

Learning Points – The Killing Lead

By Steve Moese

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Defense Level: Basic/Intermediate

This hand is from Tuesday Evening February 5 at the CBC. Mr. John Altman Jr. directing. Sometimes you play a hand and watch defenders creativity scuttle an impregnable contract. Tip your hat. If you can enjoy opponent's success at the table, you are a long way toward appreciating this game.

Let's put you in South with this hand. You hear this auction:

South

♠ A K J 8
♥ 6
♦ 9 7 5
♣ 6 5 4 3 2

East	South	West	North
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	3♠ ¹	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

1= Splinter Bid – GF, 0/1 ♠

Now you are on lead. Make your choice before reading on.

A) ♠A B) ♠K C) ♥6 D) ♦9,7,5 E) ♣6,5 F) ♣3



Choose your answer before you continue.

When making an opening lead it's important to learn as much as you can from the auction.

West has shown at least 4♦s and 4♥s with a singleton or void in ♠s (leaving room for 3-4 or more ♣s) in a hand strong enough to insist on game opposite a possible 5 HCP minimum in East. West has a hand worth 21+ Support Points.

Since East stopped in game, East must be limited to 10 Support Points and does not have a minor suit Ace ([Why? With a minor suit Ace, East would have made a control bid in that suit over 3♠](#)). You can see 1 ♠ trick. If West is 1=4=4=4 shape (a reasonable starting assumption though 1=4=5=3 or 1=4=6=2 are possible too) then:

- 1) North has 3 or 4 cards in Trumps
- 2) There are 3 ♣ cards split between North and East
- 3) North might have a minor suit Ace.

You can see 3 possible defensive tricks even before looking at Dummy: ♠A, Minor A, and Trump Honor. Can you find a lead that might develop a 4th trick for your side?

If you chose E) ♣ 6 or 5, you chose wisely!

The only chance you can set this contract is to find partner with a singleton or void in ♣s and either K 3rd or Q 4th in trumps. Why the high club spot? Suit Preference! Here's how the play unfolds (winning card in **Blue** and Suit Preference Signals in **highlight**)

- 1) ♣ 6 – 10 – 7 – Q **Declarer**
- 2) ♥ 2 – 6 – J – K **Defense**
- 3) ♠ 2 – Q – A – 10 **Defense**
- 4) ♣ 5 – J – ♥ 10 – ♣ **Defense**

Here's the full hand:

Board		♠ 9 6 5 4 2
22		♥ K 10 4
East		♦ A 10 8 6
Deals		♣ 7
E-W Vul		
♠ 10		♠ Q 7 3
♥ A Q J 8		♥ 9 7 5 3 2
♦ K J 3 2		♦ Q 4
♣ A K J 10		♣ Q 9 8
NS 3♠;		♠ A K J 8
EW 3♥;		♥ 6
2♣		♦ 9 7 5
		♣ 6 5 4 3 2

The ♣6 lead does multiple duty, denying a ♣ honor and hinting at an entry in ♠s. The ♠2 return asks for a ♣ back (lowest of remaining suits). [This is a suit preference lead whether dummy has a singleton or not. Common practice is for 3rd hand to play a suit preference signal when partner leads dummy's singleton suit]. Declarer has the ♦A to lose. 4♥ Down 1 was worth 4.5 of 5 MPs (90%).

What made this hand extra special? The defense was as shown by Isaac Stephani and Julian Kurtzman,

two very promising Youth players from the Cincinnati Bridge Association's High School Program. Yes, JD and Isaac played in the Open game. Yes, they found this defense at the table. What's that you say? Maybe they should be writing these columns? Stay tuned...If JD and Isaac continue playing this way, we'll be reading more about them soon. Yes, our Director is a strong Youth player in his own right and a member of our Youth Bridge School Program too.

Bd 22	Scores		MPs	
	N-S	E-W	N-S	E-W
5 ♥ E	100		4.5	0.5
4 ♥ E	100		4.5	0.5
3 ♥ E		170	3	2
4 ♥ E		620	1	4
4 ♥ E		620	1	4
4 ♥ E		620	1	4
4 ♠ E	200		3	0
5 ♥ E	100		1.5	1.5
5 ♥ E	100		1.5	1.5
3 ♥ E		140	0	3

Feels good all around! ... even though I sat West.