

Board of the Week 74

By Dick Chapman

Playing regularly in a competitive club, we forget what casual bridge is like. This week I submit a twofer for your amusement.

Matchpoint pairs, a total stranger for a partner (Your 10-second partnership agreement is "Standard American, nothing special"), first board of the day. At unfavorable colors and third seat, I pick up...

♠5 ♥8 ♦108765 ♣AKJ1097

...and immediately start wondering if Unusual 2NT is part of Standard American and also if partner has even heard of this method.

The auction goes pass, pass. Do I bid? No, the auction isn't going to pass out. A heart by left hand opponent, pass by partner, 2 hearts by righty, you pass, pass by LHO, and now partner comes in with a double. Pass to you, what is your call?

Partner has to have something over there. The opponents tried to stop so they aren't particularly strong. My call: 5 clubs. I get the ace of hearts and here is the complete board:

	♠AJ6 ♥32 ♦KJ9 ♣Q6542	
♠AJ6 ♥AJ965 ♦AQ2 ♣83		♠K108742 ♥KQ1074 ♦43 ♣
	♠5 ♥8 ♦108765 ♣AKJ1097	

Wow, look at the errors. Only one call was correct: West opened 1 heart. Even that is subject to partnership agreement and style, as there are many players who, with no suitable rebid, would open this hand 1NT. But 1 heart is fine. Next, East should bid 4 hearts! Partner's double was dubious at these colors, and my jump to 5 clubs was a wild shot. Will it work? Let's see. I draw trump and fool around a few tricks, but eventually I'm going to have to lead a diamond. Ok, I do that and West tanks then emerges with the ace. I ruff the next lead and put another diamond on the table and finesse the queen to make. One other pair got there; the others were in hearts making 5.

West should be ready for the diamond and smoothly play low. I would have no choice but to play the jack

and it is still making. All luck is accepted and duly appreciated.

Two boards later, all red and I deal. My hand:

♠9 ♥6 ♦KJ7652 ♣A9867

I look at the backs of the cards to ensure I'm not playing the same hand as before. Nope. Pass. LHO bids 1 spade, partner doubles, pass by RHO, 2 diamonds by me, pass, 3 diamonds by partner, pass. What now? I gambled 5 diamonds. Partner had doubled and bid, so I expected a pretty good dummy. Here is the hand:

	♠A542 ♥KQ1094 ♦Q109 ♣2	
♠QJ1087 ♥A87 ♦A84 ♣104		♠K63 ♥J532 ♦3 ♣KQJ75
	♠9 ♥6 ♦KJ7652 ♣A9867	

Oh me, the bidding is awful! My partner doubled with five hearts, a stiff club, and four spades? RHO didn't raise spades or redouble to show a good hand, three trump, and a stiff in a side suit? Partner raised diamonds with 11 hcp and 3 of the suit? My jump to 5 diamonds was wild, but I am thinking my partner has clubs! I'm also wondering why I haven't heard spades. Have I mentioned that the bidding was terrible?

I got a spade lead and it looks pretty bad. But these are not LRDBC defenders. Win the ace, ruff a spade, lead a heart up. West comes in with the ace and doesn't touch a trump card. I can now cross ruff and pitch two clubs on top hearts and end up losing the two red aces, making for a cold top.

Double dummy it's down 1, because West can cut off the ruffs in dummy by leading the ace and another trump.

Suggestion: when playing a doomed contract, keep a straight face and play like you are going to make. The defenders may be asleep. Don't wake them up by complaining about the auction. This is wrong for the reason stated (wakes up the defenders), but also because it's rude and distracting to defenders and it threatens partnership harmony. Discuss your auctions later; meanwhile, use your card skills to lull the defenders into bad play.

See you at the club, where real bridge is played.