



## Tuesday Night Tips The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

If you have joined our F2F session on Tuesday night, you probably already know the host Martin Clear. He is a big fan of the evening game because of his daytime job, and has been leading the group for bridge discussion after the session. This "discussion" will now continue online - Each week Martin will play in the field and pick an interesting hand from the Tuesday night BBO session. Join your bridge buddy for a game on Tuesday night (7.15pm start)!

### Interpreting the Lead: The Rule of Eleven

#28373 BBO – Tuesday Night 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021

18		N	W	N	E	S
♠ J10652		♠ A743	♠ K98	♠ 1♦ P	♠ 1NT P	
♥ 7		♥ Q109854	♥ K6	♥ 2♠ P	♥ 2NT P	
♦ KJ86		♦ K84	♦ AQ1074	♦ 3♥ P	♦ 4♥ P	
♣ 973			♣ J102			
		S				
♠ Q						
♥ AJ32						
♦ 9532						
♣ AQ65						
						4♥ W NS: 0 EW: 0

All too often in bridge club-level declarer play, declarer fail to do two very important things when the dummy first hits the table. The first is to make a plan of how you intend to proceed with the hand, and the second is to interpret the lead.

Making a plan is harder in Pairs play than in IMPs or rubber bridge. In IMPs and rubber bridge, making the contract is so much more important than overtricks and undertricks that your plan should generally be based purely on what is the most likely plan to make the contract. In Pairs, the target is much more movable, because if you make a 3N contract for 9 tricks, and everyone else makes 10 tricks, you will get a zero just as devastating as if you

had failed to make the contract. This creates different strategies for the same hands, depending on whether you are playing Pairs.

A simple example: you are in a 3N contract with no bidding by the opponents, where your significant cards are ♠A, ♥A, ♦A and ♦K. You have a doubleton club, while dummy has AKQ432 in clubs and no other high cards. You receive a diamond lead. In IMPs play or rubber bridge, you win the lead, and concede a club trick. The opponents may be surprised to receive this small gift, but whatever they lead, you win and then cash out the other 5 club tricks, making 9 tricks along with your other winners as long as the 5 outstanding clubs are not all in the same hand. In Pairs however, you cash the clubs from the top, making 6 club tricks and therefore 10 tricks in total whenever the clubs break 3-2, which they should do 68% of the time. If the clubs break 4-1 (which will happen 28% of the time), you will be held to three club tricks and will go down, while those adopting an IMPs strategy will make the contract. However getting an overtrick 68% of the time and dropping the contract 28% of the time gives you a better score overall than conceding a club and making 9 all the time. Pairs does not reward caution.

So your plan in Pairs needs to be flexible, but you should still prepare a plan before playing to the first trick, even if you plan to change the plan later.

The other thing you need to do is interpret the lead. Ask yourself: why did the person on lead choose this suit to lead? And why did the person on lead choose this card to lead from that suit?

Most people lead from specific rules, the most common of which is "4th-best from an honour." This means that declarer is able to use the Rule of Eleven to determine how many cards larger than the led card are held by the other three hands: basically you subtract the number of the card led from 11, and that is the number of cards higher than the led card held by the other three hands, and deducting those held by declarer and dummy allows declarer to know how many of those cards are held by the defender not on lead. Let's look at an example from Board 18 of the Sydney Bridge Centre & Friends competition on BBO on Tuesday Night 26th October.

Due to taking a very optimistic view of the void, West has unfortunately got to 4H which is going to be tough sledding. The lead is ♣7. Let's make a plan: there is a certain spade loser, one or two heart losers, and one or two club losers. The ♦A in dummy will allow one discard. One declarer in this contract played the JC from dummy at trick 1, which lost to the ♣A. Another club was returned and declarer played the ♣K, reasoning that the other club could be thrown on the ♦A.

However, declarer should ask: why the SEVEN of clubs? Let's try Rule of Eleven: eleven minus seven equals four cards higher than the 7 that should be held by the other three hands. Declarer has two of them (♣K and ♣8) and dummy has two (♣J and ♣T). And South played ♣A, making five. What is going wrong with the Rule of Eleven?

The answer is that the play of the cards proves that the lead was NOT a 4th-best lead. The cards not seen in the club suit that are higher than the 7 are only the ♣Q and the ♣9. A 4th-best lead from Q97x would not be the 7. The lead might have been top of doubleton, or middle-up-down from 97x. It seems likely then that South has the ♣Q... in which case it might be better to run the club to the ♣T, saving the ♦A for a spade discard, and gaining an entry as well.

This works as the cards lie. With an entry to dummy, declarer should cash ♦A and then take the heart finesse. The ♥T wins, but the heart return to the ♥K and ♥A reveals a second heart loser. South can return ♠Q or a club or a diamond but any lead is won by declarer and ♥Q and the other heart is played. South exits again, and now declarer cashes any remaining trumps. On the last trump, declarer comes down to two small spades, and North has to discard ahead of dummy's ♠K, ♠9, and ♦Q. North cannot keep ♦K and two spades, so declarer makes the rest, bringing home an unlikely contract, despite an adverse trump break.

The play of the hand is chancy, but it is the interpretation of the opening lead that is key. If the card led cannot be 4th-best, it is likely any honour in the suit is held by the other defender.

Martin Clear (SBC Tuesday Night host)

## **We have REOPENED for Face-to-Face bridge with ONLINE games continue on BBO**

### **For Face-to-Face sessions:**

Welcome back! Our clubroom on Goulburn Street has opened from Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021. We will start with 6 regular sessions on the first week: Monday – Thursday morning, 10am – 1.15pm and Tuesday night 7.15pm – 10.00pm. There will be a separate field for Supervised players on Wednesday morning and a “Play it out loud” Supervised session on Wednesday night (6.30pm start).

### **For BBO sessions:**

We will continue to run the 5 regular club session online on BBO. Please check our [session timetable](#) here.

All are welcome. No need to book. Please find us on BBO / Featured Areas / Virtual Clubs / ABF-Australia. Tournament title “Sydney Bridge Centre & Friends”. Tournament will open only 2 hours before the game starts.

24 boards, BB\$4 per person per game.