

♠Q1062
♥KJ932
♦43
♣J5

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>
1C	P	1H	P
1S	P	2N	P
3N	P	P	P

You hold the hand shown above, and the auction proceeds as shown. What is your opening lead?

Send your answers to me: billpuzzles@bridgesights.com

The Answer

This is a difficult problem, and there is not one correct answer.

In general, I use the following guidelines for picking my opening lead against NT contracts:

- Do not lead a suit the opponents have bid (either a major or a minor)
- Lead 4th best from the remaining suits

Using those guidelines, a diamond lead would be called for (specifically the 4 of diamonds). And that could be correct. However, since the opponents presumably have enough points for game (25 or more), and you have 7 points, that leaves room for at most 8 or 9 points in partner's hand. Now, partner could have solid diamonds (say KQJxx) and an outside K, and be able to take 4 diamond tricks when he gets in with his K, but that is somewhat unlikely.

Therefore, I would choose a heart lead, specifically the 3. If partner has the A or Q, it could work out very well. And even if partner has the 10, it still might work out. It turns out that, absent a clearly better lead, if you hold a broken sequence behind one of declarer's suit, a lead of that suit in NT often works well. I first saw this lead recommended in Mike Lawrence's book on opening leads (which I highly recommend), and have found it often works out very well.

Using the same principle, if declarer had bid spades instead of hearts, a spade lead might work out., and I might lead it. However, this is less likely to succeed, because you only have 4 spades.