

N	Dummy (Serge)
♠	<b>K Q 8 6</b>
♥	<b>10</b>
♦	<b>K Q 10 8</b>
♣	<b>A K 10 3</b>

W	West
♠	<b>J 10 9 7 5</b>
♥	<b>K 7 2</b>
♦	<b>A 2</b>
♣	<b>8 7 4</b>

**6NT by S,  
lead ♠J**

E	East
♠	<b>3</b>
♥	<b>Q 9 8 4 3</b>
♦	<b>9 7 6 5 3</b>
♣	<b>J 9</b>

Diag.1

S	Declarer (Evgeny)
♠	<b>A 4 2</b>
♥	<b>A J 6 5</b>
♦	<b>J 4</b>
♣	<b>Q 9 5 2</b>

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	6NT	Pass All	

Notes on Bidding.

- Our days, most players will open the bidding with South hand, even on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> seat.
- West is better off to stay away from 1♠ overcall, being vulnerable.
- North's decision to jump to 6NT based on primary 17 HCPs (no Jacks and 3 Tens), good fit with partner opening suit, and prayers to the Bridge God. (6♣ is not much better contract if South has 3 or 5 clubs, however, on actual layout 6♣ is cold, but 6NT requires some luck on opening lead and good declarer techniques.)

Trick ##	West	North	East	South
1	<b>♠J</b>	<b>♠6</b>	<b>♠3</b>	<b>♠A</b>
2	<b>♦A</b>	<b>♦8</b>	<b>♦3</b>	<b>♦J</b>
3	<b>♦2</b>	<b>♦10</b>	<b>♦5</b>	<b>♦4</b>
4	<b>♣4</b>	<b>♦Q</b>	<b>♦6</b>	<b>♥5</b>
5	<b>♣7</b>	<b>♦K</b>	<b>♦7</b>	<b>♥6</b>
6	<b>♣8</b>	<b>♣A</b>	<b>♣6</b>	<b>♣2</b>
7	<b>♥2</b>	<b>♣K</b>	<b>♣J</b>	<b>♣5</b>
8	<b>♠5</b>	<b>♣10</b>	<b>♥3</b>	<b>♣9</b>
9	<b>♥7</b>	<b>♣3</b>	<b>♥4</b>	<b>♣Q</b>
10	<b>♠7</b>	<b>♠8</b>		<b>♠4</b>
11	<b>Claim the rest of tricks for NS</b>			
12				
13				

Opening lead perhaps is the most difficult area of bridge game to master.

Opening lead against a Slam contract is especially difficult topic.

A lead against a Slam contract when you hold an Ace I would put in a separate category.

In general, rules on leads, after the suit is selected, have designed to communicate with your partner about your holding, to compensate for defense disadvantage of not able to see the partner's hand. However, in situation when partner is unlikely to get on lead or to make any critical decisions the information you are putting on table most likely could be more valuable for the declarer, than your partner. Deal #4 from the Saturday evening session was a good example of this principle.

What would be your lead against 6NT when holding: **♠J10975 ♥K72 ♦A2 ♣874** ?

Of course, it depends on bidding, which went: 1♣ – 1♠ – 1N - 6N. I know some players from the local clubs, when playing against the expert opponents, in such difficult situations, they do "random" leads. They know that Experts will scrutinize their lead from all possible angles. However, If lead is "random", declarer most likely to go wrong if facing a difficult to solve problem.

Looking at all 4 hands it is become obvious that any lead, but spades, will defeat 6N. (Here we go!! The "random" lead would work 8/13=62% of the time on this deal). However, without seeing the partner or dummy hand is very hard to steer away from 5-card major suit even when dummy bid it on a way to 6NT.

After the lead of **♠J** declarer had just enough information to make an educated decision. By the way, it is much easier to say, than to collect all pieces of the puzzle together during the game time when you have on average 7 ½ minutes to finish each hand. And, you must do it hand after hand, after hand, if you want to have even a slight chance to win a major event.

Let us kibitz Evgeny's play and explain the logic behind the critical decision he has to make with 4 cards left in each hand (trick #10), see diag.2.

Declarer has 11 tricks: 3 spades, 1 heart, 3 diamonds and 4 clubs and need just one more trick. That extra trick could only come from the spade suit. Bearing this in mind, Evgeny won the **♠J** in his hand, forced the **♦A** and cash all minor suit winners, discarding 2 hearts from his hand. Now, there was time for a SPADE decision! He played small spade and West inserted **♠7**, Evgeny stopped to assess the situation. He knew, by now, that West started with

8 cards in both majors ♠ - ♥ , if they divided 3-5 West most likely to lead the un-bid major (hearts). Now, if they divided 4-4, West may still lead spades, but would never discard the 4<sup>th</sup> spade in trick #8 in front of dummy's spade holding, since it surely will present declarer with his (maybe over wise not makeable) contract. So, West had to start with 5 spades, that leaves East with one spade, he had already played on trick#1. Evgeny cover ♠7 with ♠8 and claimed contract. Well done – all match-points on this board, deserved 63% in final session and 1<sup>st</sup> place overall.

N	Dummy (Serge)
♠	K Q 8
♥	10
♦	
♣	

W	West
♠	10 9 <u>7</u>
♥	K
♦	
♣	

6NT by S,  
lead ♠J

E	East
♠	
♥	Q 9 8
♦	9
♣	

### Diag.2

At trick #10 Declarer took “marked” finesse with ♠8. Read above on how he had figured out who got the rest of spade suit.

S	Declarer (Evgeny)
♠	<u>4</u> 2
♥	A J
♦	
♣	