

Half the Deck -- Problem

Board 13
East Deals
Both Vul



♠ A 5 4 2
♥ A K
♦ A K 10 8 5
♣ Q 7

1. East opens 1 ♦. What should be our plan?

2. East opens 1 ♣. What should be our plan?
 - a. Suppose we double, and partner advances 1 ♠, with the opponents now silent. Is there a slam? Is there a game? What should we do?

 - b. Suppose we double, and partner advances 1 ♥. Does partner have four spades? What should we do now?

(Deal rotated for convenience.)

Board 13
 East Deals
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Half the Deck -- Solution

♠ K J 8		♠ Q 9									
♥ Q 9 8 5 4		♥ 7 6 2									
♦ 3 2		♦ Q J 9 6									
♣ 10 9 5		♣ A K 8 6									
♠ 10 7 6 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 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		♠ A 5 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 10 3		♥ A K									
♦ 7 4		♦ A K 10 8 5									
♣ J 4 3 2		♣ Q 7									

NS 4♠; NS 4♥; NS 3N; NS 3♦; NS 1♣; Par +620: NS 4♥=; NS 4♠=

1. East opens 1♦. A 1NT overcall shows a good balanced hand, perhaps 15-19, but more likely a narrower range. Whatever the exact range, this hand is too strong for an immediate overcall. Our plan is to double first, and then bid notrump as cheaply is possible, showing a hand of about this strength.

If I were North, I would have opened 1♦ -- after a major suit overcall and a negative double, we'll be well placed -- but that's not what happened at the table.

2. East opens 1♣. We have the strength (18 to 20 HCP) to double and then bid diamonds, but our suit should have six or more cards; A-K-10-8-5 is a weak five for this plan. Because partner could hurt us in hearts, there is a case for overcalling 1♦, but that could easily miss a game -- we would play in 1♦ on this deal.

a. We double, and partner obliges with 1♠. Partner is limited to a bad 9-count. Visualizing for slam, partner would need ♠K, ♠Q, ♦Q and ♣K -- a 2♠ advance -- for a laydown slam on reasonable splits. That rules out a cue bid; we will be raising spades. We have a 5-loser hand, so we need help from partner to make game. A bump to 2♠ would show 16+ support points, so we jump to 3♠.

b. Suppose we double, and partner bids 1♥. Advancing a takeout double is quite unlike responding to an opening bid. Advancer's bid will usually be our final strain, sometimes the final contract. Doubler won't be bidding any 4-card suits. Advancer's priorities are (1) major suit, (2) notrump, (3) minor suit. With two suits of the same length and rank to bid (even 3-3), advancer should choose the *higher*. If partner has four spades, they should also have five hearts for the 1♥ bid. 1♥ on this hand would be taking a position (a deliberate misbid), to avoid a 4-3 fit at 1♠: ♠8 6 3 2 ♥K Q 9 2 ♦8 3 ♣9 3 2

In the modern style, a cue bid usually delivers 3-card support, although it could be slamming in hearts, a super-GOSH (good one-suited hand with slam possible) or, a good balanced hand without a stopper angling for notrump. Over the cue bid, advancer's primary duty is to bid notrump with a smattering of points that include a stopper. Second, advancer bids a lower-ranking suit of equal length, without increasing the level. A bid that increases the level, or a jump rebid, shows actual values in a 5-card suit. With nothing better to do, advancer rebids their original suit, which does not show extra length.

If we cue bid 3♣, we must play hearts if partner insists. When partner jumps to 3♥, we either pass or raise. 4♥ would be a terrible contract, except for the 3-3 heart split (36%) and that we know where all the cards are.

A boring 2♦ bid over 1♥ (GOSH, 18+ HCP, usually 0-2 hearts), likely ending the auction, could well be best.