

A LITTLE MORE LAVINTHAL

By Baloney Bill

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Declarer, to my right, has led trump (hearts) twice, and I have no more as a result. OMG, declarer has led another heart, and now I must find a discard to play on this third trump lead. Hmm, what to get rid of? My original hand: 9 6 3 J 10 9 6 3 A K 8 5 2

I would like to let partner know I like diamonds, and someone told me I could do that using a system called "Lavinthal," where I toss a card in a suit I do not like, and that card will tell my partner what I do like. HUH???

I yell at the top of my lungs "I need an expert to help me over here," and Ginger magically appears. How do I tell my partner I like clubs? "Shhhh," says Ginger. "Everyone can hear you." My partner says "you like clubs, eh?" Our opponents call the director, who bans us from Chat for the rest of our lives.

Please ignore the preceding paragraph, other than the Ginger expert part. She quietly explains to your very quiet question that if you like clubs, throw away either a small spade or a small diamond. If you discard a spade, it tells partner you do not like spades; same if you toss a diamond. Tossing a small card in either suit tells partner than you like the lower-ranking of the remaining suits. E.g. If you toss the 3 of spades, you dislike spades, and you like the lower-ranking of the remaining suits (which are diamonds and clubs). If you toss the 3 of diamonds, you dislike diamonds and like the lower-ranking of the remaining suits (spades and clubs).

If you toss either the spade nine or the diamond nine, you will misrepresent your desires. Tossing a high card in a suit says you prefer the higher-ranking of the remaining two suits. No one that understands and uses Lavinthal will lead a club when they are able to attain the lead.

Here's a few examples for your practice. Clubs are trump in each example.

1. Declarer takes your partner's lead and leads the Ace of clubs. You and your partner play a club on the trick. Declarer than leads the club 9. Partner takes it with her jack, and you, having no more clubs, discard the heart 8. Partner wants you to lead a _____ (the higher ranking of the two remaining suits).
2. Declarer takes your partner's lead in the dummy and leads the Queen of clubs. You play the club King. Declarer plays the club ace. Partner plays the club 7. Declarer now leads the Jack of clubs. Partner tosses the 10 of hearts, telling you that if you get in the lead sometime during the play of the hand, that she wants you to lead a _____. Click here if you deserve a star for your answer: _____
3. Declarer takes partner's king of spades with her ace and takes two club tricks, everyone following. She then leads a third club, and you discard the 3 of diamonds, indicating that you do not like the _____ suit, but you do like the _____ suit. After you take a trick in your preferred suit (because partner was smart enough to lead it, you lead a different suit. Which one? _____ Why?