

Partner leads our suit! Declarer calls for the ♦ 3. Plan the defense.

Partner Strikes Gold, or the Dog in the Night -- Solution Board 8 ♠ K 10 8 7 2 **♥** 6 West Deals None Vul **♦** K 3 ♣ A K 10 8 4 **♦** QJ6 **♠** 954 ♥ QJ9853 ♥ 104 ♦ AQ542 ♦ 876 **\$** 9 **♣** 0 6 2 **♠** A 3 ♥ A K 7 2 ♦ J 10 9 ♣ J 7 5 3 N 44; N 54; S 34; S 44; NS 2N; NS 10; NS 10; Par +420: N 44= West North East South

1

Pass

All pass

3 NT by South

Declarer probably would have bid a 5-card heart suit, so partner has at least six hearts. Why didn't that dog bark? The hearts must not be strong enough for a non-vulnerable weak two bid! (Most West players would open 2 \heartsuit , but we play "good suit.")

Pass

3 NT

The only hope on this hand is the diamond suit. Duck, playing an encouraging card. Declarer clearly has at least \Diamond J-10-9; we hope that partner has \Diamond 8-7-6, so that the suit will run. This works: we get four diamonds and either a spade or a club to set the contract.

If we win the opening lead and shift to the \heartsuit 10, declarer wins the \heartsuit A, tests clubs, gets the bad news and splits the spades -- thereby knocking out West's entry. When West leads the \diamondsuit 7, we get another chance! If we duck now, the \diamondsuit K wins, and declarer cannot reach the \heartsuit K in time.

If declarer calls for the \Diamond K on the opening lead, we must either duck that or the second trick, without touching hearts, or declarer can make the contract.

Opener Rebids a Minor -- Problem

Board 26South Deals
Both Vul

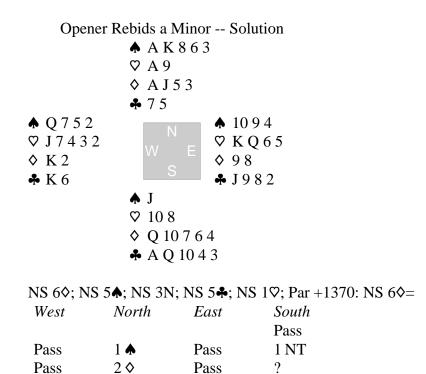


♣ J♥ 10 8♦ Q 10 7 6 4♣ A Q 10 4 3

1 12 € 10 . 0			
West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1 🛧	Pass	1 NT
Pass	2 💠	Pass	?

What now?

Board 26South Deals
Both Vul



This is a situation where it is good to keep the bidding open when possible. North can have a quite good hand for 2 \$\diamsle\$ here, perhaps a point or two more than North actually holds, but still not good enough for a jump shift.

Long ago, being a rules kind of guy, I made up a provisional rule to raise partner's minor suit here with 8 HCP and 5-card support, or 10 HCP and 4-card support. This has stood the test of time: South has a clear cut raise to 3 ♦. Game will then be reached: 3 NT depends on the diamond finesse (50%), while the superior 5 ♦ contract probably makes if either finesse wins, and makes six here by establishing the long club or spade.

Board 25

East Deals N-S Vul

Spade Fit -- Problem



♦ KJ54

♥ A87

♦ 76

♣ A K 6 4

West South North East 1 ♣

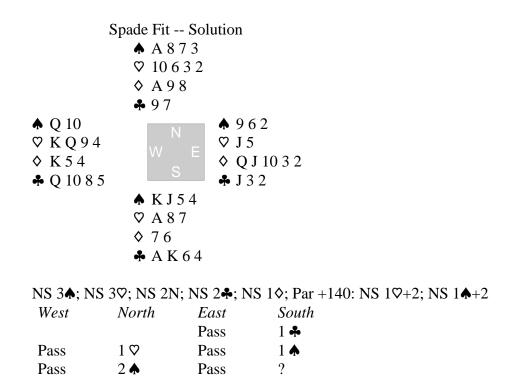
Pass

Pass 1♡ Pass

1 🖍 2♠ ? Pass Pass

What now?

Board 25
East Deals
N-S Vul



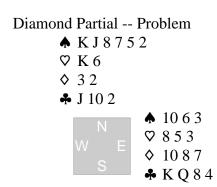
Treating North's raise as semi-constructive, the situation is effectively the same as a $\{1 \land -2 \land \}$ auction, except that we know more about the fit. South has the high cards to make a game try, but the hand has seven losers. North would need four winners to produce a solid play for game, which is not reasonable to expect. South should pass $2 \land$.

If South makes a natural $3 \heartsuit$ game try, North should refuse with two winners and accept with three. Aces are the best winners of all; with two aces and a doubleton opposite length, North should accept the game try. It's a bad game; $4 \spadesuit$ fails on a \spadesuit 9 overruff of the fourth club: no fourth winner.

Not all pairs play our way, on three issues:

- 1. Most pairs would open 1 NT. Our 1 NT opening is a good 15 to a bad 18. South has a slightly better than average 15-count, but hands with 4-4 in the black suits bid well when opened 1 ♣. This flexibility at 15 HCP has served us well over the years. (On this deal, we would always find the spade fit after a 1 NT opening, whether North decides on invitational or crawling Stayman.)
- 2. Take away one or two HCP and many Souths would still rebid $1 \spadesuit$ over $1 \heartsuit$ with this shape. With that lesser hand, we would raise to $2 \heartsuit$ immediately. We need extra values to bid $1 \spadesuit$ and then remove responder's likely 1 NT bid to $2 \heartsuit$. South has them on this hand, just barely. (The other folks would have to jump to $3 \heartsuit$ to show extras.)
- 3. North's raise of opener's second suit promises 4-card support. 1 \spadesuit was not forcing, so North would have passed with a poor hand. However, 2 \spadesuit has a preemptive effect, so other Norths might raise on any hand with 4-card support.

Board 16East Deals
E-W Vul



NS 2 \spadesuit ; W 1N; EW 1 \heartsuit ; NS 1 \diamondsuit ; N 1 \clubsuit ; Par +110: NS 2 \spadesuit =

West North East South

Pass 1 \diamondsuit Dbl 1 \spadesuit Pass 2 \diamondsuit All pass 2 \diamondsuit by South

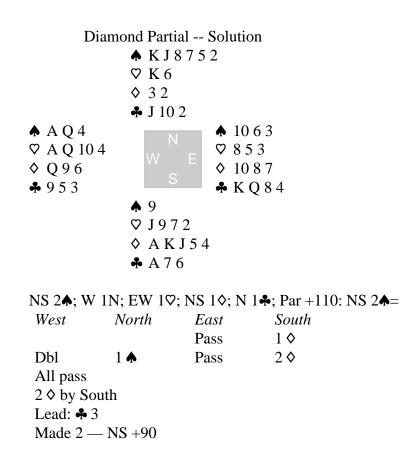
Lead: \clubsuit 3

Made 2 — NS +90

Join me as East for this deal at matchpoint pairs at the Warwick Regional. Partner leads the \$\display\$ 3, third best from even and low from odd. With little pause for thought, opener calls for the \$\display\$ J from dummy. We cover with the queen, and declarer wins the ace.

Declarer leads the \clubsuit 9, and dummy's \spadesuit K wins. After some thought, declarer calls for the \clubsuit 2 from dummy. What is partner's most likely distribution? Plan the defense.

Board 16East Deals
E-W Vul



Partner clearly has three spades and three clubs. They would have overcalled $1 \, \heartsuit$ with a 5-bagger, so play partner for four hearts and three diamonds.

Declarer has rebid a 5-bagger and has "stolen" the spade trick they were going to get anyhow, with the ∇ K as an entry. Now they are trying more trickery.

Holding the \clubsuit 9, declarer's automatic play on the opening lead would probably be a small club. Win the \clubsuit 8 and lead a trump. When partner gets in with a heart, another club gets the killing second round of trump.

Unfortunately we slipped a trick at the end, as declarer made two anyhow.