

Introducing Dr. Goodlead

by [Brian Gunnell](#)

Today we feature a terrific opening lead by Dr. Goodlead.

Board 15		♠ Q J 9 6										
South Deals		♥ J 9 7 4										
N-S Vul		♦ 9										
		♣ K 8 7 4										
♠ K 10 5 4 3 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; text-align: center;">S</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E				♠ —	
	N											
W	S	E										
♥ A 5		♥ 8 6										
♦ A 7 6		♦ 10 5 4 3 2										
♣ 5 2		♣ Q J 10 9 6 3										
	♠ A 8 7											
	♥ K Q 10 3 2											
	♦ K Q J 8											
	♣ A											
West	North	East	South									
1 ♠	2 ♥	Pass	1 ♥									
All pass			4 ♥									

Imagine yourself as East, if you will, looking at the N-E hands. West, the good doctor, leads the ♠10. A strange-looking lead, don't you think? It's not fourth best, not top of a sequence. Has the doctor's legendary common-sense finally deserted him?

While you are puzzling over that bizarre opening lead, Dummy plays the ♠Q and you gleefully ruff. What next, Mr. East? West found a grand opening lead, and life would be even grander if only you could get back to West's hand for a second ruff. If that is to happen, West must have the ♦A or ♣A. Any clues as to which?

The opening lead is your much-needed clue. West led an unnecessarily *high* Spade, and is trying to tell you something. Yes, he is advertising the Ace in the *higher*-ranking side-suit! So, after ruffing, you shoot back a diamond to West's Ace and get your second spade ruff. Down one!

Doctor G's lead from ♠K-10-5-4-3-2 was not without risk, but he saw no appealing alternative, and he reasonably concluded that East had no more than two spades (due to non-support in the auction). He didn't necessarily expect a void, but singleton was also a possibility (in which case West would later win the ♥A and give East a second-round spade ruff).

What just happened was a *Suit Preference* signal, whereby, in certain situations, the play of a high card says "I have the higher-ranking suit", vice versa with a low card. This defensive signal is a rare bird on opening lead, it usually comes later in the hand and even then only in specialized situations.