

U3ABC Compendium Seven: Bidding Commentary

Introduction

This is a summary of Hands 1-24 from Compendium Seven, complete with Bidding Commentary to help explain the recommended bidding. As always, your mileage might vary when you play these hands.

Advanced topics

Advanced topics are in green. These are included for completeness; you can ignore them for now or dive in if you want *more*.

The Hands

North East South West

1♥ Pass 2♥ Pass
4♥ Pass Pass Pass

♠ AJ
♥ AKJ74
♦ AJ9
♣ J32

♠ 72 ♠ K984
♥ 862 ♥ 5
♦ K73 ♦ QT54
♣ AQ754 ♣ T986

♠ QT653
♥ QT93
♦ 862
♣ K

Board: 1 Dealer: North Lead: ♣T #123

East leads Clubs as it's safer than leading away from their unsupported Honours in Spades or Diamonds. A trump lead looks too passive; the opposition have bid Hearts strongly, they aren't short of them. So East leads ♣T, the top of a 3-card sequence in one of their longer suits.

West overtakes South's ♣K with ♣A but how can the Defence find 3 more tricks to defeat the contract?

Should they lead a Spade? If East has ♠A or ♠K they will win a trick with that card whether or not West leads a Spade now. However, if East has some points in Diamonds, West needs to attack this suit straight away (before Declarer discards losing Diamonds on the long Spade suit), so they lead a low Diamond towards Dummy's weakness.

In general, it's a good idea to lead towards weakness like this, rather than toward strength.

If you've read the notes on leads, a low card lead like this *suggests* to Partner that you have 3 cards to an Honour - which is exactly what West has.

Declarer plays ♦9 and East wins with ♦T. East returns a Diamond to West's ♦K and Declarer's ♦A. After drawing some trumps Declarer takes the Spade finesse, but East wins with their King and cashes ♦Q to defeat the contract by one trick.

West defeated the contract by switching to Dummy's weak suit at trick 2; leading a low Diamond in order to retain ♦K for Partner's Diamond continuation.

Declarer had to try the Spade finesse, but went down when it lost and East was able to cash ♦Q.

East	South	West	North
Pass	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ Q43		
	♥ KQJ9		
	♦ KJ842		
	♣ 7		
♠ KT7			♠ AJ965
♥ A76			♥ T82
♦ A5			♦ T3
♣ AKQ53			♣ 964
	♠ 82		
	♥ 543		
	♦ Q976		
	♣ JT82		

Board: 2 Dealer: East #3563

West has 20 HCP and a balanced hand, so opens 2NT.

A 2NT opening shows 20-22 HCP and a balanced hand.

East has 5 HCP so game should be on, with 25-27 HCP. In 3NT? Maybe. East has a decent 5-card Spade suit and a doubleton Diamond, so 4S sounds a better bet, but only if partner has 3+ Spades, for an 8-card fit. The way to find out is to use a Transfer.

East also wants West's much stronger hand hidden from the Defence, so they want West to be Declarer – another advantage of a Transfer.

So East bids 3H, a transfer to 3S, then bids 3NT rather than 4S. This tells partner that they have a 5-card Spade suit and enough points for game. Partner can pass if they only have two Spades, or bid 4S with three or more, confident of an 8-card fit.

West does indeed have three Spades, so "corrects" the contract to 4S as requested.

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♣	2♦	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ J83		
	♥ AJT		
	♦ KT74		
	♣ A96		
♠ AQ76			♠ K92
♥			♥ 97632
♦ 983			♦ 52
♣ KQT752			♣ 843
	♠ T54		
	♥ KQ854		
	♦ AQJ6		
	♣ J		

Board: 3 Dealer: South #2404

West has 11 HCP, a good 6-card Club suit and void in Hearts, so is happy to overcall 1H with 2C.

A 2-level overcall shows 11-15 HCP and a 5-card suit.

East has just 3 HCP, so isn't strong enough to bid.

West isn't strong enough to bid over 3D, so passes.

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ 96		
	♥ 63		
	♦ KQJT3		
	♣ Q965		
♠ AT2			♠ QJ3
♥ Q95			♥ AK7
♦ A754			♦ 982
♣ K87			♣ A432
	♠ K8754		
	♥ JT842		
	♦ 6		
	♣ JT		

Board: 4 Dealer: West Lead: ♦K #101

There are 7 top winners. 1 in ♠, 3 in ♥, 2 in ♣ and 1 in ♦.

It costs us nothing to duck the first round of diamonds, but when South discards on the second round, it is clear that we must make 9 tricks without losing the lead. The only hope is that South has ♠K. We cross to dummy with a heart. Then play the ♠Q from dummy and play low from hand if South plays low, repeating the finesse by playing ♠J (or ♠3).

Note: We only lead a high card for a finesse when we have a sequence of honour cards and don't mind if the opponents cover the honour.

Without a sequence of honour cards we lead low towards the honour we hope to make.

North East South West

2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ KQ5		
	♥ AK2		
	♦ AKT4		
	♣ AK6		
♠ JT98		♠ A743	
♥ J96		♥ QT53	
♦ Q82		♦ J	
♣ J94		♣ Q873	
	♠ 62		
	♥ 874		
	♦ 97653		
	♣ T52		

Board: 5 Dealer: North #2464

North has 26 HCP and a balanced hand. Too strong for a 2NT opening bid (20-22 HCP), they open 2C.

An opening bid of 2C shows 21+ HCP (with a 5-card Major) or 23+ HCP in a balanced hand, or 9+ playing tricks. This is a Game Force unless opener rebids 2NT.

South has 0 HCP, so must make the negative response, 2D.

The 2D response to the 2C opening bid shows 0-7 HCP; a negative response indicating a Slam is unlikely.

North bids 3NT to show their point count and balanced hand.

The 3NT rebid after a 2C opening shows 25-28 HCP and a balanced hand.

South has nothing else to say and passes.

East South West North

1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ 974		
	♥ T73		
	♦ 852		
	♣ AKQ9		
♠ KQJ6532		♠ A8	
♥ Q5		♥ AJ6	
♦ K		♦ AJ743	
♣ 843		♣ JT7	
	♠ T		
	♥ K9842		
	♦ QT96		
	♣ 652		

Board: 6 Dealer: East Lead: ♣A #1594

East has 15 HCP and a 5-card minor in a balanced hand. They open 1D planning to rebid 1NT to show their point count and shape.

West has a good 7-card major and 11 HCP in an unbalanced hand, so they respond 1S. Their rather overexposed singleton ♦K looks like it might even win a trick as partner has bid Diamonds! They plan to rebid their suit (option 3).

This 1S response shows 4+ Spades, 6+ HCP, and denies a longer Heart suit, but not much else can be gleaned from the bid at this time.

East rebids 1NT as planned. This shows a balanced hand with 15-16 HCP and denies 4-card support for Spades.

West can't support partner's suit (option 1) and see at least 9 Spades (partner must have two to bid NT) so they are happy to rebid their suit (option 3) and can see 26-27 HCP and 4S. (They don't have stops in the unbid suits, so option 2, 3NT, would be misleading – and risky.)

South West North East

1♣	1♥	1♠	2♥
3♣	Pass	5♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ KQJT2		
	♥ 65		
	♦ A32		
	♣ Q87		
♠ 64		♠ A9873	
♥ KQJ97		♥ T84	
♦ KT4		♦ Q875	
♣ 952		♣ 6	
	♠ 5		
	♥ A32		
	♦ J96		
	♣ AKJT43		

Board: 7 Dealer: South #542

West has 9 HCP and a good 5-card Heart suit, so they're strong enough to overcall at the 1-level.

The 1-level 1H overcall shows 8-15 HCP and a 5-card suit.

East has 6 HCP and 3 Hearts, just enough to limit raise to 2H.

The 2H limit raise of the overcall shows 6-9 points and 3-card support.

West isn't strong enough to bid again.

West	North	East	South
1♠	1NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

♠ AQ4
♥ JT83
♦ K2
♣ AK97

♠ KJ862
♥ A9
♦ A863
♣ J4

♠ T5
♥ 7642
♦ 954
♣ T863

♠ 973
♥ KQ5
♦ QJT7
♣ Q52

Board: 8 Dealer: West Lead: ♠T #47

West has bid Spades, so East's opening lead is easy: Partner's suit. They chose ♠T so they can signal they have two (by playing high then low - called petering) so partner can count Declarer's Spades.

Before playing to the first trick West tries to understand Partner's lead. Dummy's ♠9 means that it can't be top of a sequence or an interior sequence. With ♠ATx or ♠QTx East would have led low. With ♠AT or ♠QT alone East would have led the higher card (to unblock). East must therefore have a singleton ♠T or ♠Tx.

In this situation you ignore "Third Hand Plays High". If East has a singleton ♠T, then West can only set up their suit if Declarer makes the mistake of winning the first round. If East has ♠Tx, West needs to save their ♠KJ for the later rounds. **East can however afford to encourage (signal) with ♠8, since even if Declarer has 4 Spades, their ♠6 will be available to win the 4th round of the suit.**

Declarer allows ♠T to win the first trick, hoping that East has a singleton.

East has another Spade so they lead it, Declarer wins the second trick with ♠Q and leads ♦K.

It's often right to duck the first round in these situations, but not here. West plays ♦A at trick 3 and leads a Spade to remove ♠A.

Now, Declarer has made 2 tricks in Spades (AQ), and can make three tricks in Clubs (AKQ) and 3 tricks in Diamonds, but when they lead a Heart, West plays the Ace and cashes their two Spades; the contract is one down.

Defence made two good decisions on this hand: in trick 1, West played low on Partner's ♠T. Then West played ♦A at trick 3 so they could flush out ♠A, preventing Declarer from making more than 3 tricks in the red suits.

North	East	South	West
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

♠ QJT4
♥ K843
♦ 97
♣ AK9

♠ A952
♥ J9
♦ AQT
♣ J532

♠ 63
♥ T72
♦ J8432
♣ Q64

♠ K87
♥ AQ65
♦ K65
♣ T87

Board: 9 Dealer: North Lead: ♣4 #1991

North has four Hearts and four Spades, so responds 2H to the Stayman 2C bid. This shows at least four Hearts but does not deny four Spades.

South has 12 HCP so can count 24-26 HCP and 8 Hearts, so bids 3H as a Game Invitation, asking partner to bid 4H if they have the maximum 14 HCP for their 1NT bid.

North has 13 HCP, one less than the maximum for their 1NT opening bid, so they should pass, but bid 4H. Hmm. I guess they can claim a Shortage Point for their Diamond Doubleton. Looks a bit risky to me...

Advanced Discussion

OK, looking at the North-South hands in isolation, you can easily lose one Club, two Diamonds, one Spade and maybe even a Heart. A risky contract.

Looking at all four hands, the contract makes because the Hearts split nicely. You should lose two Diamonds and a Spade with an opening lead of a Diamond; with a Club lead you get a free finesse for an overtrick.

East	South	West	North
1♠	2♦	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ 9		
	♥ T432		
	♦ T763		
	♣ J987		
♠ KT83		♠ AQJ765	
♥ 765		♥ AQ8	
♦ 98		♦ A2	
♣ AQ54		♣ 32	
	♠ 42		
	♥ KJ9		
	♦ KQJ54		
	♣ KT6		

Board: 10 Dealer: East #347

East has 17 HCP and a 6-card Spade suit, so they open 1S.

The 1S opening bid shows 4 Spades and 12-19 HCP (but see the discussion for Hand 1).

South overcalls with 2D. This 2-level shows at least 5 Diamonds and 10 HCP. **We haven't taught you about overcalls yet, so hopefully YOUR South didn't.**

West has 9 HCP and 4-card support for partner's Spades. They can add a point for their Doubleton Diamond, making 10 points – enough for a jump raise. They would have made the same bid without South's overcall; that might even prove helpful when they play contract, showing where the points are!

West's 3S jump raise shows 10-12 points and 4 Spades.

East can now add 2 points for their Doubletons, playing in Spades, making a total point count of 29-31. That's more than enough for game, but not quite enough to consider a slam – so they bid 4S.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ K76		
	♥ A76		
	♦ 94		
	♣ KJT76		
♠ T82		♠ J943	
♥ QJ32		♥ T95	
♦ KJ632		♦ QT7	
♣ 2		♣ A98	
	♠ AQ5		
	♥ K84		
	♦ A85		
	♣ Q543		

Board: 11 Dealer: South #113

South has 15 HCP and a balanced hand, so bids 1C (their longest suit), planning to rebid NT. Their 1C bid shows 12-19 HCP and 4 Clubs.

North has 11 HCP and excellent support for South's Club suit, so wants to bid strongly. Their jump to 3C shows 4 Clubs and 10-12 HCP, but is not forcing. If partner is really weak they can pass.

South now knows they have enough points for game in NT and maybe enough points for game in Clubs. But their Club suit is short and they have a balanced hand with stops in all the suits; 3NT looks like a much easier contract and may well score better.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

If North had a 4-card major to bid, they'd bid that instead of 3C, as a change of suit bid is forcing (so they won't miss game) and game is a lot easier in a major than a minor.

North could add a Shortage Point for their doubleton, playing in Clubs, but that wouldn't change their bid.

West	North	East	South
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		
	♠ 542		
	♥ K92		
	♦ T987		
	♣ T84		
♠ KQ		♠ AT6	
♥ T873		♥ 64	
♦ AKQ64		♦ J52	
♣ AQ		♣ K7632	
	♠ J9873		
	♥ AQJ5		
	♦ 3		
	♣ J95		

Board: 12 Dealer: West #1913

West has 20 HCP and a fairly balanced hand, so opens 2NT.

A 2NT opening shows 20-22 HCP and a balanced hand.

East has 8 HCP, so knows they have enough points for game (28-30) but not enough for a Slam, so bids 3NT.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

West has two Doubletons, so their hand is semi-balanced, not an ideal hand to open 2NT. They could open 1D instead and jump on the second round to show their points, but partner might pass with less than 6 points, potentially missing game.

Both Doubletons are good stops, reducing the attendant risk, so 2NT seems the better bid to me – but it's debatable.

North East South West

1♦	1♠	Pass	2♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ A63		
	♥ K982		
	♦ KJT96		
	♣ K		
♠ Q84			♠ KJT97
♥ A7			♥ J54
♦ Q532			♦ A7
♣ 8762			♣ AJ5
	♠ 52		
	♥ QT63		
	♦ 84		
	♣ QT943		

Board: 13 Dealer: North #2916

East has 14 HCP and a decent 5-card Spade suit, so is strong enough to overcall.

The 1S overcall shows 8-15 HCP and a 5-card Spade suit.

West has 8 HCP and 3-card support for partner's Spades, so raises to 2S.

The 2S limit raise of the overcall shows 6-9 points and 3-card support.

East can see 20-23 points, plus 1 point for their Doubleton Diamond. The maximum 24 points is not enough for game, so they pass. Phew.

East South West North

1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
	♠ 653		
	♥ T987		
	♦ A6		
	♣ JT98		
♠ 87			♠ AT9
♥ AKJ			♥ Q62
♦ KJT73			♦ Q985
♣ 543			♣ AQ2
	♠ KQJ42		
	♥ 543		
	♦ 42		
	♣ K76		

Board: 14 Dealer: East Lead: ♠K #568

We have five top winners: ♠A, ♥AKQ, and ♣A.

The diamonds will provide four more tricks once we have forced out the ♦A but there is a danger that when the defenders win the ♦A they can cash four spade winners.

To reduce the risk of this we hold up winning ♠A until the third round. Then we play a diamond and hope that North has ♦A. Thanks to our earlier hold up play North has no spade left to lead back to his partner.

North returns a club and we win with ♣A as we can't afford to lose the finesse to South who has two winning spades to cash. We then cash the rest of our winners. Making 9 tricks.

Note that we have no guarantee that North will be the one who holds ♦A. If South had ♦A we would need to hope that spades were breaking 4-4.

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

♠ 64
♥ AK854
♦ J4
♣ KQ43

♠ Q9732
♥ T2
♦ AQ5
♣ T75

♠ JT5
♥ QJ976
♦ 72
♣ J98

♠ AK8
♥ 3
♦ KT9863
♣ A62

Board: 15 Dealer: South Lead: ♠3 #511

West's ♦AQ over the suit bid by Declarer's looks like the key to defeating this 3NT contract. Which opening lead provides the best chance? Not Diamonds!

A 5-card suit is often a good attacking lead against a NT contract so West leads ♠3 (fourth highest as they have an Honour); they don't have a sequence or near-sequence of three high cards.

At trick 1 East plays ♠T and Declarer wins with ♠K. Declarer continues with ♣2 to Dummy's ♣K, East following suit with ♣8. Declarer next runs ♦J to West's ♦Q.

Which card should West lead to trick 4?

Declarer would have won the first trick with ♠J rather than ♠K if they had the Jack so East must have it, so West can continue Spades safely. There's no reason to lead a Spade higher than ♠2, you can rely on Partner to play their J, high in 3rd position.

Declarer allows East's ♠J to hold the trick. East returns Partner's opening suit: another Spade, won by South with ♠A. South leads ♦8 to continue setting up their long suit. Should West play high or low?

West doesn't need to play low, as they now have three winners to cash and defeat the contract, so they play ♦A and their two winning Spades.

Declarer easily has the rest, but the Defence has already taken five tricks and defeated the contract.

West defeated the contract by opening with their long suit and continuing it when Declarer's play at trick 1 made it clear that they didn't have ♠J, so Partner must!

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	5♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

♠ AKQT98
♥ 7
♦ JT976
♣ 6

♠ 764
♥ AK43
♦ K
♣ QJ743

♠ J5
♥ 982
♦ AQ43
♣ AK52

♠ 32
♥ QJT65
♦ 852
♣ T98

Board: 16 Dealer: West Lead: ♠A 910

North has 10 HCP and a good 6-card Spade suit, so they're strong enough to overcall at the 1-level.

The 1-level 1S overcall shows 8-15 HCP and a 5-card suit.

East has 14 HCP and good support for partner's Clubs. Game is likely, so they make a forcing change of suit to 2D to learn more about partner's hand.

This two-level change of suit is forcing, showing 10+ HCP and a 4-card suit.

South has just 3 HCP and 2 Spades, so isn't strong enough to bid.

West shows their second suit by bidding 2H. This promises 4 Hearts.

North isn't strong enough to bid again without support from partner.

East can't support partner's Hearts with just three, and can't bid NT without a stop. They can see 26+ HCP and 1 SP playing in Clubs; 5C seems a good bet and their only chance for game, so they bid it.

North East South West

1♦	Dbl	3♦	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠ 976		
	♥ K		
	♦ AKQJ6		
	♣ 8743		
♠ KT3			♠ AQ85
♥ AT87			♥ J964
♦ T7			♦ 5
♣ KQ96			♣ AJT2
	♠ J42		
	♥ Q532		
	♦ 98432		
	♣ 5		

Board: 17 Dealer: North #2740

East has 12 HCP, a shortage in the opponents' suit, and no 5-card suit, so doubles for takeout.

This 1-level double promises 12 HCP, a shortage in the doubled suit, and a tolerance for any of the other three suits; a **Takeout Double**. Or it could be a strong hand with a long suit – see the [Discussion](#) for Board #1.

This double is forcing.

West has 12 HCP and a moderate 4-card major, with no stop in Diamonds so they can't bid NT. With 24+ HCP and assumed Heart support, they jump to game over South's 3D raise.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

That 3D bid really messed up the bidding for E-W. Well done South!

West's 4H bid is rather questionable. What if partner has a Double Then Bid hand, with a long suit in Clubs or Spades and no support for Hearts? You just have to hope they overrule your 4H and bid their suit; you've got good support for the other suits too!

I think West should bid 3H, not 4H. Their suit isn't long but they do have points; the fact that they've made a free bid shows that they've got points, so they should bid game.

Tricky!

East South West North

1NT	Dbl	2♥	2♠
Pass	3♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			
	♠ QJ9542		
	♥ J942		
	♦ 4		
	♣ 64		
♠ T76			♠ K3
♥ AQT83			♥ K76
♦ 8			♦ A753
♣ JT97			♣ K532
	♠ A8		
	♥ 5		
	♦ KQJT962		
	♣ AQ8		

Board: 18 Dealer: East #488

South has 16 HCP, so doubles 1NT for penalties. A double of 1NT shows 16+ points and any shape of hand.

West has a 5-card suit, so they bid 2H; this removes the double and is a much safer contract than 1NT doubled. It's a rescue bid, promising 0-10 points (!) and a 5-card suit.

North has just 4 points but a decent 6-card Spade suit, and shortages in Clubs and Diamonds, so decides to bid 2S. Their partner has at least 16 points, so it looks like a sensible contract, probably better than defending against 2H.

This bid actually promises a 5-card suit and 5+ points; near enough?

East is happy to pass, as 3H could be very expensive if partner has minimal points! You should not treat a rescue bid as encouraging.

South doesn't like North's suit; playing in 2S with a 5+2 fit could be uncomfortable, so they bid their own solid 6-card suit, 3D. Partner probably has some Diamonds, for a better fit.

South can only see 21 HCP, so game in Diamonds is very unlikely. North can see only see 20-22 HCP and hasn't found a fit with partner, so they pass.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

If I were South I might bid 5D rather than 3D, especially if non-vulnerable. North has shown 5+ HCP (liar) and a useful Spade suit – and most of the remaining points are in East's hand, increasing the probability of the finesses in Spades and Clubs working. (Although with good defence, 5D goes down one.)

Then again, if I were North I'd bid 3S over 3D to show I have six. 4S makes quite easily.

South	West	North	East
2♥	3♦	4♥	5♦
Pass	Pass	5♥	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Pass	

♠ AKT4
♥ QT953
♦ 8
♣ T64

♠ QJ7
♥
♦ KQJ743
♣ K872

♠ 963
♥ AKJ862
♦ T5
♣ J3

♠ 852
♥ 74
♦ A962
♣ AQ95

Board: 19 Dealer: South Lead: ♦K #2145

South has a good 6-card Heart suit with three Honours and 9 HCP; a fairly strong Weak Two.

This Weak Two opening suggests 6 Hearts and 5-10 HCP, and no (other) 4-card major.

West has a good 6-card Diamond suit and 12 HCP, enough to overcall at the 3 level. Their void in Hearts should be useful, too.

A 3 level suit overcall of a Weak Two promises 10-16 HCP and a 6-card suit or good 5-card suit.

North has excellent 5-card support for partner's Hearts, a shortage in Diamonds, and 9 HCP, so they raise to 4H with a reasonable expectation of making it.

East has good 4-card support for partner's Diamonds and 10 HCP. They have two Heart losers, which is a worry. They can see 20-26 HCP, so probably won't make 5D, but it's a good sacrifice if the opponents can make 4H, will cost less than the game. They bid 5D.

At this stage, I can't tell who's going to make what from the bidding. Who's sacrificing, bluffing, or over-optimistic...

North bids 5H and East decides their two Aces MUST be enough to get the contract down, with partner's help - and doubles for penalties.

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

If you look at the hands, you can see that South will probably lose two Clubs, one Diamond, and one Spade - for 2 down doubled. Could be a worthwhile sacrifice if 5D makes - which it should - depending on Vulnerability. So now we know!

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

♠ QT3
♥ QJT82
♦ KQ7
♣ 96

♠ J96
♥ A765
♦ AJ52
♣ KJ

♠ AK4
♥ K9
♦ T9864
♣ A73

♠ 8752
♥ 43
♦ 3
♣ QT8542

Board: 20 Dealer: West Lead: ♥Q #519

Which opening lead should North make to give the Defence the best chance of defeating this 3NT contract?

The best opening lead is from North's strong 5 card suit. They have a sequence of three Honours, so they lead the highest of these, rather than fourth best. This tells Partner (and, sadly, Declarer) that they have a 3-card sequence.

Dummy's ♥K wins the first trick. Declarer continues by running ♦T around to North's ♦Q. Which card should North lead to trick 3?

The play to the first trick indicates that Declarer holds ♥A (Partner would have covered the King if they had the Ace), but Dummy's now-bare 9 means that North can safely use their remaining ♥JT8 to set up at least two tricks in the suit. It doesn't matter which Honour they lead, just don't lead the 8!

Declarer wins in hand and leads ♦A followed by ♦J. North wins with ♦K and cashes their two remaining Hearts to defeat the contract.

North defeated the contract by starting with the top of their sequence in their longest suit and playing it again from the top when back on lead.

North East South West

1♥ Pass 3♥ Pass
4♥ Pass Pass Pass Pass

♠ J8
♥ AKQJT
♦ A985
♣ 98

♠ A93
♥ 73
♦ T742
♣ KJT5

♠ KQT72
♥ 82
♦ 3
♣ Q7632

♠ 654
♥ 9654
♦ KQJ6
♣ A4

Board: 21 Dealer: North #390

North has 15 HCP and a good 5-card Heart suit, so opens 1H.

The 1H opening bid shows 4 Hearts and 12-19 HCP (but see the discussion for Hand 1).

South has 10 HCP, a 4-card fit with partner's Hearts and a Doubleton (making 11 points), so bids 3H.

The 3H bid is a jump raise, showing 4-card support and 10-12 points. This bid is not forcing, but partner will usually respond by bidding game unless they are weak (less than 15 points) – or pessimistic.

North adds their points (15 + 2) to partner's 10-12, making 27-29; more than enough for game, but not enough for slam to be likely, so just bids 4H.

East South West North

1♦ Pass 1♥ Pass
1NT Pass 3♦ Pass
5♦ Pass Pass Pass

♠ K532
♥ A862
♦ 3
♣ QJT6

♠ 8
♥ QJT9
♦ JT875
♣ A84

♠ A76
♥ 753
♦ AKQ94
♣ K7

♠ QJT94
♥ K4
♦ 62
♣ 9532

Board: 22 Dealer: East Lead: ♠Q #339

East has 16 HCP and a nice 5-card diamond suit, in a balanced hand – so they open one of their longest suit, intending to rebid 1NT, to show their 15-16 HCP.

West has 8 HCP so needs to bid. They have good 5-card support for partner's suit, so they could respond 2D (showing 4 trumps and 6-9 points) but you should only support a minor with your first bid if you don't have a better bid, and they do. You should always show a major in preference to raising a minor, and they have a 4-card Heart suit that they can bid at the one level, so they bid 1H.

West's 1H bid shows 6+ points and a 4-card suit. It does not deny support for partner's minor.

East doesn't have 4-card support for Hearts, so continues with their plan and rebids 1NT, showing 15-16 HCP and a balanced hand, and denying 4 Hearts.

West can count at least 23 HCP (15+8). Adding 2 Shortage Points for their singleton Spade if they play in Diamonds, they have 25-26 points, maybe enough to encourage partner by jumping to 3D.

East takes a bit of a gamble and bids 5D. Does it make? Just!

ADDITIONAL (ADVANCED) DISCUSSION

West's 3D bid is a bit optimistic, misleading; you need around 28 points to make 5D! So if you didn't bid 5D, I'm with you.

With East's hand I would be tempted to bid 3NT rather than 5D, even though as the cards lie, 5D makes on a Spade lead and 3NT doesn't. After the inevitable Spade lead, the Defence should make 4 Spades and 2 Hearts in 3NT, but 0 Spades and 2 Hearts in 5D.

South West North East

1♥ Pass 2♦ Pass
 2♥ Pass 4♥ Pass
 Pass Pass

♠ Q64
 ♥ KJ9
 ♦ AKT5
 ♣ 753

♠ JT97
 ♥ A
 ♦ 8762
 ♣ KJT4

♠ K832
 ♥ 742
 ♦ J94
 ♣ Q92

♠ A5
 ♥ QT8653
 ♦ Q3
 ♣ A86

Board: 23 Dealer: South Lead: ♠J #2707

South has 12 HCP and a 6-card major in an unbalanced hand, so opens 1H. This shows 12-19 HCP and 4 Hearts. To show their points (12-15) and length (5+), they plan to rebid 2H – this also denies a second 4+ suit.

North has 13 HCP so expects to bid to game, but can't support partner's Hearts (yet) with just 3. Better to bid their longest suit – Diamonds – and get partner to describe their hand further. Bidding a new suit at the 2 level shows 10-15 HCP and 4 cards, and is forcing for one round.

South now knows they have at least 22 HCP, but that isn't enough for game! They bid 2H, showing 5+ Hearts and 12-15 HCP, as planned.

North now knows that partner has at least 5 Hearts, so their 3 Hearts are enough to bid game in Hearts as long as they have the points. They can see at least 25 HCP, so raise to 4H.

West North East South

1♣ Pass 1♥ Pass
 3♣ Pass 3♥ Pass
 4♥ Pass Pass Pass

♠ AT93
 ♥ 74
 ♦ 432
 ♣ AQT9

♠ KQ
 ♥ A8
 ♦ A76
 ♣ KJ8765

♠ 8542
 ♥ KQJT95
 ♦ K85
 ♣

♠ J76
 ♥ 632
 ♦ QJT9
 ♣ 432

Board: 24 Dealer: West Lead: ♦Q #2692

West has 17 HCP and a decent 6-card club suit in an unbalanced hand. They open 1C, showing 12-19 HCP and 4 Clubs. They intend to rebid their strong single-suited hand by a jump rebid of Clubs.

East has a good 6-card Heart suit and 9 HCP – and a void in Clubs. Their 1H bid shows 4 Hearts and 6+ HCP. Forcing.

West can now show their strength by jumping to 3C, as planned. This jump rebid promises 16-19 HCP and 6 Clubs, but it isn't forcing.

East has a problem. While they have enough HCP for game in Hearts, or (maybe) Clubs, they have no Clubs and partner hasn't shown any support for Hearts. They have a weak stopper in Diamonds, no stopper in Spades, and their Heart suit will need setting up – 3NT does not look likely.

Their best bid is to show their Hearts again, promising six, and hope partner can bid game in NT or Hearts. Their 3H bid shows 6 Hearts and 10-12 HCP.

Phew. West now knows that they've got 8 Hearts between them, as well as 27 HCP, so can bid 4H.