



MARTY BERGEN'S

SECRETS OF GOOD DEFENSE

Number 12

Opening Leads vs. Suit Contracts

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The Right Time to Lead a Trump

Every player has heard, "When in doubt, lead trump." Obviously, if your other suits are "unleadable," you would lead a trump, but the statement above is not very helpful. I much prefer the following guideline: "The best time to lead trump is when you are NOT in doubt." Here are some situations where a trump lead is indicated:

1. RHO opens a major, his partner never supports him, opener bids a second suit, which becomes trumps. Dummy is probably short in declarer's first suit, so you should be eager to lead a trump.
2. The opponents sacrificed against your game (or slam). Because your side has the balance of power, you (or your partner) doubled. Their only hope to win tricks is with their trumps. Therefore, it's time to, "Get the kiddies off the streets."
3. Your side has strength in all three side suits. Once you remove some of their trumps, what will they do for an encore?
4. Your side opens 1NT, and you're on lead after a 2-suited auction, such as DONT or Cappelletti. The overcaller has a distributional hand. He wants to do some ruffing, so lead trumps early and often.
5. If partner passes your takeout double of 1♣ or 1♦, he must have a massive holding in opener's suit. Partner would like to draw their trumps ASAP, so unless you are void – lead a trump.
6. Dummy has made a Splinter Bid. A trump lead may stop declarer from ruffing all of his losers in dummy's short suit.
7. The opponents end up in a partscore or game, and partner doubles the final contract. He has great trumps, or a lot of general strength. Lead a trump.