MARVIN VS JOURNALIST

Journalist leads against suit contracts feature Rusinow leads (king from AK, queen from QJ, 10 from J10, 9 from 109), including the lead of the ten from KJ10 and the 9 from K109 or Q109.

"Journalist" (Jeff Rubens) once wrote: "There is no way to improve efficiency when leading from interior sequences without introducing (what we consider) a greater loss somewhere else." That statement bears checking. Rubens assumes that the alternative is playing the 10 or 9 as "zero or two higher," which is not compatible with Rusinow leads. There is a third approach, however, which I modestly call "Marvin."

Marvin leads second best from sequences, a la Rusinow, but leads the top of an interior sequence. Let's examine the situations in which the difference may matter:

<p style="text-align:center">Kxx</p>

J109x or Q109x	Axxx

<p style="text-align:center">Qx or Jx</p>

Journalist leads the 10 from J109 and 9 from Q109, so third seat can't go wrong. Marvin leads the 10 from both holdings and third seat doesn't know if it's from J109 or Q109. She may lose her ace if she ducks. Plus for Journalist (although with Jx declarer always gets one trick in the suit).

<p style="text-align:center">Qxx</p>

K109x	Axxx

<p style="text-align:center">Jx</p>

This is a similar case. Declarer will always get one trick in the suit, but if Marvin's partner plays declarer for Kxx and ducks the lead of the 10, the defense could lose one or two of its tricks. Plus for Journalist, who knows not to duck when the 9 is led.

<p style="text-align:center">AJx</p>

1098x	Kxx

<p style="text-align:center">Qxx</p>

Journalist leads the 9 and third seat doesn't know who has the queen. Usually he will duck and maybe get the trick later. Or maybe not. Marvin also leads the 9 but his partner knows to play the king. Plus for Marvin.

<div align="center">AJx</div>

<div align="center">Q109x   Kxx</div>

<div align="center">xxx</div>

Journalist leads the 9 and third seat probably ducks. Marvin leads the 10 and third seat definitely ducks, knowing where the queen is. We'll call this even, but there is a chance that Journalist's partner will go wrong and play the king.

<div align="center">Kxx (or Axx)</div>

<div align="center">Q109x   Jxx</div>

<div align="center">Axx (or Kxx)</div>

Journalist leads the 9, which tells third seat nothing of value. Who has the queen? Marvin leads the 10 and third seat knows who has the queen. Plus for Marvin.

<div align="center">AQx</div>

<div align="center">K109x   Jxx</div>

<div align="center">xxx</div>

Journalist leads the 9, declarer plays the queen, and third seat doesn't know who has the king. Marvin's partner does know. Plus for Marvin.

<div align="center">Jxx (or Qxx)</div>

<div align="center">K109x   xxx</div>

<div align="center">AQx (or AJx)</div>

Same comments as for the previous case. Plus for Marvin.

<div align="center">xxx</div>

<div align="center">K109x   Jxx</div>

<div align="center">AQx</div>

You know the story by now: plus for Marvin.

Axx

              K109x   Jxx

                              Qxx

A similar case: plus for Marvin.

                              xxx

              1098x or K109x   QJx

                        AKx or Axx

Journalist leads the 9 from both holdings, while Marvin leads differently. When declarer wins the ace, Marvin's partner knows who has the king. Plus for Marvin.

                        AQx (or AJx)

              K109x   xxx

                        Jxx (or Qxx)

When declarer wins the trick in his hand, Marvin's partner knows who has the king (helping to place declarer's points). Journalist's does not. Small plus for Marvin.

                              xxx

              K109x   AJx

                              Qxx

Marvin's partner will continue the suit after winning the ace, but Journalist's may play declarer for KQx and switch. Plus for Marvin.

                              Qxx

              KJ10x   Axx

                              xxx

Journalist leads the 10 and third seat may fear to duck. Marvin leads the jack and third seat knows he has the kiing. Plus for Marvin.

Another plus is that the 9 lead is no longer ambiguous, as it shows the 10 and nothing else. There are many combinations where this can be important, so I won't show them.

Well, Marvin has more pluses than Journalist. Of course the situations are not all of equal importance, which must be taken into account. Maybe some significant combinations have been missed, such as when dummy is void of the suit. Another ignored factor is that these leads could be from a short suit. Analysis of all that "is left as an exercise for the reader."