

I duly led the fourth highest of my longest and strongest. West took his ♠K and the next eight tricks to make his contract.

Board 7	♠ AQT542	
Dealer S	♥ K84	
Vul Both	♦ 84	
	♣ JT	
♠ K3		♠ J986
♥ A		♥ T975
♦ J65		♦ K9
♣ AKQ6532		♣ 974
	♠ 7	
	♥ QJ632	
	♦ AQT732	
	♣ 8	

What should I have done this time? The answer is "think!"

West didn't make a strong opening, yet he can now bid 3NT. He must have a long club suit and is anticipating a spade lead to give him his nine tricks. So, the answer must be to lead anything except a spade.

At least, I was not the only player to get this wrong. Five wests played in 3NT and they all made their contract.

This time, we scored -600 when it could have been +100. Another 12 imps gone.

After this, Kate and I discussed speculative 3NT bids and decided that often an unconventional lead will be required to beat the contract.

Sydney

In the 2018 Spring Nationals, I finally got one right. Again, I was north and this was the hand.

♠ J876
♥ KT98
♦ 9
♣ AQT6

After two passes, west bid 3NT. I asked east the meaning. Eventually, I learned that it was a "gambling" 3NT likely to have a long minor suit. East was unwilling or unable to tell me anything more. East passed and I was on lead.

Clearly, the long suit was diamonds. After my trials and tribulations in 2015, I decided to start with the ♣A. I hit the jackpot.

Board 22	♠ J876	
Dealer E	♥ KT98	
Vul E-W	♦ 9	
	♣ AQT6	
♠ K32		♠ AQT4
♥ QJ6		♥ 732
♦ AKJ8643		♦ T72
♣		♣ 742
	♠ 95	
	♥ A54	
	♦ Q5	
	♣ KJ9853	

Partner encouraged and we helped ourselves to the first eight tricks.

How good was that!

Of course, a more conventional lead of ♣6 works too but that just spoils my story!