

It pays to get involved in the bidding at duplicate pairs in case both sides might be able to make a part-score contract. How often have you opened the travelling score-sheet and written 110 in the minus column only to see that some pairs sitting your way have bid and made a contract of their own? Others might have finished one down, losing 50 or 100, but they've still beaten your score.

In the protective position, this often involves bidding on a hand that would have Passed the same opening bid by your right-hand opponent:

♠A1074
♥6
♦KJ932
♣J86

If your right-hand opponent opens One Heart, you would Pass. But if your left-hand opponent opens One Heart and this is followed by two Passes, you should Double for take-out. The high-card points are probably divided fairly evenly so you should look for a part-score contract of your own instead of giving your opponents an easy time of it. Partner should be aware that your hand might be this weak and respond conservatively.

When one of your opponents opens the bidding and the other is able to respond, the chances of your side being able to make a game contract are much reduced. However, you might still be able to win the part-score contest.

Here's a recent hand from Shoreham, very similar to the one above. At Love All, you, South, pick up the following:

♠AJ94
♥7
♦Q8754
♣K93

East opens One Heart. You decide to Pass, judging your hand a little light for a take-out Double. West raises to Two Hearts and this is Passed back to you. What do you bid?

I'd guess that a number of players would still Pass, worried by their lack of points. Others would decide to Double and this is definitely the better option. Your partner is marked with some high cards because the opponents have shown no interest in bidding beyond the two-level. It is even possible that your side holds the majority of high-card points. With a shortage in their suit, you should Double and ask partner to choose a trump suit. It might allow your side to win a part-score contract – even one down might be a good score – or it might push the opponents a level too high if they decide to compete.

The full deal:

	Q1052	
	J982	
	AJ	
	Q72	
876		K3
AQ4		K10653
63		K1092
J10865		A4
	AJ94	
	7	
	Q8754	
	K93	

At the tables where N/S did not get involved in the bidding, East played in Two Hearts and made seven or eight tricks. When South Doubled, North bid Two Spades and that ended the auction. There was no problem in making that contract. Notice that North had no interest in bidding anything higher. His partner had already Passed East's opening One Heart bid so there was little chance of making a game.

Now swap the E/W hands around and say that West, on your left, opens One Heart and East raises to Two Hearts. What would you bid now? This is different to the first auction because you do not know what West is intending to do. With a weak opening bid he will Pass, but his hand might be strong enough to look for a game contract, or even bid game directly.

Despite the increased risk, it is still a good idea to Double. Your side could easily be able to make a part-score contract and unless you Double now you probably won't have another chance to get involved.