

The Real Deal



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In the 2009 Grand National Teams, our squad was upset in the Round of 16. David (from Minnesota) beat Goliath (from Florida). Our team won the event in 2007 and 2008, but our opponents played well and a few freak deals went against us, none worse than this one:

♠ 5 3 ♥ 3 ♦ 8 ♣ A J 10 9 8 7 6 5 3.

Yes, that is a nine-card club suit (I hope it fits on one line in the magazine).

I held this hand as the dealer at favorable vulnerability. In general, I preempt on the two level with a six-card suit, the three level with seven, the four level with eight and the five level with nine. So, I opened 5♣. This was passed around to right-hand opponent who balanced with 5♦. LHO raised to 6♦, the final contract.

There I was — what should I lead?

The choice was between the ♣A and the singleton heart. The other two suits didn't make much sense.

If partner has an ace, maybe we can cash my ♣A and then upon seeing dummy, I would know which major to switch to. On the other hand, if an opponent is void in clubs and my partner happens to have the ♥A, I

can lead my singleton and get a ruff.

Which will it be? I usually follow "Garozzo's rule," which says: "When in doubt, lead a singleton." This has worked well for me over the years — ever since I read the tip from that great Italian legend, Benito Garozzo.

But I decided that playing partner specifically for the ♥A was putting all my eggs in one basket. Maybe by cashing the ♣A (if it cashed), we would easily set the contract — partner might even have a trump trick.

So, I rejected Benito, and led Larry — the ♣A. This was the full deal:

Dir: West ♠ 10 7 6 4
Vul: N-S ♥ K Q J 4 2
♦ K 4 3
♣ K

Larry (Golden Arm)

♠ 5 3	♠ J 9 8 2
♥ 3	♥ A 10 6 5
♦ 8	♦ 5 2
♣ A J 10 9 8 7 6 5 3	♣ Q 4 2
♠ A K Q	
♥ 9 8 7	
♦ A Q J 10 9 7 6	
♣ —	

Benito was right again. Had I led my singleton heart, partner would have won and given me a ruff. (At least, he better have!)

After my actual club lead, declarer claimed. She ruffed and drew trumps, losing only the ♥A.

At the other table, the auction began the same way. Jeff Meckstroth balanced with 5♦, but Eric Rodwell didn't raise to 6♦ with the North hand. I agree 100% with Eric. I like to give my partner some leeway — I always presume he is already figuring on me for some cards. The ♣K looks wasted, so in effect, North has an aceless 9-count — nothing too special. Against 5♦, West did lead his singleton heart to hold declarer to 11 tricks.

For minus 1370 and plus 600 our team lost 13 IMPs. Had I followed Benito, we would have been plus 100 and plus 600 to win 12. My golden arm had cost our team 25 IMPs. □

Marty Bergen – Larry Cohen reunion seminar at the Wynn Hotel in Las Vegas June 22–24. Visit www.larryco.com for more information.

2010–2011 North American Pairs

The finals of the 2009–2010 North American Pairs will be played at the Louisville KY Spring 2011 NABC.

Play in your local club games to qualify. Club qualifiers are scheduled throughout June, July and August.

First-place district winners in all flights receive \$700 per person and free entry. Second-place district winners receive \$300 per person and free entry. (Qualifiers must play in the national final until elimination to receive the award.)

Flight A: Wednesday, Thursday, March 9–10, 2011

Flights B and C: Saturday, Sunday, March 19–20, 2011