

A Quiz for Listeners

(Solutions on p.26)

Opening lead problems provide golden opportunities to confirm Reese's dictum that blind leads are for deaf players. Here are some encountered in board-a-match (point-a-board) and high-level pair events.

PROBLEM 1

Game All. Dealer South.

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT(i)
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

(i) 22-23

West holds:

♠ AQJ4 ♥ 984 ♦ 53 ♣ AJ53

PROBLEM 2

Game All. Dealer West.

West	North	East	South
1♣	Dble	Rdble	1♠
Pass	3♠	Dble	All Pass

West holds:

♠ 6 ♥ A1052 ♦ KQ3 ♣ K7532

PROBLEM 3

North/South Game. Dealer South.

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

West holds:

♠ K3 ♥ 9875 ♦ 109872 ♣ 82

PROBLEM 4

East/West Game. Dealer South.

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	2♠(i)
Pass	2NT(ii)	Pass	3♠(iii)
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♠	Dble	All Pass

(i) weak

(ii) enquiry

(iii) good suit, maximum

West holds:

♠ 64 ♥ 9632 ♦ J72 ♣ KQ85

PROBLEM 5

Game All. Dealer South.

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1♦
Pass	1♥	Dble	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦	All Pass	

West holds:

♠ Q10 ♥ KQ53 ♦ Q64 ♣ 9654

Solutions to A Quiz for Listeners

PROBLEM 1

The winning lead is the ♠A. You are likely to hold all of the defensive assets. The hope is to establish spade tricks quickly, while the ♣A remains as an entry. Holding South to nine tricks is your probable objective.

♠ 10762				
♥ KJ				
♦ 97642				
♣ 64				
♠ AQJ4	N	♠ 985		
♥ 984	W	♥ 107652		
♦ 53	S	♦ Q		
♣ AJ53		♣ 9872		
		♠ K3		
		♥ AQ3		
		♦ AKJ108		
		♣ KQ10		

A club lead surrenders the tenth trick immediately, while a middle spade or red card allows a good card reader to squeeze/endplay you for the same result. Only the ♠A followed by the ♠4 gives South no chance. Trick 2 would have been easy if only three spades had appeared in dummy, but the fourth tests the defenders' signalling methods. The useful principle that one should signal attitude unless the attitude is known, in which case count takes precedence, would suffice here. East knows that his partner is cognizant of his lack of high cards, and so the five connotes an odd number of spades.

PROBLEM 2

You must lead a trump. Partner's double of an invitational jump makes sense only if you know that South will decline the invitation. Because East is marked with high cards, then, the offence's tricks are likely to come primarily from the trump suit.

♠ AQJ7				
♥ QJ6				
♦ A				
♣ Q10986				
♠ 6	N	♠ K95		
♥ A1052	W	♥ K97		
♦ KQ3	S	♦ J10642		
♣ K7532		♣ AJ		
		♠ 108432		
		♥ 843		
		♦ 9875		
		♣ 4		

If instead you lead a diamond, a club from dummy will establish the cross-ruff.

PROBLEM 3

You should lead the ♦10. It may seem as though which minor will be a success depends upon how chance has distributed the cards. But while the doubleton lead could be the winner, it requires a complex parlay. The key is to appreciate the auction. Partner is marked with a strong hand, yet he chose not to compete. He must therefore have balanced distribution. If any one has club length, it will be dummy. The diamond lead is an attempt to establish tricks for the defence before the trump control is gone.

♠ 876				
♥ 62				
♦ 43				
♣ AJ9653				
♠ K3	N	♠ 1052		
♥ 9875	W	♥ KQJ3		
♦ 109872	S	♦ AKJ5		
♣ 82		♣ Q7		
		♠ AQJ94		
		♥ A104		
		♦ Q6		
		♣ K104		

On a diamond lead and heart shift, South must guess clubs to make his contract. On a club lead, West must guess the red shift after winning the ♠K to hold declarer to four.

PROBLEM 4

Keep your hands off that club! Partner has told you that he can beat the hand with no knowledge of your honours. He must be planning to ruff the opening lead and then cash his side ace. You must work out the suit in which his ruff is coming. Your hand tells you it is likely to be hearts.

North's bidding is logical if he knows the trumps are solid, controls all suits, and has a solid or establishable suit to furnish the tricks. You cannot be sure which solid suit he is counting on, but it is more likely the opponents have nine hearts than that they have ten diamonds.

♠ K109				
♥ AKJ10754				
♦ 8				
♣ A7				
♠ 64	N	♠ 32		
♥ 9632	W	♥ —		
♦ J72	S	♦ AKQ6543		
♣ KQ85		♣ 10642		
		♠ AQJ875		
		♥ Q8		
		♦ 109		
		♣ J93		

Although the ♦J does succeed on this deal, it earns no credit in the quiz.

PROBLEM 5

When the indications for a trump lead are strong enough, even a dangerous holding should not deter you. Here the (somewhat greedy) auction tells you that South is short in hearts and North is short in clubs, so a cross-ruff is looming.

♠ J76				
♥ J98742				
♦ K98				
♣ J				
♠ Q10	N	♠ 98432		
♥ KQ53	W	♥ A10		
♦ Q64	S	♦ A7		
♣ 9654		♣ KQ82		
		♠ AK10		
		♥ 6		
		♦ J10532		
		♣ A1073		

When this deal was played, a world-class South put up the ♦K at Trick 1, and the hand fell apart for him.

Although this choice looked bad, it was not unreasonable; had the lead been from A-x-x, blocking the trump suit would have preserved a valuable tempo. After three rounds of diamonds, South was booked for a two-trick defeat, which he later converted to down three when he (somewhat unreasonably) played East to have led from the ♠Q.

Notice that an opening lead of the ♠Q completely turns the hand around. South will win it and lead a heart; if East takes that trick and returns a spade, South will scamper home on a cross-ruff.