

Board of the Week 8

By Dick Chapman

Before I get to the board of the week, try this auction at imp pairs not vulnerable. You hold

♠AK1098 ♥AQ9732 ♦98 ♣—

and open 1 heart, planning to reverse into spades. Lo, partner bids 1 spade. Righty bids 3 clubs. You bid 4 clubs. Partner 6 hearts (!). Your call? Decide now, read more at the end of this report.

Now the board of the week. When you are a mentor and can't tell your mentee what went wrong, what time is it? It's time to ask your mentor. Which I have done.

Matchpoints, NV, Dealer East holds this hand:

♠J973 ♥AQ7 ♦AQ974 ♣K

East	South	West	North
1♦	Pass	1NT	Pass
????			

Hmm, what to call? As we all know, you shouldn't make an opening bid unless you have a second call in your back pocket. By the way, did you see that I have used the terms "bid" and "call"? They are not the same. A "bid" is a level and denomination: 1 diamond, 4NT, etc. A "call" is any bid, pass, double, or redouble.

Let's look at the East's options:

- Pass
- 2 diamonds
- 2 spades
- 2 NT

That's about it, so pick one. East picked one: 2 diamonds. West passed and East played it for 11 tricks (there were no defensive errors) and a 25% matchpoint score in a small (5 table) game. Three pairs were in no trump making 180, 210, and 400.

What went wrong? I wrote our friend Gordon Campbell who kindly offered suggestions which I have incorporated into this article. First, opener should know that any second bid is going to be a problem. Consider:

- 1D-1H-1S-1NT-??. Nothing will be right after that NT call.
- 1D-1S-??? 2 spades is too weak, 3 spades too strong. The bid box doesn't have a 2 ½ spade card.
- 1D-1NT-??? This is the case at the table.

So 1D might not be the best opening call. What is the best? My limited imagination couldn't come up with anything, but here it is: 1NT. Yes, off-shape, but the right strength.

Let's assume 1 diamond is the standard opening bid. Now we are back to the original question. No rebid looks right, so East must pick the least bad call. A bid of 2 spades guides the hand away from no trump, where it looks to play best because of the strength of the club king *. If that king were elsewhere, 2 spades might have some merit. 2 diamonds is wrong for a couple of reasons.

At matchpoints, the least bad call might be pass. Atimps, where we stretch to bid game, 2NT would be suitable. The full deal:

	♠862 ♥J983 ♦K6 ♣A932	
♠AQ4 ♥102 ♦J832 ♣J1065		♠J973 ♥AQ7 ♦AQ974 ♣K
	♠K108 ♥K654 ♦105 ♣Q874	

* When an auction goes 1D-1NT, responder almost always has 4 or more clubs, so the club shortage should not be troubling to East.

East did well to bring in 11 tricks. The double dummy limit is 9 tricks in NT. But we don't play bridge double dummy, do we? The NT players did better.

Ok, what did you do with that big hand at the top? Pass is very reasonable and possibly right. There is a lot of pressure in the finals of the Bermuda Bowl, but that's not where I was playing. My call was seven hearts, and it either makes or not. Here's the hand:

	♠QJ74 ♥KJ54 ♦AK ♣KJ8	
♠6532 ♥8 ♦QJ1043 ♣1073	Matchpoints D: S V: EW	♠ ♥106 ♦7652 ♣AQ96542
	♠AK1098 ♥AQ9732 ♦98 ♣	

Opening lead: diamond queen. Knowing West didn't hold 9 diamonds, I claimed when dummy appeared. I'm not saying 7 hearts is the right call. I'm saying one of the fun parts of bridge is the occasional grand, so there you are. If I went down, would I be writing this? No. Was the auction scientific? No. Was the hand fun? Yes.