

The rule of Eleven

This is a request. One member asked me if I could explain the rule of eleven and the significance of 4th highest leads against NT contracts. I can certainly do no better than simply quote from probably the best book on card play ever written: - Card Play Technique, by Victor Mollo and Nico Gardener. It was written in 1955 and is considered a classic. Unlike bidding, playing technique has not changed over the years.

In the defence to NT section, the book covers all sorts of leads (leading honours from honour sequences and interior sequences etc.) against NT contracts. It then goes on to say that from a holding such as AKxxx(x), AQxxx(x) lead the 4th highest. Partner will then apply the rule of eleven. If you want to borrow it, let me know.

Bidding Quiz

♠ KQ10 This is a hand from last Friday. You are playing 5 card majors and a
♥ 85 15-17 NT. Partner deals and opens 1♥. What do you bid?
♦ AJ654 Perhaps this sort of hand is easier when playing a weak NT; 2♦ is then
♣ 832 ‘obvious’ as it promises only 9 pts. Playing a strong NT, things are different. A 2NT bid is
11-12 pts, 1NT is 6-9 and 2♦ is 11+. With a 10
point hand, you must evaluate whether the hand is closer to 11 or 9. So what would you bid? 1NT, 2♦ or
2NT? Answer (and the reasoning behind it) next week. If you really can’t wait that long, then ask me. If
you have a definite opinion, then let me know and I will include it in next week’s answer, especially if it
disagrees with the opinion of Chuck and myself (yes, we totally agreed on this one).

Let’s finish off with a hand type that is impossible to bid using traditional methods: -

♠ 75 Your partner opens 1♦. No problem, you simply bid 1♥ (you would not,
♥ AJ96 of course, even dream of bidding 1NT and suppressing the 4 card ♥ suit).
♦ Q4 Unfortunately, life is not always that simple, and RHO intervenes with
♣ 98732 1♠. So what do you bid now? You cannot support partner’s ♦’s with a doubleton. 2♥
would show a 5 card suit and 11+ (or 9+ if you play a weak
NT) points. The ♣ suit is too anaemic to bid and you are not strong enough to make a forcing bid at the two
level. So 1NT? Does not seem right with a small doubleton in opponents suit and with an undisclosed ♥ suit.
So that just leaves pass? Now it really would be sad to sell out to 1♠ when you know that your side has *at
least* 19 points (but I saw this happen with a similar hand last week). There is no sensible solution unless you
play negative (Sputnik) doubles. More next week.

Now one thing has come up in both of the above hands. Why does the point requirement for a two-level response depend upon whether you play a weak or strong NT? Answer next week.