Leads Against No Trumps

RonKlingerBridge.com
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We all learn that against no-trumps, we aim to lead our longest suit. Of course there are many situations where the right lead turns out to be something other than our longest suit. We have to pay attention to the bidding -especially if partner has contributed – and then make up our minds. If partner has bid a suit, we should aim to lead partner’s suit, unless we clearly have a superior alternative. If there has been no informative bidding, then your own longest suit is the normal choice.

Try this question:

The opponents have bid 1 no-trump, 3 no-trump and you have 5 spades and 5 hearts. What lead would you choose?
Your answer should be the queen of hearts. The suits are equally long, and each has 3 points but the hearts have 3 honour cards and spades only 1. It is better to lead the suit that has more honours, particularly when it’s in sequence - QJ10. Choose the queen of hearts.

What about this time?

You have 5 spades and 5 hearts again, which lead would you choose now? Again you have 2 honours in hearts against 1 in spades. It is better to lead the suit with the 2 honours. There is a better chance of success there. Either the king of hearts or the 10 of hearts will help you, therefore you should start a heart. You don’t have a sequence so this time you would lead the 3 of hearts.

This time you have 5 spades and 4 hearts. The hearts are pretty good but the spades are longer. What would you lead against 1 no-trump, 3 no-trump this time?
A sound principle for this type of case is that if you had a 4 card suit and 4 cards in sequence, it's far better to lead that than lead the 5 card suit with only 1 or 2 honours. QJ109 will definitely develop 2 tricks for you. You just have to get rid of the king and ace by leading the suit twice. Spades may or may not produce that many extra tricks so prefer the solid holding.

Again the bidding has been 1 no-trump, 3 no-trump, and you have two 5 card suits but this time you have 1 honour card in each suit. On that basis, **which suit should you lead?**
It is a sound principle in this type of problem to lead the suit where you do not hold the ace. The idea is if you lead a spade and manage to set the spades up, the ace of hearts will be an entry. But if you lead a heart and set the hearts up, the king of spades may or may not be an entry. Therefore, choose the suit where you don’t have the ace.

This time you have 5 spades and 4 goodish diamonds. You have a 3 card sequence in diamonds but you have extra length in spades.
Which suit should you prefer?

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