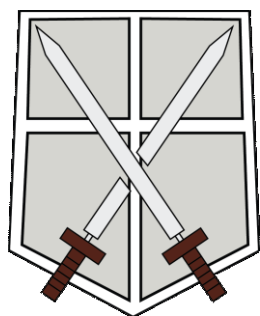


**GIVE NOTHING AWAY....NOT EVEN GERBER!**

One up for Gerber this week. Firstly, though, some thoughts on opening leads to games.



Do you attack or go defensive?

No-one should answer that question without asking one in return. "What do I hold?"

A fair question!



Board 3. ♠ 7 ♥ 97432 ♦ K743 ♣ T76 after the opposition bid uninterrupted

<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>
	1NT (12-14)
2♥ (transfer)	2♠
3♣	4♠
Pass	

Board 16. ♠K62 ♥Q43 ♦KT9 ♣KJT7 and again no interruption from your side:

<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
Pass	1NT (15-17)
2♥ (transfer)	2♠
3♦	4♠
Pass	

Two pretty similar sequences. Two very different hands from which to lead. Two poor results from the leads chosen.

The actual sequence to Board 3 was more complex but the information available to me, West, was similar. Since we have so little and they have stopped in game, our partner has to have values. My philosophy is to go with what little I have and try and get or set up our tricks quickly. Out came a low diamond.

**Board 3**

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 7	♠ A J 6 5 2	
♥ 9 7 4 3 2	♥ 8 6	
♦ K 7 4 3	♦ 10 8	
♣ 10 7 6	♣ A K 8 3	

W	N	E
	S	

	♠ Q 9 8 3	♠ K 10 4
	♥ Q J 5	♥ A K 10
	♦ A Q 9 6	♦ J 5 2
	♣ Q 4	♣ J 9 5 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♠
All pass			

It was all over at trick one. The ♦Q won. The spade finesse lost and East cashed two high hearts but the rest belonged to the declarer. A heart lead (surely better than a club if one goes passive) followed by an immediate diamond switch is what the defence require. However, switch the ♥K and ♥Q and ♦Q and ♦J between the East and South hands and it has to be a diamond lead at trick one to beat the contract.

Apologetic but unrepentant as the opposition claimed 10 imps. Interestingly, 4♠ made four times and went down four times. Don't we love opening leads! I have made some fairly negative opening leads myself in recent months and have had some success with them but unless declarer is very strong and balanced, I am not sure of the long-term gain.

What, though, when one's partner will have very little because we have an opening hand and they are in game? The textbook says "do not open up suits" but the passive trump lead on Board 16 had an interesting effect on the subsequent defence:

<u><b>Board 16</b></u>		♠ 10 4	
West Deals		♥ K 8 7 2	
E-W Vul		♦ 8 6 4	
		♣ Q 5 4 3	
♠ Q J 7 5 3	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px; vertical-align: middle;">             N W     E S           </div>	♠ A 9 8	
♥ A 9		♥ J 10 6 5	
♦ J 5 3 2		♦ A Q 7	
♣ 9 6		♣ A 8 2	
		♠ K 6 2	
		♥ Q 4 3	
		♦ K 10 9	
		♣ K J 10 7	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♠	All pass

Any suit opening from South could have been right or wrong. Indeed, on the actually deal, while an initial club lead is most definitely best for the defence, no side-suit lead is in any way terminal. However, I can sympathise with South's low spade lead. ♠Q took the first trick and ♠A the second.

All was fine so far. At trick 3, declarer played a heart to the 9 and North's king. North continued the passive defence by returning a heart to dummy. Next came a losing diamond finesse with South cashing the ♠K...but the defence was over. Declarer won the diamond return in hand, played the ♥10 flushing out the queen, effectively allowing West's losing club to disappear on the established ♥J.

Passive opening leads are fine with such holdings as South's but at some point, defenders need to take stock of what declarer was trying to do. It was easier for North than South to play a club on the one occasion they were in. Opportunity lost and contract made.

"Give nothing away" leads have their place and there are times when one should not "give away"

**Gerber** - one of the most maligned conventions by experts.

While South could have launched into Gerber after their partner's 1♦ opening bid, Andrew Michl and Kinga Hajmasi used it to good effect:

<u>North (Andrew)</u>	<u>South (Kinga)</u>
♠ A43	♠ 7
♥ QJT	♥ K42
♦ AQ7642	♦ K5
♣ J	♣ AKQ9632

*The bidding*

1♦	2♣
2♦	2♥
3NT	4♣
4♠	6♣
Pass	

For South, slam rests primarily on the number of aces their partner held. When Andrew showed two, Kinga bid accordingly. Blackwood (4NT) of any kind works badly when clubs are trumps and partner's response is 5♦ showing inadequate aces. One up here for Gerber, though partnerships need to be clear what impact South's previous club bid had on the 4♣ call: i.e. natural or Gerber?

Only three out of eight pairs made it to the small slam (including one in the slightly inferior 6NT). "Give nothing away. Not even Gerber!" (well... not completely!)

*Richard Solomon*