : 1 \spadesuit$, $3 \checkmark : 4$ NT, $5 \spadesuit$ (0 or 3 key cards for hearts): $5 \spadesuit$ ('Do you have the trump queen?'), $5 \spadesuit$ ('Yes'): $6 \checkmark$, all pass. Obviously a club lead would beat this. If the auction had gone that way, West can expect North to have strong spades and a club lead or a diamond lead is indicated. After $1 \checkmark : 1 \spadesuit$, $3 \checkmark$ (15-18 points, usually 6 losers), North with $6 \frac{1}{2}$ losers (Q-x-x-x counts as $2 \frac{1}{2}$ losers in an unbid suit) is just a touch short of insisting on slam, but success forgives all.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Teams: Dealer South: North-South vulnerable

What would you do as West with:

- **★** K10852
- **v** 105
- ♦ J654
- **♣** KJ

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

Coming Soon: Star Wars 14: Luke Needs A Walker