

Oh, I Don't Know, I'll Let My Partner Play It!

by Evan Dorrington

If you are declarer and the opposition makes an **opening lead out of turn** (Law 54): first call the director.

You will then be faced with five options and you have to make a decision.

If you know the five options you may be on a winner. But if you have to consider your options based upon what the director tells you at the time, pressure and confusion will often lead to a poor decision.

It is not difficult to learn these five options.

Option 1 Declarer may accept the lead and spread their hand as dummy for partner to play the hand.

Option 2 Declarer may accept the lead and have partner spread their hand as dummy, before declarer plays to the lead.

Options 3 and 4 Declarer may choose to have the lead played from the correct hand after demanding (option 3) or denying (option 4) a lead of the suit originally played out of turn.

In either case, the card originally led out of turn is returned to hand. The lead restriction continues to apply as long as the offender's partner retains the lead.

Option 5 Declarer may direct a free lead from the correct hand. The only penalty in this case is that the original lead remains face up, as a major penalty card, to be played at the first legal opportunity.

The following examples are guides only to provide you with some food for thought – decide which option you would take on each hand, before looking at the answers below. Declarer's hands are displayed.

HAND 1

S 85
H KQT94
D QT4
C J84

Bids

N	E	S	W
1NT	-	2H	-
-	-		

Contract

2H

Lead Out Of Turn

Small diamond

HAND 2

S 85
 H QT943
 D AQ4
 C 864

<i>Bids</i>				<i>Contract</i>	<i>Lead Out Of Turn</i>
N	E	S	W		
1NT	-	2H	-	2H	Small diamond
-	-				

HAND 3

S KJ7
 H J943
 D K5
 C KQ74

<i>Bids</i>				<i>Contract</i>	<i>Lead Out Of Turn</i>
N	E	S	W		
		1C	-	4H	Various
1D	-	1H	-		
4H	-	-	-		

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ANSWERS:

HAND 1 Declarer should spread own hand as dummy, thereby concealing the stronger hand and also granting partner the benefit of being the fourth player to the trick.

HAND 2 Declarer demands a diamond lead from correct hand, thereby being virtually assured of winning two stress-free diamond tricks.

HAND 3 A shortage of aces makes declarer's situation delicate. Declarer does not want a lead in any king-headed suit from RHO.

Therefore if RHO makes an opening lead out of turn in clubs, diamonds or spades, declarer should smile and demand a lead in that suit from the correct hand, thereby ensuring the king of that suit wins or is promoted.

If the lead out of turn is a heart, the same benefit can be gained by denying a heart lead from the correct hand.