

The Worst That Could Happen

West Deals
None Vul

♠ 3
♥ Q J 6 5 3
♦ 10 9
♣ A J 8 5 4



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	Dbl
Pass	2 ♥	2 ♠	Pass
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♥
Dbl			

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Welcome to this, the 35th session of Shark's Pointers Online!

Today we are going to talk about "The Worst That Could Happen". I'm going to highlight a number of hands that point out some very important and not particularly unique situations you might want to consider before deciding to double your opponents.

I want to start off with a hand that actually occurred during the recently conducted ACBL Premier Pairs. You're sitting West and are looking at the hand as shown. Partner opens 1 ♠ in 3rd seat and South doubles. You are happy to pass, and North now bids 2 ♥! Your ecstasy is short lived as partner bids 2 ♠. But the auction isn't over yet! When the auction gets around to North again, he now bids 3 ♣! It doesn't get any better than this. Now P - 3 ♥! to you.

Well, you sure don't want to hear your partner bid 3 ♠, so you wack this. After all, what's the worst that could happen?

Well, you're about to find out....

The Worst That Could Happen

West Deals
None Vul

♠ 3
♥ Q J 6 5 3
♦ 10 9
♣ A J 8 5 4



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	Dbl
Pass	2 ♥	2 ♠	Pass
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♥
Dbl	Pass	Pass	3 NT
Dbl	All pass		

3 NT× by South

Out of the blue, South pulls the double to 3 NT. Well, partner did open the bidding and bid again, and you have an 8 count with both of the opponents' suits locked up. No way they are making this, right? So, you double this, and lead your 3 of spades.

Here's the full deal...

The Worst That Could Happen

West Deals
None Vul

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

♠ K J 2	<table border="1" style="background-color: #008000; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A Q 10 9 8 4
N					
W E					
S					
♥ K 10 9		♥ 8			
♦ K J 8 3		♦ A 6 5 4 2			
♣ K 9 2		♣ 3			

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	Dbl
Pass	2 ♥	2 ♠	Pass
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♥
Dbl	Pass	Pass	3 NT
Dbl	All pass		

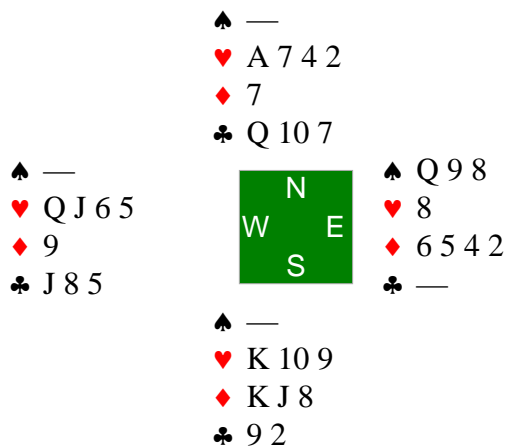
3 NT× by South

Well, you certainly were beating 3 ♥! Spade to Ace, spade ruff, Ace of clubs, club ruff, spade ruff, Ace of diamonds and another spade. You have to get another heart. Down 3!

But look what happens in 3Nx! All you end up scoring is your 3 Aces! Let's go thru the play - with all the cards exposed.

Spade to the Ace and a spade back, South winning the J as you pitch a low heart. Now South leads the K of ♣. You win, and return the 10 of ♦. Dummy plays the Q and East wins the Ace and continues another spade, clearing the suit. You now part with a club. Here is the position...

The Worst That Could Happen



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	Dbl
Pass	2 ♥	2 ♠	Pass
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♥
Dbl	Pass	Pass	3 NT
Dbl	All pass		

3 NT× by South

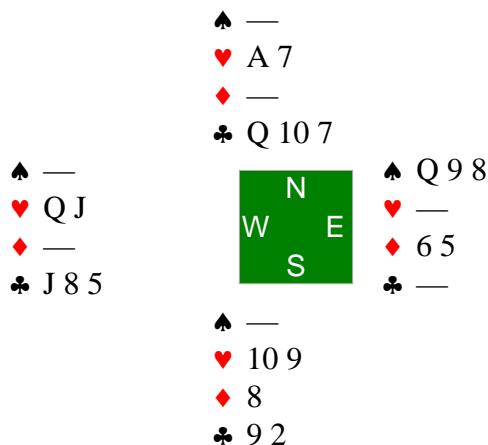
Well, I know what you are thinking. How can our declarer hook the J of ♣ into the East hand with all those spades established. It's easy looking at all hands, but not in real life, right?

Not exactly. South doesn't finesse the club, he plays off the K of ♦, and is thrilled to see you 9!

So, now South continues with the J of ♦, on which you pitch a heart and before playing his last diamond winner, he plays the K of hearts.

The last 5 cards are as follows....

The Worst That Could Happen



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	Dbl
Pass	2 ♥	2 ♠	Pass
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♥
Dbl	Pass	Pass	3 NT
Dbl	All pass		

3 NT× by South

Now declarer cashes his last diamond, as you pitch a low club, and dummy pitches the 7 of hearts.

At this point, declarer has won 2 spade tricks, 1 heart, and 3 diamonds. 6 tricks. The ace of hearts and Q of clubs are sure winners, bringing his total to 8. He plays the 9 of clubs on which you follow with the 8. Declarer plays low from dummy and scores the last 3 tricks making 4!

But wait a second. If the club lost to the J, East would have the rest of the tricks.

He would go down 3! Why did he play the hand this way? Why not play a low club to the Q and then back to his 9 so as to at least guarantee 9 tricks?

The answer goes back to his play of the K of hearts. Because you showed out on the 2nd spade and the 3rd diamond, East was known to have started with 6 spades and 5 diamonds. He followed to one round of clubs, and when declarer cashed the K of hearts to which East followed, his hand was completely counted out - 6 ♠ 1 ♥ 5 ♦ and 1 ♣. The club finesse is 100% !

The following hand was reported to me by an old friend from my rubber bridge days...

The Worst That Could Happen

North Deals
None Vul

♠ J 10 7 6
♥ Q J 8
♦ Q
♣ A K J 10 5



West	North	East	South
<i>Steve Sion</i>	<i>Divaka Baghava</i>		<i>Charlie Coon</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 NT	Pass	6 NT
Dbl			

In a high stakes rubber bridge game at the now long closed Boston Chess Club in Brookline, the late, great Charlie Coon sat South, and West was the infamous Steve Sion, a truly brilliant player who was banned from the ACBL not once - but twice, and is now permanently barred from any ACBL events.

Steve held the West hand and thought for sure that Charlie, who was known to overly imbibe on occasion - had just handed him a huge gift. On lead against 6 NT, Steve happily doubled.

But the auction wasn't over...

Here was the final auction and the complete deal...

The Worst That Could Happen

North Deals
None Vul

♠ A Q 8		♠ 5 4 3 2									
♥ K 10 9		♥ 7 6 5 4 3 2									
♦ K 10 4 3		♦ —									
♣ 9 8 7		♣ 4 3 2									
♠ J 10 7 6	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <table style="border: none; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ 5 4 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q J 8		♥ 7 6 5 4 3 2									
♦ Q		♦ —									
♣ A K J 10 5		♣ 4 3 2									
♠ K 9											
♥ A											
♦ A J 9 8 7 6 5 2											
♣ Q 6											

Opening lead 7 of ♥

West	North	East	South
<i>Steve Sion</i>	<i>Divaka Baghava</i>		<i>Charlie Coon</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 NT	Pass	6 NT
Dbl	Pass	Pass	7 ♦
Dbl	All pass		

7 ♦ × by North

While Charlie's bidding was madness, there was indeed method to it. He might very well be ice cold for 6 NT on a variety of hands. Even if he was off the A and K of clubs, it is very unlikely that one would lead an unsupported Ace against a notrump slam, and an expert like Steve Sion would surely not lead away from the K of clubs without the Ace.

When Steve, a/k/a "Wonder" doubled, Charlie knew very well where the A and K of clubs were, and he knew his partner would have to guess what to lead, so he smartly pulled to 7D - which, as you can see, was ice cold on any lead other than a club!

Talk about the worst that could happen!

The Worst That Could Happen

North Deals
N-S Vul



♠ K Q 6 4 3
♥ A Q 10
♦ Q 7
♣ A Q 6

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	3 ♥	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	4 NT
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	5 NT
Pass	6 ♦	Pass	6 ♠
Dbl	Pass	Pass	?

This is a not uncommon situation.

You and your partner freely bid to 6 ♠ after a preemptive bid in hearts on your right, and the preemptor's partner doubles. What's going on?

If you draw the only logical conclusion that West must be looking at 2 sure spade tricks, you hold your breath and pull to 6 NT.

This was the complete deal...

The Worst That Could Happen

North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A 5 2		♠ —
♥ 7		♥ K J 9 8 4 3 2
♦ A K J 9 8 4		♦ 10 3 2
♣ J 8 7		♣ 10 9 5
♠ J 10 9 8 7	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;"> N W E S </div>	
♥ 6 5		
♦ 6 5		
♣ K 4 3 2		
♠ K Q 6 4 3		
♥ A Q 10		
♦ Q 7		
♣ A Q 6		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	3 ♥	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	4 NT
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	5 NT
Pass	6 ♦	Pass	6 ♠
Dbl	Pass	Pass	6 NT
All pass			

6 NT by South

As you can see, 6S has no play, whereas 6 NT is ice cold.

Ok one more hand. This from just the other day...

The Worst That Could Happen

IMPs
West Deals
E-W Vul



♠ 8 4 3
♥ A Q 3
♦ 9 6 5 2
♣ 9 6 4

West	North	East	South
	<i>Shome</i>		<i>Shark</i>
1 ♦	1 ♠	2 ♥	Dbl
Rdbl	2 ♠	Pass	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	?

I was playing in an expert IMP game with one of my favorite partners, Shome Mukherjee.

Our bidding requires some explanation. My double of 2 ♥ was duly alerted as showing a spade raise with 3 spades. The redouble showed a strong hand, and East's 3S bid asked for a spade stopper. Now I had to decide if I should double for a heart lead. I had already passed 3S, so it could not be ambiguous.

But, I decided to pass. Here was the complete deal...

The Worst That Could Happen

IMPs

West Deals

E-W Vul

	♠ K Q J 10 6		
	♥ J 9 4 2		
	♦ J 4		
	♣ 10 8		
♠ A 9 5	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 7 2	
♥ 10		♥ K 8 7 6 5	
♦ A K 8 7 3		♦ Q 10	
♣ A J 7 3		♣ K Q 5 2	
	♠ 8 4 3		
	♥ A Q 3		
	♦ 9 6 5 2		
	♣ 9 6 4		

West	North	East	South
	<i>Shome</i>		<i>Shark</i>
1 ♦	1 ♠	2 ♥	Dbl
Rdbl	2 ♠	Pass	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

3 NT by West

3NTx would be problematic if North starts with a heart, or shifts to a heart after two rounds of spades. In practice, Shome played 3 rounds of spades. Now West was cold a couple of ways, the easiest would have been a diamond to the 10. In practice, declarer cashed 3 clubs, and 3 diamonds and threw me in with the 4th diamond and I was forced to lead away from my Ace of hearts.

As you can see, if Shome had shifted to the J of hearts after cashing two spades, we could have beaten this by way of 2 spades and 3 hearts. Any way we could have worked this out without the lead directing double?

Yes there is, and this is an important point to address. I followed with the 3 of spades and the 8.

Here's a good Shark's Pointer. When you hold 3 cards in partner's suit, the first card should be a count card, the second suit preference. Shome knew he had no entries. He also knew that declarer had opened the bidding in diamonds, later bid clubs and was known to have started with A95 of spades, so he had to have started with no more than 1 heart. My 8 of spades was a signal for a heart shift. To protect against declarer having started with a singleton 10, the J of hearts really is the proper play at trick 3 - certainly at Imps.

The Worst That Could Happen

IMPs

West Deals

E-W Vul

♠ A 9 5	♠ K Q J 10 6	♠ 7 2
♥ 10	♥ J 9 4 2	♥ K 8 7 6 5
♦ A K 8 7 3	♦ J 4	♦ Q 10
♣ A J 7 3	♣ 10 8	♣ K Q 5 2
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; border: 1px solid black;"> W N E S </div>	
	♠ 8 4 3	
	♥ A Q 3	
	♦ 9 6 5 2	
	♣ 9 6 4	

West	North	East	South
	<i>Shome</i>		<i>Shark</i>
1 ♦	1 ♠	2 ♥	Dbl
Rdbl	2 ♠	Pass	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

3 NT by West

3NTx should be set a trick most of the time in all likelihood. So, was my not doubling a mistake? Not at all! First of all, as we described, the hand could have and arguably should have been set after declarer ducks the first 2 tricks.

More significantly, take a close look at this hand. An astute West can redouble to suggest doubt about his team's heart stopper, and East can pull 3Nx to 5C - which is ice cold!

So, today's Shark's Pointer is to be very, very careful before deciding to double - even when it is absolutely obvious the opponents are going down a lot. Ask yourself if the opponents might conceivably be able to run to a better contract.

Hope we have given you some good examples of what indeed might be the worst that could happen.

See you next Friday!

Have a great weekend!