

Walsh One Spade -- Problem

Board 17
 North Deals
 None Vul



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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦ ¹
Pass	1 ♠ ²	Pass	?

1. Unless forcing to game, denies a 4-card major.
2. Unbalanced hand or concentrated values.

Join South for this deal in an online matchpoint pairs game.

Playing Walsh responses, partner would skip the spades and rebid 1 NT with a routine, balanced opening hand.

Here are some choices for our next call:

Pass -- 1 ♠ is not forcing.

1 NT -- The value bid -- it's matchpoints.

2 ♣ -- Partner surely has four clubs, and may have five or six.

2 ♠ -- 3-card support. With four spades, we would jump to 3 ♠, to force to game.

What's it to be?

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Walsh One Spade -- Solution

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

NS 4♠; NS 4♦; NS 4♣; NS 2N; NS 1♥; Par +420: NS 4♠=

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	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦ ¹
Pass	1 ♠ ²	Pass	?

1. Unless forcing to game, denies a 4-card major.

2. Unbalanced hand or concentrated values.

At the table, South chose the apparent value bid of 1 NT. The opponents took the first five tricks at 3 NT. Unless partner has a singleton diamond, if we belonged in notrump, partner would already have bid it.

Passing wins the board, but we owe partner a bid with 9 fine HCP.

If we raise to 2 ♠, North will jump to 4 ♠. This might be made with good luck and careful play. 2 ♠ would be a better choice with a better spade honor, even the jack. Games in Moysean (4-3) fits thrive on trump honors.

A meek preference to 2 ♣ is correct. (3 ♣ would be correct with a fourth club.) Holding five or six clubs, 2 ♣ would be just what partner wants to hear. On this deal, partner jumps to 3 ♦, perhaps 4=1=3=5 shape, or more likely 4=2=3=4 under duress. We should make 3 ♦ easily, ruffing a heart in the short hand, for a fine score.

Let's turn to partner -- an occasional mindermaster -- who is on the edge again. Playing online, he confirmed on our convention card that our opening 2 NT range is 20+ to 22. The ♥ Q is not pulling its full weight, so this is not a good 20 HCP. He opened 1 ♣. Over the 1 ♦ response, he knows the opponents have eight hearts. He goes low again at 1 ♠. Hearing 1 NT and counting on a fitting card in hearts, he bids 3 NT with 20 HCP. That contract should have played with a South hand of only 7 HCP that includes as little as ♥ J-3-2.

The thing is, a few pairs made 3 NT, when the opponents did not run the hearts. That's possible when a 2 NT opening is raised to 3 NT, but not when we bid three suits and they have five tricks in the fourth. Mindermasting or not, North set this course, and South should not be bidding notrump without something in the fourth suit. Trust partner!