

Bridge Column from AnnArbor.com.

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Subject > **The lead tells about the length**

Charles de Montesquieu, a French lawyer and political philosopher who died in 1755, said, "What the orators lack in depth, they give you in length."

What a weak hand lacks in points, it compensates by providing length in partner's suit.

In this deal, what would you lead from the West hand against four spades? Pick whatever you like, but don't forget that your partner opened one heart!

When I ran this deal on the Norwegian cruise in July, several Souths contented themselves with a one-spade overcall -- and at two tables, that ended the auction. Yes, West might have raised to two hearts, and North might have advanced with one no-trump, but one can understand why they did not. South should immediately bid the contract he wishes to reach -- four spades. Yes, he might miss a slam if partner has a magic hand, but partner "never" does. And bidding four spades could make responder's life a nightmare.

When you have not supported your partner's suit, giving length information is more important than strength information. Here, lead the heart three. (If you lead a high card, it shows that you have either a singleton or a doubleton.) East wins with his nine and cashes the ace, learning that you have the last unseen heart. Now East shifts to the diamond two, and your side takes two tricks in that suit for down one.

Note that if you lead the heart eight, top of nothing, partner will assume that you began with a doubleton and will think that he can cash three heart tricks. But South will ruff the third, draw trumps, and run the clubs for an overtrick.

		North	09-30-11
		♠ 4	
		♥ Q 5 2	
		♦ 10 7 6 3	
		♣ A K 10 9 8	
West		East	
♠ 5 2		♠ 6 3	
♥ 8 7 3		♥ A K J 10 9	
♦ A J 4		♦ Q 9 8 2	
♣ 7 6 4 3 2		♣ Q J	
		South	
		♠ A K Q J 10 9 8 7	
		♥ 6 4	
		♦ K 5	
		♣ 5	
		Dealer: North	
		Vulnerable: North-South	
South	West	North	East
4♠	Pass	Pass	1♥
		Pass	Pass
Opening lead: ??			