

Competitive Bidding

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all			
<div>♠ 8 7 ♥ A 9 ♦ J 8 5 4 ♣ J 9 8 6 5</div>	<div>♠ K 6 2 ♥ 10 5 4 3 2 ♦ K 9 3 ♣ Q 3</div>	<div>♠ 10 4 ♥ K Q J 7 ♦ A Q 7 6 2 ♣ K 10</div>	<div>♠ 8 7 ♥ A 9 ♦ J 8 5 4 ♣ J 9 8 6 5</div>
West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1 ♦
	2 ♦	2 ♠	3 ♦
	All pass		
There are two useful mantras associated with competitive bidding. One says "support with support" and, when that's established, do so to "compete to the level of the fit". The level of the fit means that we compete to a level that is consistent with the number of trumps we hold. It's a very useful guide and it works very well.			
Here East raises to the 2level because he knows of the 8card spade fit (partner has promised 5spades for the overall). Because East will have promised 3spades, West is able to carry on to 3 ♠ because he holds a sixth spade (so knows of nine trumps between the two hands).			
North South follow a similar approach where North's gentle raise usually promises 4card support. This allows South to bid on to 3 ♦. Although these competitive rules are very handy we shouldn't lose sight of other factors. He South has extra values so is willing to contract for 3 ♦ strongly believing that he has the fire power to succeed. Had he some values in spades he would deem his hand more defensive and might have been willing to defend 2 ♠.			
So the auction has climbed to 3 ♠ by West. This contract should fail by one trick provided the defence plays on trumps early. In this way declarer is restricted to six spades, one club and a club ruff. 3 ♦ by South may make if declarer guesses to play a club to ♠ 10. With a view of all hands it always makes because declarer can attempt to run ♦ J. When it's covered and ♦ 10 drops from West, a finesse can be taken against East's ♦ 9.			

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable			
<div>♠ K 6 2 ♥ 10 5 4 3 2 ♦ K 9 3 ♣ Q 3</div>	<div>♠ 10 4 ♥ A 9 ♦ J 8 5 4 ♣ J 9 8 6</div>	<div>♠ 8 7 3 ♥ A 9 ♦ J 8 5 4 ♣ J 9 8 6</div>	<div>♠ 10 4 ♥ A 9 ♦ J 8 5 4 ♣ J 9 8 6</div>
West	North	East	South
2 ♦	2 ♠	1 ♦	1 ♠
3 ♦	All pass	3 ♣	Pass
South has a minimum strength overall but his spade suit is good and meets the suit quality test (cards in suit plus honours sum to at least the level at which the suit is being bid). North gives a courtesy raise to 2 ♠ but South won't compete further – he has no extra values and doesn't think his side has more than an 8card fit.			
East has higher ambitions. Had he wanted merely to compete to 3 ♦ over 2 ♠ he would have bid 3 ♦. By bidding something else (here 3 ♣) he is announcing extra values and interest in reaching game. West's 3 ♦ is the least encouraging move that hand could make – though he does have a little in reserve - and East respects that decision.			
3 ♦ should make ten tricks (two hearts, four diamonds and four clubs). Declarer cannot play the diamonds for maximum effect, as mentioned for Board 1, because he lacks a second entry to the West hand. That extra entry would have been available in a club contract such that 5 ♣ can make. Funny old game.			

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable				
♠ 9 ♥ A Q J 6 4 3 ♦ K Q 9 7 ♣ A 3				
♠ A Q J 8 7 ♥ 10 ♦ A 8 6 5 ♣ 9 7 2				
♠ 6 3 2 ♥ K 9 7 5 2 ♦ 3 ♣ K Q 8 6				
West	North	East	South	
Pass	1 ♥	1 ♠	Pass	
4 ♣	5 ♥	All pass	4 ♥	
South puts on maximum pressure with his leap to game (a bid made usually without great values, but with at least five trumps and some shape [i.e. a side suit singleton or void]). Following the mantra of "support with support" and unsure of how many tricks each side can make West bids on to 4 ♣.				
Now the spotlight falls on North. He has extra values, extra trump length and a useful holding in the opponents' suit (singletons and voids are always assets when judging whether to compete further). On that basis North may bid on to 5 ♥. He'll have done the "right" thing in that 5 ♥ makes with the only losers being a diamond and a spade.				
"Right" because have to look at the vulnerability. North South are nowhere near making 4 ♣. The contract could fail by three tricks though, in practice, this might be only two light. When 4 ♠ is doubled that gives North South +500 or +800, more than adequate compensation for the risk of trying for (the making) +450 from 5 ♥.				
So, as here, the state of the vulnerability is important. If you find yourself in a similar position and don't bid on, <i>don't forget to double.</i>				

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable				
♠ 9 6 ♥ A 6 3 2 ♦ K Q 8 2 ♣ K Q J				
♠ A Q J 8 7 ♥ - VOID - ♦ A 7 6 5 ♣ 9 7 5 4				
♠ K 3 ♥ K 9 7 5 4 ♦ 9 ♣ 10 8 6 3 2				
West	North	East	South	
Pass	1 ♦	1 ♠	X	
3 ♣	4 ♥	Pass	Pass	
X	All pass			
East's overcall makes it difficult for South who is not strong enough to bid 2 ♥ (forcing, with at least [9]10hcps). He can, however, double. This call usually shows just 4 ♥ but works with this moderate collection that contains an extra heart (perhaps think of the double saying "East's 1 ♠ overcall has stolen my usual 1 ♥ response").				
Thereafter West may put on the pressure by raising to 3 ♣. Given West's heart holding there's an element of "slowly slowly catchy monkey" contained in this bid. And yes, lo and behold, North is hit with an awkward decision. He has 4hearts and extra values so is likely to bid 4 ♥. Now East is disciplined and passes (it's tempting to bid one more) and West is able to wield the axe. 4 ♥ fails by two tricks (one spade, two hearts and the two minor suit bullets to concede) and East West will score plus five hundred.				
<i>(It is just possible for East West to make 4 ♣ but it's tricky. Far better to take plus 500 than gamble on a chancy plus 620)</i>				

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable			
<p>♠ K1054 ♥ 8 ♦ J1042 ♣ J1054</p> <p>♥ 63 ♦ K9754 ♣ K862</p>	<p>♠ 92 ♥ AQ163 ♦ KQ8 ♣ AQ3</p> <p>♠ AQ187 ♥ 102 ♦ A765 ♣ 97</p>	<p>West</p> <p>North Pass</p> <p>East 1♥</p> <p>South 1♠ All pass</p>	<p>4♥</p> <p>4♠</p> <p>X</p> <p>All pass</p> <p>This auction has a familiar start in that one side bounces to the game level and the other competes over that. East will be considering bidding on to 5♥ because of the extra values. A further consideration is for East to look at the shape of the hand. The more balanced the hand, the more we should be willing to defend. Bidding on suggests some shape that arises because of the holding of a singleton or void (especially in the opponents' suit). Here East is balanced and his holding in spades is poisonous. The doubleton holding is about as bad as it gets. Often, as here, it's matched with a doubleton in the same suit in partner's hand. 5♥ will fail by one trick with the defence taking two spades and a top diamond.</p> <p>4♠ by North South fails by two tricks with the defence taking one heart, two diamonds and two clubs. Yes, East West should double 4♠ and collect 500. Yes, again, a look at the vulnerability is also useful here too as 5♥, making, would have only scored plus 450 for East West.</p>

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable			
<p>♠ AQ18732 ♥ 10 ♦ A965 ♣ 9</p> <p>♥ 9 ♦ AQ1643 ♣ KQ87</p> <p>♠ A3</p>	<p>♠ K1054 ♥ 8 ♦ J1042 ♣ J1054</p> <p>♠ KQ8762 ♥ 3 ♦ K9752 ♣ 3</p>	<p>West</p> <p>North Pass</p> <p>East Pass</p> <p>South Pass</p>	<p>1♥</p> <p>1♠</p> <p>4♥</p> <p>4♠</p> <p>5♥</p> <p>5♠</p> <p>Pass</p> <p>Pass</p> <p>X</p> <p>All pass</p> <p>In contrast to the previous hand we have a deal where bidding on to the five level works well for East West. First, they have the chance of picking up the vulnerable game bonus; and, secondly, West is in a better position to carry on because of the spade shortage.</p> <p>Bidding 5♥ was the right thing but North isn't finished. North has a seven card spade suit and terrific shape – 7141 distribution*. Given that we should think about bidding on with great shape 5♠ by North here should be automatic. North South can make ten tricks but nine is more likely. Even with the double that only leads to a concession of 300 points.</p> <p>*rearrange that pattern and we arrive at 4711 so this distribution is affectionately known as an eau-de-cologne hand.</p>
Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable			
<p>♠ 764 ♥ 108 ♦ 106542 ♣ K102</p> <p>♠ AKJ53 ♥ Q2 ♦ J98 ♣ 543</p>	<p>♠ Q109 ♥ 9543 ♦ AQ7 ♣ AJ8</p> <p>♠ 82 ♥ AKJ76 ♦ K3 ♣ Q976</p>	<p>West</p> <p>North Pass</p> <p>East 2♥</p> <p>South 1♥ Pass</p>	<p>1♠</p> <p>Pass</p> <p>2♠</p> <p>All pass</p> <p>West's overall is automatic and East has spade support and interest in reaching game. He shows this by making an unassuming cue bid of the opponent's suit. This says "I have 10+hcps (but maybe distribution too) and at least 3card spade support. Are you interested in higher things?" Here West doesn't have anything extra (the heart holding is useless as well) so West signs off at the minimum level. Playing in a more old-fashioned way East may have felt obliged to bid 3♠ to show his extras. That would not have worked. The unassuming cue bid has been very efficient. It's kept the partnership on the 2level and there are only eight tricks. Declarer will lose two hearts, a diamond and two clubs.</p>

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all				
<p>♠ J 10 9 8 4 ♥ 8 ♦ A 10 8 2 ♣ K Q 8</p> <p>♠ 3 ♥ 10 6 5 4 ♦ Q J 5 ♣ J 7 5 4 2</p> <p>♠ A K Q 7 6 5 ♥ Q ♦ 9 6 4 ♣ 10 9 3</p>	<p>West</p> <p>Pass</p> <p>3♥</p> <p>Pass</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Pass</p> <p>4♠</p> <p>Pass/X</p>	<p>East</p> <p>1♥</p> <p>5♥</p> <p>All pass</p>	<p>South</p> <p>2♠</p> <p>Pass</p>
<p>South makes a weak jump overcall and that makes life difficult for West. Were South to have passed or bid 1♠ West could have bid a comfortable 2♥ (following a "support with support mantra"; just 4hcps but some values in the spade shortage ... perhaps). In competitive auctions which are somewhat crowded it's normal to stretch to show support. This is what West has done here and East should be aware of this possibility. Since West might be shaded it's quite possible that East won't go on to 5♥. Nevertheless, with his extra values, 7card heart suit and shortage in spades, it's a reasonable call.</p> <p>Here it doesn't work out well – 5♥ fails by one trick - and congratulations should be bestowed on the South player. Weak jump overcalls are great ways to disrupt the opponents' bidding and it has worked a treat here. East West's winning action was to double 4♠, a contract that would have failed by one trick*.</p> <p><i>*or by two if East doesn't play ♠A on ♠K. Now declarer may be fooled and lose a second club. If East takes the ace immediately South's only real line is to run ♠10/finesse ♠8.</i></p>				