

MARATHON for DEFENDERS

Q87 2 Spades
J1087
KJ
J1087

52
AKQ4 Double
Q1082 Pass
K43

643
93 PASS
96543
A92

AKJ109
652 DEALER – 1 Spade
A7 Pass
Q65

West leads the A of hearts, East must signal with the 9, playing high-low with a doubleton. Now West should cash his other 2 heart winners, East follows to the second heart, then gets to make a discard. Which card should he play?

You need 6 tricks to defeat the contract, and must take them immediately.

Q1098
Q1098 4 Clubs
KQJ10 Pass
A

532
4 three Clubs
92 Pass
KQ109876

4 Pass
AKJ72 Pass
8743
542

AKJ76
653 DEALER – 1 Spade
A65 4 Spades
J3

West leads his singleton heart. Partner wins the first trick with the J, and cashes the K. West should anticipate making 2 discards, one now and one on the Ace of hearts. What do you discard and why?

Note: A preemptor whose lead is a side suit, has led a singleton. (If he leads his own suit, play him for a singleton trump).

SHOWING YOUR SHAPE

When you pick up a balanced hand, your auction tends to be fairly easy. Depending on your strength, you can show your balanced hand by:

1. With 12-14 pts. ----- Opening 1 of a suit and rebidding NT at the lowest level.
2. With 15-17 pts. ----- Opening 1 NT
3. With 18-19 pts. ----- Opening 1 of a suit and jumping in NT (2 NT)
4. With 20-21 pts. ----- Opening 2 NT
5. With 22-24 pts. ----- Opening 2 clubs and rebidding 2 NT
6. With 25-27 pts. ----- Opening 2 clubs and rebidding 3 NT
7. With 28-30 pts. ----- Opening 2 Clubs and rebidding 4 NT

Seriously, it is easy to tell partner that you have a balanced hand AND give your point count at the same time. In addition, partner has lots of tools such as Stayman, Jacoby and Texas Transfers, 2 Spades relay, Gerber, Roman Keycard, etc., all of which make bidding with balanced hands, relatively straightforward. When you hold unbalanced hands, life becomes more difficult, but much more fun!

My tip for handling unbalanced hands is to first of all not to think about the number of HCPs you have and think more about the number of tricks in the hand.

SHAPE is so important, best bridge advice I was given, BID A LOT with shape, BE CONSERVATIVE when you are balanced.

Whenever you can show your shape, it allows partner to judge which of their cards are working. For example, holding KQJ opposite partner's singleton is not good.

SHAPE (and holding controls) takes over from point count at higher levels, and that's why I recommend you play Jacoby 2 NT and Splinters.

Shape is very important in competitive bidding. When the opponents have the majority of the points, you can still compete and interfere and maybe find sacrifices when you have shape. Preempts and conventions such as Unusual NT and Michaels allow you to bid on hands with few points and a lot of shape.

Finally, during the auction, you will gain enormously if you think about partner's shape and the opponents shape.