

# Partnership Bridge

By Pamela and Matthew Granovetter  
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**Pamela:** Do you think an opening lead *style* should be included in partnership agreements? I do, and here's a case in point. I was East.

Dlr: East ♠ 8 7  
 Vul: Both ♥ A Q 10 7 3  
 ♦ K J 3  
 ♣ 10 9 2

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

♠ A J 10 9 6 3 2  
 ♥ 6 4  
 ♦ 9  
 ♣ A 7 4

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	1♥	2♦	4♠
All Pass			

My partner led the ♦ 6. Declarer put in the jack, losing to the ace, and later discarded a club on the ♦ K.

My notes with all regular partners include opening-lead agreements. For example, "Avoid trump leads." Another example is called "robot leads," where instead of trying to find a killing lead on every hand, we use be-a-robot rules such as, "Always lead your singleton," "Lead the top of touching honors," etc. In this case, as you can see, only a club lead beats their vulnerable game (and by "coincidence," West happened to have touching honors in one suit only — clubs!). When I told my partner that the "robot lead" would have worked, he became very peevish, and basically told me to mind my own business.

**Matthew:** The opening lead is one of the most difficult aspects of the game. Each partner should be allowed to use inference and creativity to find the best lead. I happen to favor "robot leads" mainly because if partner doesn't lead an honor, I infer as his partner that he doesn't have touching honors. If partner doesn't lead a singleton, I infer that he doesn't have one, etc. I do, however, secretly admire those who have the talent to find the killing leads that win and lose tournaments!

**Pamela:** There you go again, admiring the heroic, one-man-army tactics! I certainly agree with you that being good at opening leads is a talent, but I am a partnership-bridge player. I like to keep my partners happy, and vice versa. I'm not alone here. Take Bob Hamman, who has quite definite opening-lead preferences — for example, he dislikes trump leads, and won't play "jack-denies" leads (he says they are too helpful to the opponents).

If avoiding trump leads and other partnership leading-style agreements make partner happy, why not oblige? Further, partnership agreement on opening lead style has the merit of quelling partnership discord when a lead doesn't work, since both partners agreed to play that way in the first place.

**The Last Word (Matthew):** Some aspects of bridge are partnership matters, but in many cases (primarily declarer play) each person must be allowed his individuality. It's true that sharing an opening-lead style makes a partnership more harmonious on defense, so that's the ideal. But if you find yourself with an individualistic type of opening leader, it may be more diplomatic not to critique the results. He will know without your comments whether the lead worked!

The new Granovetter Weekly Bridge Quiz is available by e-mail subscription. Contact pam@bridgetoday.com for details.

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