Jeremy Flint's leading tip

FINE-TUNING

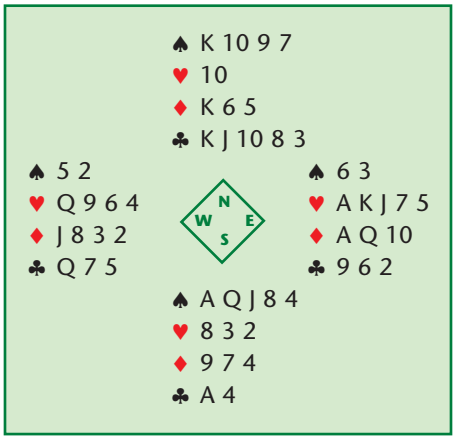
Freddie North

IN many walks of life 'doing what comes naturally' is a thoroughly laudable pursuit and it certainly has its place in bridge. Indeed, a player who is consistently exploring new avenues in the land of exotica may occasionally be hailed as a genius but that is unlikely to be what his harassed partner calls him! However, while the norm is frequently the best course of action, there are times when a spot of fine-tuning may suggest itself. Without further ado, what would you lead on this hand?

Game All. Dealer East.

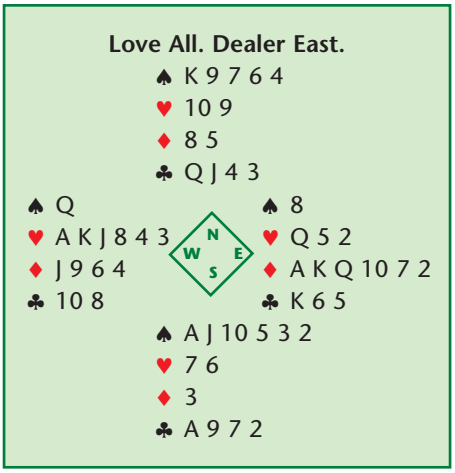
West	North	East	South
		1♥	1♠
2♥	4♠	All Pass	

The normal lead is, no doubt, the four of hearts but I recall a tip given by my old friend, the late Jeremy Flint, who advised that in circumstances where it might be advantageous to hold the lead, see the dummy and observe partner's card, you should play your top honour; in this case the queen. Let's look at the full deal:



We can now see that a small heart would not have endangered the contract as East is powerless to take more than two tricks – dummy's clubs providing adequate discards. Following Jeremy's advice, however, and kicking off with the queen of hearts, leads to a completely different scenario. East, ever the dutiful and helpful partner, will no doubt invoke a McKenny signal with the jack of hearts ('Please switch to diamonds') but even without this tiny piece of sophisticated nursing West will be under no illusions as to his best continuation: a diamond. But, of course, not any old diamond; it must be precisely the jack! When the dust has settled, declarer can do no more than offer his congratulations to the defenders, chalk up minus 100 and hope that his next opponents will be more charitable.

Another deal, also from a recent pairs competition, posed a number of questions for both sides:



After preliminary exchanges this hand became a battle of the majors, neither side being allowed to play at the four level. If North-South take out insurance by continuing to 5♠, they are likely to lose three tricks, two hearts and one diamond – the ten of clubs conveniently falling doubleton.

The really interesting scenario is when North-South defend 5♥, with North to lead. The 'natural' lead of the six of spades will not defeat the contract. Indeed, if South does not cash his ace of clubs at trick two, West will score an overtrick. However, with a little fine-tuning (and a quick thank-you to J.F.) North will commence proceedings with the king of spades. When that trick is safely in the bag, it won't require Einstein to find the queen of clubs switch. ❐

MAURICE WEISSBERGER

MAURICE WEISSBERGER died on 3rd March, just short of his 90th birthday. He had been one of Great Britain's finest players both in domestic and international competition. Internationally, his best result was finishing second with the late Joan Durran in the World Mixed Pairs in 1966. This, along with numerous other good performances, helped him become one of very few British players ever to achieve the World Bridge Federation's rank of World Master. The pinnacle of his domestic record was achieving back to back wins in the Lederer Trophy in 1966 and 1967.

As a bridge theorist, Maurice invented the convention known as 'Extended Stayman', where, if the auction begins 1NT – 2♣ – 2♦, then a bid of 3♦ asks the 1NT opener to show if he has one or both three-card majors.

Until last February, Maurice was still playing rubber bridge at the Avenue Bridge Club, where he enjoyed enormous respect and affection.

(From www.sccba.co.uk)