

“NEVER LEAD A TRUMP, UNLESS ITS RIGHT”

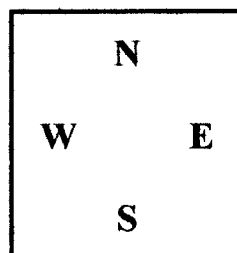
Vul: Both
Dir: South

♠ AT43

♥ AKT

♦ J

♣ KJ762



♠ KQ6

♥ J8742

♦ AQ9

♣ AQ

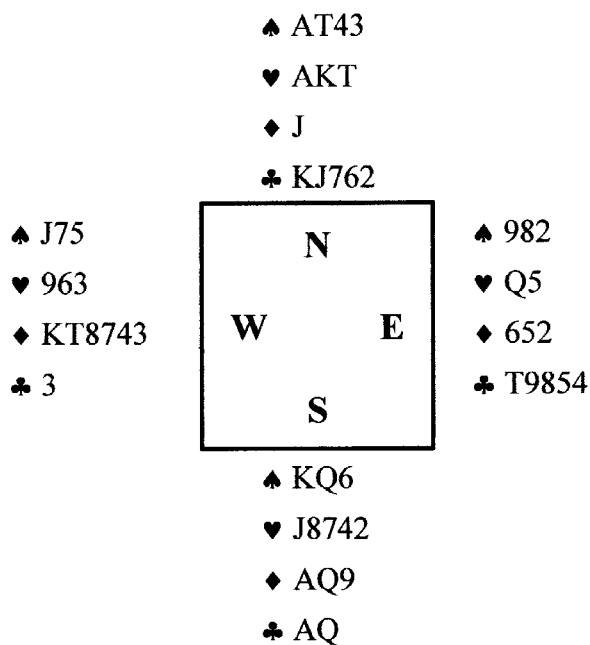
<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♠	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♥	Pass	7♥	All Pass

Opening Lead: 3♥

The late, great Lew Mathe was infamous for being a difficult opponent and a difficult partner. He had several “rules” for his partners. Amongst these rules was “*Never lead trumps, unless it’s right.*” I was glad this particular West didn’t know Lew’s rule.

In this hand, left to my own devices, I would have gone down after taking a losing finesse in trump. The trump lead however makes the hand quite different. Would a reasonable opponent lead away from the Queen of trumps? Probably not, so I played to drop the Q offside!

The whole hand was:



I have always believed that this “rule” of Lou’s is a valuable guideline for defenders. Many players believe that leading a trump is “safe” because it is unlikely to give away a trick. Even if that’s true (and experience tells us it is not always true, as on this hand), it gives away a tempo. George Rosenkranz wrote a whole book on the subject, called appropriately, “*Trump Leads*,” which I recommend to those who want to study this subject in detail (and learn when a trump lead is “*right*.”)

TIP: Never lead a trump, unless it’s right!
