

Leading Questions - Book Review

There haven't been too many bridge books in recent years devoted entirely to opening leads, but now we have Sally Brock's *Leading Questions in Bridge* (Master Point Press, Toronto).

The book covers all aspects of opening leads and answers all the important questions:

- *Should I lead fourth highest of my longest and strongest suit against notrump (the standard lead)?*
- *Should I lead my partner's suit (probably our strongest attack)?*
- *Do I have my own good suit to lead (is it better than partner's)?*
- *Should I lead the unbid suit (a shot in the dark)?*
- *Should I lead a trump (cut down on ruffing values)?*
- *How do you decide what to lead when you really are just guessing?*
- *Once you've decided the suit to lead, which card do you lead?*
- *Should I lead a singleton, trying to get a ruff?*
- *Should I go active or passive? Do we have to set our tricks up quickly before declarer gets pitches or have they stretched for their contract, indicating a passive approach - avoid breaking any risky suit combination?*
- *Should I lead an ace against a slam (how miserable if someone is void and it gets ruffed, but what if I don't grab it and it goes away)?*

What about those lead directing doubles? And you do ask yourself all of those questions before each opening lead, don't you?

Of course, much depends on the auction. Some auctions give you lots of information. Some give you little. For instance you don't lead fourth best from your longest and strongest against notrump if that's declarer's suit as well (you should just let him take his losing finesses into you). Of course, sometimes the tricky part of the game is not just learning the rules, but learning the exceptions. Normally you lead fourth highest from your longest and strongest suit against notrump (especially on the unrevealing one notrump, three notrump auction), but what if your fourth highest card is still a high spot?

The author provides a sample hand where on that very auction, you have three small spades, four small hearts, a singleton diamond and five clubs to the ace-queen- nine-eight-five. You are lucky. Partner has the king and they are wide open in the suit.

But if you lead your fourth highest, the eight, partner may read it as top of nothing, three small, and misdefend, possibly not even playing his king on the first trick, after which declarer scampers home with nine or ten tricks.

So, suggests Brock, lead the five. Maybe it misrepresents your actual length, but it both encourages partner to play his highest card on the first trick, and also indicates you have strength in the suit and want it returned.

Another lesson: Always look for a way to prevent partner from going wrong.