

Direct vs. Delayed Heart Raise -- Problem

Board 10
 South Deals
 Both Vul



♠ A J 10 8
 ♥ A Q 10
 ♦ J 7
 ♣ 10 7 5 2

West	North <i>PeteM</i>	East	South <i>ptownsd</i>
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♣ ?

In a recent ACBL matchpoint pairs game on BBO, South-North were often playing strong notrumps, and East-West often exhibited the good sense to stay out of the bidding -- then the auction usually started as shown.

As South, which of these plans would you choose?

1. Raise to 2 ♥.
2. Bid 1 ♠. If partner bids 1 NT, pass.
3. Bid 1 ♠. If partner bids 1 NT, bid 2 ♥.
4. Bid 1 ♠. If partner bids 1 NT, bid 3 ♥.
5. Bid 1 NT.

Consider your answer for these minor suit holdings:

- A. ♦ J 7 ♣ 10 7 5 2
- B. ♦ 7 5 ♣ J 10 7 2
- C. ♦ 7 ♣ J 10 7 5 2
- D. ♦ 7 ♣ A J 7 5 2

Note that we do not need to consider a 16-point hand with a doubleton diamond (similar to [D]), as that hand opens 1 NT.

Direct vs. Delayed Heart Raise -- Solution

Board 10
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	♠ 5 4 3 2										
	♥ J 6 5 2										
	♦ A K 4 3										
	♣ J										
♠ 7	<table style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K Q 9 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 9 8 4		♥ 7 3									
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West	North	East	South								
	<i>PeteM</i>		<i>ptownsd</i>								
			1 ♣								
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	?								

Most Souths bid 1 ♠ and found the spade fit. Results of the play in spades were all over the map, but the most common one was making three for a 64.9% result. We don't know how these folks would have continued, should responder have bid 1 NT, instead of raising spades.

Thrice, South rebid 1 NT, playing there for an average 28.3% result (just deserts). One pair -- us, playing my preferred method -- raised directly to 2 ♥ and played there making two for a 40.9%. We play that a delayed raise of 2 ♥ shows extra values, something like hand [D]. This is a bad hand (with a tolerable result) for our methods, but when we get hand [D], they pay off. An updated excerpt from my "Fragment Spiral" article:

 We consider a three card raise when holding weak shortness in a side suit; my plan is J-x or weaker (more often); World Grand Master Steve Weinstein's plan is 9-x or weaker (less often). Other features may count, too.

Opener has four spades and three hearts – partnership decision: In this auction, opener shows 3-card heart support and weak shortness in the fourth suit: 1 ♣ - 1 ♥; 1 ♠ - 1 NT; 2 ♥

Some pairs require no values for 2 ♥ beyond those required for 1 ♠. This approach has been in Bridge World Standard since 2001. To invite game at the third bid with 3-card heart support, opener would have to jump to 3 ♥, perhaps too lofty a height.

For other, pairs, the delayed raise of 2 ♥ shows extra values, about the overall strength required to raise 1 ♥ to 3 ♥, but with only three trumps. With fewer values, the immediate 3-card raise is used, even when holding four spades: 1 ♣ - 1 ♥; 2 ♥

This approach may play 2 ♥ in a 4-3 heart fit with a 4-4 spade fit on the side. This method seems to be favored by players with many years of experience, including Steve Weinstein and myself. Most players do play that the delayed raise shows extras when the spade suit is not at issue, such as: 1 ♦ - 1 ♥; 2 ♣ - 2 ♦; 2 ♥

It's a trade-off. The important thing is to *make an agreement* with your partner on these matters.

Note: A few pairs bid "up the line," responded 1 ♦, caught a 1 ♠ rebid from opener, and found the spade fit. We play "Walsh style," where a 1 ♦ responder assumes responsibility for finding any major suit fit. Opener would rebid 1 NT over 1 ♦ on this deal. Since responder is not strong enough to then reverse into a major suit on this deal, a 1 ♦ response would be unacceptable for us. This is another trade-off.