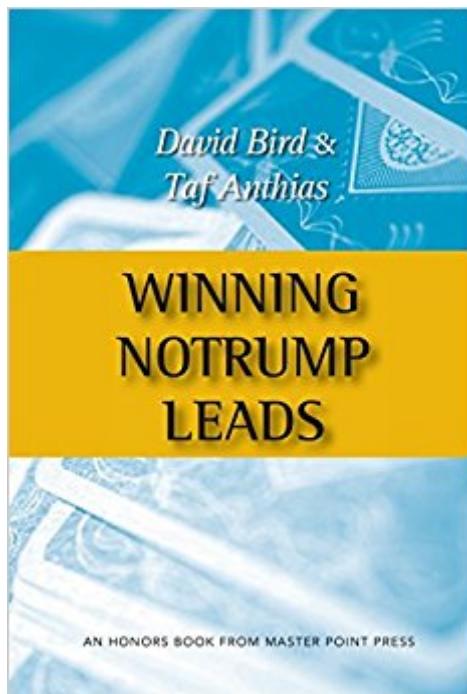


The book was found

Winning Notrump Leads



Synopsis

To discover which opening lead is best from a given West hand against a particular auction, the authors use computer software to generate 5000 deals that match the North-South bidding. (The West hand remains the same and the other three hands are chosen randomly.) The software then plays these deals automatically, seeing which of the 13 possible opening leads works best at both IMPs (rubber bridge/Chicago) and match-point pairs. By analysing the results, the authors pass on to the reader the secrets of finding the best lead against notrump contracts on a wide range of different auctions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Writing this book, with my long-time friend and previous bridge partner Taf Anthias, required way more effort than most of my other books. We spent over a year running computer simulations, accumulating the results and deciding which lead problems to include in the book. When we spotted an unexpected result, for example a doubleton or singleton lead being rated best against 3NT, we tried to analyse the reason for this. It involved wading through the many thousands of 52-card deals in the simulation output, trying to determine why a particular lead was working better than others. OK, it was hard work, but it was also great fun to be writing a book that was so different from anything that had been done before. The publisher did not think that there would be a wide audience for such an academic book. He was very surprised, as we have been, at the book's success. Yesterday, more than a year after the book's publication, it was ranked 3rd in USA's Bridge Top 100 listing. Hurray! At the start of this month (November 2012) Masterpoint Press published our 'Winning Suit Contract Leads'. This follows exactly the same

format as 'Winning Notrump Leads'. It investigates the best leads against suit part-scores, games, small slams and grand slams. Again we found many surprising results. For example, leads from a doubleton (particularly two low cards) were much more highly rated than most players would expect. Leads from a jack were not so bad as everyone says. Trump leads were generally quite awful. Should you lead an ace against a small slam? You will have to read the book to find out!

I've played a lot of online bridge and have personally observed computer-simulation leads to be more effective than what humans select. Computing power uncovers long-term odds-on advantages that we cannot observe on a day-to-day basis. This book is excellent, it goes through hundreds of lead scenarios and then provides tables showing mathematically what the best leads are under each situations. There are explanations as to why these leads are better, and each chapter ends with a summary of what has been discovered. If you faithfully lead 4th best at NT every time, your game is leaking tricks left and right, and digesting the information on this book is going to get your score a little higher on the totem pole on many occasions.

This is an incredibly valuable book and a must read for the serious bridge player. The authors report the results of computer play simulations with a sample size of 5,000 deals constrained for hundreds of opening lead hands featuring specific characteristics of interest (e.g., singleton, doubleton headed by 1 honor, doubleton QJ or KQ, long suits headed by 1 high honor, 2 high honors, broken honor sequences, interior honor sequences, and on and on it goes). Frequency of alternative leads to beat the contract at IMPs and the average number of tricks taken at Matchpoints based on the simulation results are reported. Occasionally, corrections to these statistics based on further computer analyses are made for situations when a lead might eliminate a declarer's need to guess in the play of the hand. Clear and well-written narrative explanations of the simulation results are also presented, allowing the reader to gain insight and train his/her thinking processes. Each chapter concludes with some take-away guidelines for opening leads culled from the results reported. While most of the simulation results were not surprising to me, a sizeable minority were. But the narrative analyses calmed my skepticism by presenting logical arguments that reassured me that the simulation results are to be trusted. So I began applying these new principles and insights at the bridge table. There has been a dramatic improvement in my results and it is NOT my imagination. Based on analyses of my before and after opening lead deal results available online, I found that I defeat NoTrump contracts 22% more frequently than before while surrendering almost 1/3 fewer tricks on defense per deal when I do not beat them. Wow! And those "Nice lead"

comments I keep getting from partner every session certainly are gratifying. I have but one request of anyone reading this review: If you choose to read this book, please promise me you will ignore it completely and return to your previous opening lead habits whenever you might play against me!

For IMPs, I will follow the advice of the authors 100%. For match points, I wish the authors had said, if you make this lead, you will take x number of tricks, on average, this percentage of the time, and y number of tricks, this percentage of the time, etc., instead of the average number of tricks for each lead they give. Larry Cohen has stated that successful match point players try to avoid zeros if there is a good chance of getting one from a particular line of play. Specifically, I have my doubts about the singleton leads, and some of the doubleton honor leads and suspect that the passive second best line of play may be the winning line in the short run at match points. The authors don't show how these short suit leads can give you a zero and cost you the event.

After a few of my typical unsuccessful opening leads, my partner "suggested" that our game would benefit from reading this book. He was right. Instead of relying on years of experience, the author attacked the problem of choosing the best lead with 21st century technology. Using thousands of generated hands and a double dummy program, they found the best opening lead in a large number of situations, from a simple 1NT-3NT or 1NT-all pass, to complicated sequences such as failed Stayman investigations. The results showed that some rules, such as leading the unbid major, tend to work well, but others, such as the venerable "fourth best from your longest and strongest" don't always work as well as advertised. A very thought-provoking book that should be useful to bridge players at all levels.

A must read for advanced players. It offers suggestions that contradict what we've been taught. It would have been better if the authors ran more simulations and did a more thorough analysis instead of showing a hand and saying X is the best lead. To be useful you want to learn a general rule and when to apply it. Some of their hands are cherry picked and the "winning" lead is normally a low percentage lead in other cases. Also, to say that lead X has a 20.1% chance of working is better than lead Y that has a 20.0% chance of working is silly, when you are using a double dummy solver (making plays that would not be found at the table) 25% vs 20%, ok, that's worth considering, but not a .2% difference, based on some model that itself is only a rough approximation.

The authors use scientific computer simulations to study the lead problems against notrump

contracts and draw conclusions based on the simulation results. Although the simulation ignores some very important aspects such as whether the current signaling system can still survive under the suggest leading pattern (e.g., if one always leads unsupported Aces, then the current signal system simply fails to work, and I doubt if a good remedy exists), it provides useful hints that would complement the decision making process of an experienced player. To me, the whole book can be summarized to several points (as which types of leads are more preferable than what people used to think and which types of leads are less preferable than what people used to think). Due to the respect to the authors, I shall not talk about the details but will let the readers to find out themselves.

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