

Relay Precision Slam -- Lead Problem

Board 7
 South Deals
 Both Vul

♠ 6 5 4
 ♥ J 9 8 6 4
 ♦ A 8
 ♣ 6 5 3



West	North	East	South
<i>Pete</i>	<i>Leo</i>	<i>Adam</i>	<i>Joon</i>
			6 ♠ ¹

All pass

1. The actual auction is lost to posterity.

6 ♠ by South

Lead: ?

South opens 1 ♣, strong artificial and forcing. The opponents conduct a Relay Precision auction that makes South declarer at 6 ♠. North describes his exact shape: seven spades, four diamonds, and two singletons. North shows ♠ KQ, ♥ K, and ♦ K, but denies holding an ace.

What do you lead at matchpoint pairs? Would you choose a different lead at IMPs?

Relay Precision Slam -- Solution

Board 7
 South Deals
 Both Vul

♠ 6 5 4 ♥ J 9 8 6 4 ♦ A 8 ♣ 6 5 3	♠ K Q J 10 9 8 7 ♥ K ♦ K J 9 4 ♣ 8		♠ 3 ♥ Q 10 7 5 ♦ Q 7 5 3 ♣ J 9 7 4
	♠ A 2 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ 10 6 2 ♣ A K Q 10 2		
West	North	East	South
<i>Pete</i>	<i>Leo</i>	<i>Adam</i>	<i>Joon</i>
			6 ♠ ¹

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6 ♠ by South

Lead: ?

The opponents clearly have landed in a slam they plan to make, and it seems likely other pairs will not bid so confidently to this slam, if at all. It's time for drastic measures, whether playing matchpoints or teams. With all this in mind, I put the ♦ 8 on the table with little pause, once the auction had ended. (A huddle might tip the play.)

Joon thought for a long time (a compliment to me), shrugged, and called for a small diamond (not too big a compliment).

In June, 2009, when this hand was played, Adam Yedidia was a smart high school student from Cambridge. He often came to the game with one of two friends, but this time he came alone and we played together. He thought about his play for exactly 1.5 eternities, before producing the ♦ Q. The second round of diamonds came promptly thereafter.

Leo Zelevinsky and Joon Pahk went on to win North-South with a 59.17% game. The MIT game is no longer convenient for Leo, but I still see him occasionally, with a different partner. I understand Joon started a family; I hope he comes back to bridge when the kids are grown, as I did.

Likely the only time we played together, Adam and I won East-West with 68.75%, partly on the strength of this deal, my favorite of the year. When you're hot, you're hot. I have been meaning to write this up ever since.

Adam came to MIT as an undergraduate, but he joined a singing group on Tuesday nights. He never played bridge at the club during his whole time at MIT. Go figure. Maybe he'll take up bridge again later in life.