

Five Hearts -- Problem

**Board 17**  
 North Deals  
 None Vul



♠ J 7 5 2  
 ♥ A K J 10 7 2  
 ♦ —  
 ♣ Q 10 6

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1 ♥	2 ♦
3 ♦ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	?	

1. Invitational or better with heart support.

As East, you make a normal opening bid of 1 ♥, by any of three methods:

14 points: 11 HCP plus 3 for the void,

21 Bergen points: 11 HCP in long suits plus 10 cards in your two longest suits, or

6.5 losers: three in spades (4th card is not a loser), one in hearts, and half a loser in clubs.

In fact, this hand is a tad better than minimum, so when the bidding comes back to you, you leap to 4 ♥.

Partner raises to 5 ♥. Now what?

**Board 17**  
North Deals  
None Vul

Five Hearts -- Solution

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

EW 6♥; EW 5♣; NS 3♦; EW 1N; Par -800: NS 7♦×-4

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1 ♥	2 ♦
3 ♦	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	?	

If partner asked you if you had a little more, you should say, no. In fact, with a better hand, you might have taken a cue bid on the way to 4♥. (Yes, the opponents should still be bidding diamonds, but then there would be no story.)

5♥ is not an invitation; it asks you a question: do you have a heart control? If not, pass. If so, bid on. This is something you have to know, because you probably cannot figure it out at the table.

Bid 6♦ to show first round control of diamonds. Don't insist on a grand slam, because partner might have made an aggressive 5♥ bid, as turns out to be the case. Small slams have some wiggle room, but don't bid speculative grand slams. In this club matchpoint game, few pairs bid even a small slam, so going down in 7♥ would turn a top into a bottom.

This bid is part of a set of standard agreements sometimes called Vol5 -- a voluntary raise to five of a major. As Bill Root says in *Commonsense Bidding*, Vol5 does not apply when the opponents forced you to the five level; it must have been possible to bid or pass four of the major. The voluntary raise to five of a major asks for first or second round control of the obvious problem suit:

- The one suit shown by the opponents, if neither of us has shown a (first or second round) control in that suit.
- If the opponents have shown two suits, the one of their suits in which we have not shown a control.
- The one suit outside trumps in which we have not shown a control.

Cuebid the problem suit with first round control; bid the slam with a singleton; bid 5 NT with the guarded king, and pass with no control. (When there is no obvious problem suit, Max Hardy says five of the major asks for trump quality, but it makes more sense for it to ask for extra values when playing Roman Keycard Blackwood.)

Vol5 comes up less frequently in partnerships using modern slam bidding methods, such as Serious 3 NT and Italian cue bids. However, this deal demonstrates that Vol5 can sometimes be a fine way to try for slam. It would be foolhardy for West to ask for keycards, holding two losing diamonds.

Often, the same result might be achieved by modern cue bidding, as is the case here. Such methods require discussion with partner -- and more bids & possible interference -- while Vol5 has been standard for decades.

Nebulous Double -- Problem

**Board 2**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul



♠ J 9 8 4  
 ♥ A 9 7 5  
 ♦ A 8  
 ♣ A J 5

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♣	Pass
1 NT	2 ♦	Dbl	Pass
Pass <sup>1</sup>	Pass		

1. Long hesitation (unauthorized but irrelevant information).  
 2 ♦× by North

Partner's 1 NT response denied holding a 4-card major, but you decided to try on a double anyhow. For better or worse, it's now your lead against 2 ♦ doubled. What's your choice?

## Nebulous Double -- Solution

**Board 2**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

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

EW 2♠; EW 2♥; EW 3♣; EW 1N; NS 1♦; Par -110

West	North	East	South
		1 ♣	Pass
1 NT	2 ♦	Dbl	Pass
Pass <sup>1</sup>	Pass		

1. Long hesitation (unauthorized but irrelevant information).
- 2 ♦× by North

With only seven points, West could have made up a 1 ♦ response, but chose 1 NT holding an honor in each major suit. If that double is for penalties, then East will have at least four clubs. Otherwise, East expects West to bid clubs or pass for penalties with diamonds. Either way, bidding 3 ♣ makes sense.

However, if we set 2 ♦, we expect a top for +200. West chose to pass.

If we double a partscore on power, they will normally require taking lots of trumps to make it. The normal lead is a trump. If you held ♦ K8, you would have a problem. Here, the ♦ A, followed by the ♦ 8 is a standout.

This is the only lead to set the contract. It works in a strange way: a trump is the only entry to declarer's eighth trick, the ♠ K, and declarer does not get to unblock the ♠ A in time. Careful defense now sets the contract.

Rule: If your side doubles a partscore on power, you do not lead a trump, and they make it, it's your fault.

Diamonds on Dummy -- Problem

**Board 25**  
 South Deals  
 E-W Vul

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



♠ A K 10 3  
 ♥ A 3 2  
 ♦ J 7 2  
 ♣ A Q 5

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♣
Pass	1 ♦	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	
	3 NT by South		

Playing matchpoint pairs in a club game, RHO leads the ♥ Q at your normal 3 NT contract. On dummy's ♥ 4, RHO deposits the ♥ 8 (standard leads and carding).

It is conceivable to win all 13 tricks on this hand by splitting the diamond suit (6), ♥ A (1), a finesse of the ♣ Q (2), a double spade finesse (3), and a [likely silly] squeeze (1). To take those finesses, you require three entries to dummy in the diamond suit.

Do you win the ♥ A immediately, and go for it? What is your plan?

Diamonds on Dummy -- Solution

**Board 25**  
 South Deals  
 E-W Vul

<p>♠ 8 4                  ♥ Q J 10 9                  ♦ Q 10                  ♣ J 8 7 3 2</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ 6 5                  ♥ 7 6 4                  ♦ A K 8 6 5 3                  ♣ 10 9</p> <p>♠ Q J 9 7 2                  ♥ K 8 5                  ♦ 9 4                  ♣ K 6 4</p> <p>♠ A K 10 3                  ♥ A 3 2                  ♦ J 7 2                  ♣ A Q 5</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										

NS 6N; NS 6♦; NS 3♠; NS 3♥; S 2♣; N 1♣; Par +990  
 3 NT by South

First of all, forget the double spade finesse, which works only 25% of the time. However, the ♠ 10 may prove to be a useful squeeze threat, if you can rectify the count. Furthermore, the club finesse is only 50% and losing it would usually let the opponents cash out the heart suit. All this argues for ducking in hearts, so you do.

West chooses to lead the ♥ J next (the ♥ 9 is technically correct), perhaps to be deceptive, but giving partner (me) some anxiety about making the correct play of the ♥ K. The actual declarer won this trick, the normal trick to win when holding six combined cards in the suit. If the diamonds run, you will have ten tricks, so it is correct to duck the second heart as well, to rectify the count to one loser. You win the third heart.

Whatever you do, if you lose a diamond, the winner of the trick will cash the last heart, if possible. If not, you will attempt to squeeze East in the black suits. Win the return, cash the top spades, and watch the discards as you run the diamonds. If neither the ♣ K nor the ♠ Q J appears, discard the ♠ 10; then either guess to finesse in clubs or play the ace and guarantee your tricks.

Plan A. Lead a diamond and duck (even the ♦ Q), clearly best at IMPs, but losing to plan B(1) at matchpoints. A "free" variant is to lead the ♦ J and duck no matter what West plays, gaining when West fails to cover.

Plan B. Lead a low diamond, playing the ace unless West shows out. If East shows out (5%), two down at best. If the ♦ Q appears (12.5%), run your squeeze; otherwise:

(1) Play a low diamond, assuring that you run the suit for at least nine tricks. (Declarer made nine tricks this way, when the hearts split.) This will produce the maximum number of tricks whenever the diamonds are 3-1, a nominally 50% play for a "normal" sort of result.

(2) Cash the king. If diamonds fail, two down, at best. If diamonds run, you get a top, perhaps all alone, if the squeeze works. The 2-2 split is a nominally 40% top-or-bottom play, inferior to plan B(1) in the long run.

Plan C. Lead the ♦ J and run it. If West covers with the ♦ Q, win, hoping East deposits the 9 or 10 on the trick; if not, see B(1). Return to the ♠ A and take the restricted choice finesse for the missing 9/10, a two-to-one favorite, and a "normal" result if it loses. However, if you win the ♦ Q and East shows out, West can stop you from running the suit by refusing to play the 10 or 9 on the second round of diamonds; a trick better for you than plan B. If the ♦ Q is singleton in either hand, this play costs a trick, compared to plan B. The chance of singleton 9/10 in East is also 12.5%, but the restricted choice finesse reduces this play to 8.3%. Add back the 5% for doing better when East is void, and plan C gains 13.3% to offset the 12.5% cost -- a tad better than B(1).