

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

INTRODUCING DR GOODLEAD

By: Brian Gunnell

This week we feature a terrific opening lead, found in real life by John Brady of Jacksonville, FL (known to some as Dr Goodlead).

	♠ QJ96 ♥ J974 ♦ 9 ♣ K874	
♠ KT5432 ♥ A5 ♦ A76 ♣ 52	North West East Declarer	♠ ♥ 86 ♦ T5432 ♣ QJT963
	♠ A87 ♥ KQT32 ♦ KQJ8 ♣ A	

N-S Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	2♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

Imagine yourself as East, if you will, looking at the N-E hands. West, the good doctor, leads the Spade Ten. A strange-looking lead, don't you think? It's not fourth best, not top of a sequence. Has the doctor's legendary common-sense finally deserted him?

While you are puzzling over that bizarre opening lead, Dummy plays the ♠Q and you gleefully ruff. What next, Mr East? West found a grand opening lead, and life would be even grander if only you could get back to West's hand for a second ruff. If that is to happen, West must have ♦A or ♣A. Any clues as to which?

The opening lead is your much-needed clue. West led an unnecessarily *high* Spade, and is trying to tell you something. Yes, he is advertising the Ace in the *higher-ranking* side-suit! So, after ruffing, you shoot back a Diamond to West's Ace and get your second Spade ruff. Down one!

Doctor G's lead from ♠KT5432 was not without risk, but he saw no appealing alternative, and he reasonably concluded that East had no more than two Spades (due to non-support in the auction). He didn't necessarily expect a void, but singleton was also a possibility (in which case West would later win the ♥A and give East a second-round Spade ruff).

What just happened was a *Suit Preference* signal, whereby, in certain situations, the play of a high card says "I have the higher-ranking suit", vice versa with a low card. This defensive signal is a rare bird on opening lead, it usually comes later in the hand and even then only in specialized situations. Dr Goodlead gave us the caviar, we'll have some meat-and-potatoes examples in later Bridge Bites.

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