

## **Unit 191/119 Mentor-Mentee Game October 15, 2025**

### **6 Tables**

#### **Boards 1-4 Glen Anderson**

##### **Board 1 NS, EW non-vulnerable, North deals**

How the bidding proceeds depends on whether or not North opens a very light 2S preempt or passes. Let's look at both options:

After 2S by North and a pass by East, South can put pressure on West by bidding 3S with nine support points. West is too strong to bid 4H and should make a takeout double, East will bid 4C and West will now bid 4H. As the cards lie, 6H makes but only because East has the heart King, the diamond queen, the club queen and the club King is onside.

If North passes, East and South will also pass and it is West's bid. West has 6 heart tricks opposite normal breaks, 2 diamond tricks and one club trick or nine tricks in total. Most players will open 2C with nine tricks in a major, but if your style is to open 2C based only on total points, this is a 1H opener or 4H in 4th seat to prevent the opponents from finding their spade fit, but a save in spades at the 4-level or higher will be quite costly doubled.

##### **Board 2, East deals, NS vulnerable, E-W non-vulnerable**

As dealer, East passes and South will likely open 1S. At least one West jumped to 4C over 1S, but I think West is too good for this bid and I would overcall 2C. Over 2C, North should double to show support for both red suits, South bids 2D and eventually East-West will buy the contract in 4C or 5C. As there is a spade loser and a heart loser as the cards lie, making 5 depends on West's play of the club suit - the finesse is the winning play. West might get some additional information on the opening lead: North might try Ace of spades and the spade Jack hoping for a spade ruff. West can infer that North will not have a natural club trick if looking for a spade ruff, but North could hold xx or a stiff K in clubs. If North switches to the diamond queen after winning the spade ace, South is likely holding the club K as North has shown Ace of spades and QJ of diamonds - West can count 26 HCPs are accounted for, but more importantly, If North has the club king, South opened a nine-count hand.

### **Board 3, South deals, NS non-vulnerable, E-W vulnerable**

South, looking at 12 HCPs, may choose to open 1D (better) or 1C but the hand only has two quick tricks and poor intermediate cards. At least one South opened 1D and the auction proceeded Pass-Pass-Double. East is too strong to overcall 1S. South will pass and now West should bid 1S - yes, West could pass the double and defend 1D setting the contract 1 or 2 tricks if East has a normal reopening double. Over 1S, East is good enough

to jump to 3S (although one East jumped to 4S) but 4 EW pairs played in a spade part score and one pair played in 2NT in the East (which makes on a non-club lead as East can set up the diamond suit). Spade contracts should play from the West as East is too strong to overcall in spades. Whether played from the East or West, the hand should only make 8 or 9 tricks in spades on best defense.

### **Board 4, West deals, NS vulnerable, E-W vulnerable**

West deals and has a very marginal hand to open 1D. If partner bids 1H West would have a few bad choices for rebids - Raise 1H to 2H with only 3-card support, bid 1NT with no stoppers in the black suits or rebid a weak 5-card diamond suit. I would pass with the West hand but on this hand, it gets very interesting if West opens 1D. But let's look first at this hand if West passes. North will open 1NT with 16 HCPs and acceptable 2-4-4-3 distribution, East will pass and now a lot depends on NT structure for NS. If NS are playing 4-suit transfers, South will bid 2S to show clubs. Many pairs use a super accept structure in responding to a minor suit transfer. With Qxx support in clubs or better, the NT bidder bids 3C and 2NT otherwise. With AJX in clubs, North will bid 3C and with limited high card points, South will bid 3NT. On a heart lead by East, NS are cold for 3NT as long as North doesn't cover the heart ten on trick 3 (the suit blocks and if East overtakes, the ten, declarer still has a heart stopper. Without the agreements discussed above, NS may play 3 or more clubs. (3 pairs played clubs, 3 pairs played 3NT making 3, 4, or 5 (Making 4 looks right)).

Back to a 1D opener by West. North will overcall 1NT showing 15-18 HCPs but because West opened the bidding, East will get into the auction with good shape but limited HCPs. Players should discuss their systems after 1X-1NT. Most pairs play that double is for penalties. Thus with less than a good 9 HCPs, suit bids are natural and non-forcing, especially if partner has opened a minor - a 2S bid can take bidding space away from NS (although on this hand South would bid 3C over 2H or 2S by East. Conventions where double is penalty-oriented can be handy. Most of my partners and I play HELLO, a system over 1NT developed by Jerry Helms. In HELLO, double is penalty, 2C shows diamonds or a major minor, 2D shows one-suited hand in hearts, 2H shows both majors and 2S shows spades. East has the perfect hand to bid 2H in HELLO showing both majors. South is not likely to be deterred by a two-suited overcall or a natural major-suit bid and will bid 3C. The interference by East may keep NS out of 3NT as North has a weak heart holding, but as the cards lie, NS can also make 5C.

## **Boards 5-8 John Cobb**

### **Board 5 N/S Vulnerable, North deals**

North has a difficult decision regarding whether to open or not. With 11 HCP and 9 cards in the two longest suits, but only 1.5 Quick Tricks, the hand meets the [Rule of 20](#), but fails the [Rule of 22](#). Being vulnerable could be a tiebreaker in favor of passing.

4 of our pairs chose to open 1D, while 2 passed. After a 1D opener, East will overcall some number of Hearts. I believe this hand has too much offensive potential to make a preemptive jump overcall of 3H and instead should just overcall 1H. If partner can make a heart raise of some sort, we may want to be in 4 Hearts. If we overcall 2 or 3 Hearts we will be less likely to find a making heart game. In our game, 2 pairs overcalled 1 Heart and 3 pairs overcalled 2 Hearts. Interestingly nobody overcalled 3H with their 7 card heart suit. If you do decide to make a preemptive jump overcall with this hand, I think 3 Hearts is better than 2 Hearts.

South is happy to pass with only 5 points and a Heart stack. E/W will likely end in a Heart contract at the 3 level or 4 level. Surprisingly, E/W can take 10 tricks in a heart contract with perfect Double Dummy play, but in practice South's heart stack is too much to overcome and the limit will be 9 tricks.

### **Board 6 E/W Vulnerable, East deals**

With an 8 card spade fit and a combined 26 HCPs, all roads lead to a 4 Spade contract. The most common auction was the very reasonable:

1S - 2C

2S - 4S

West has enough to force to game and in a 2/1 system should bid 2C. East has 6 spades and therefore rebids 2S. West now knows they have an 8+ card spade fit and has minimum game forcing values, so bids 4 spades. In a 2/1 auction there is merit to bidding only 3 spades to allow more room for slam exploration, in case opener has a big hand (which his 2S bid did not deny). However, these agreements require some partnership discussion.

The popular lead against 4S was the singleton Diamond Jack. Declarer should play low from Dummy. North wins the Ace of Diamonds and returns a diamond. North can read the Diamond Jack as a likely singleton since they have the Diamond 10 and the Jack cannot be top of a sequence. After ruffing, South leads the Club Jack. Declarer needs to rise to avoid another potential Diamond ruff and is very lucky when the King of Club drops. This allows declarer to bring the contract home.

## **Board 7 All Vulnerable, South deals**

The most common auction was the very reasonable:

1D - 1S

2N - 4S

West's rebid of 2NT shows a balanced 18-19 HCP and should promise 2 or 3 spades. East now knows they have a 8+ card Spade fit and sufficient values for game and can bid 4 Spades. Note that even with 11 HCP, North has no suitable bid over 1D and should pass.

South led the singleton Diamond 10 at all tables. Declarer with 9 diamonds in the combined hands and South leading a suit bid in the auction by E/W should read this as a likely singleton and rise with the Diamond Ace. The spade Queen happily pops up on the second round of Spades, obviating the need to decide whether or not to finesse. After drawing trumps, declarer plays diamonds and eventually can discard the losing heart on the long diamond. Declarer takes 11 tricks, losing only the Diamond King and Club Ace.

### **Board 8 None Vulnerable, West deals**

West passes and now North has another hand that meets the [Rule of 20](#), but fails the [Rule of 22](#). This time, however, with only 1 Quick Trick I think North has a clear pass. If North passes South will open 1H and the likely auction (replicated at several tables) is:

1H - 1S

3H - 4H

Double dummy, E/W can defeat 4S by finding their club ruff. In practice (and at all of our tables that played 4H), this will be difficult and declarer will come to 10 tricks. On a Diamond lead, after winning the Ace, East typically returned a spade. Now declarer can pitch a losing club on the second diamond after using the Heart Jack as an entry.

## **Boards 9-12 Mary Jo Dunnebacke**

### **Board 9 EW vulnerable, N deals**

N opens 1 D , E doubles, S with 5 diamonds and 8 hcp must bid 3 diamonds, (law of total tricks) which puts pressure on W to bid the spades. If S only bids 2 diamonds, west has an opportunity to bid both major suits. Should just lose 2 clubs and one or two hearts. Three diamonds either makes or just goes down 1.

### **Board 10 Both vulnerable, E deals**

With E passing I would preempt 2 D with the S hand even though there is a 4 card major. It best describes the hand. Most e/w got in trouble bidding however.

### **Board 11 Neither vulnerable, S deals**

A situation with each side having big major suits. As usual the team with spades wins. The bidding should be 1 h by N, double by E 4 hearts by S and 4 spades by W. Law of total tricks again.

### **Board 12 NS vulnerable, W deals**

West deals and bids 1 S. N should overcall 2 clubs showing almost an opening hand and clubs. Poor E should just pass.

A brave S should bid 2NT showing more than 8 hcp and spades stopped. With an opening hand N might go to 3



which makes but  
2 might be enough for a high board.

## **Boards 13-15 Eric Hamilton**

### **Board 13 Both vulnerable, North deals**

The first five bids should be automatic and uncontroversial:

- East has an easy 1S opening bid.
- South has good hand, a good suit, and no fear of a penalty double. This is pretty much what a two-level vulnerable overcall shows, so that's what they do: 2C. (Not 3C, even with the seven-card suit. That would be preemptive and the south hand is much too strong for that).
- West supports with 2S.
- North is not invited to this party and passes.
- East has no extras, nothing more to show and passes.

Now we're back to south, and their first thought should be "Do we want to defend 2S?". West bid 2S freely, they could have passed if they didn't think 2S their way would be a good contract. So west thinks 2S is a good spot for EW, which means that it is a bad spot for NS, which means that South doesn't want to defend 2S. (It is almost never right to let the opponents play in two of a major when their bidding says they want to be there). So south pushes on to 3C. They are expecting that it makes (+110) or only goes down one (-100), either of which will be better than -110 for defending.

Now west gets the tough question: defend against 3C or bid 3S? If both contracts go down west wants to pass: +100 against 3C down one is better than -100 down one in 3S, but otherwise 3S (+140 or -100) is better than -110 when 3C makes. So west has to make their best judgment about which outcome is most likely.

In our game, three E/W pairs defended against 3C, three competed to 3S. As the cards lie both contracts will make and competing to 3S is the winner, but it's close: 3C only makes because the heart lead that beats it is hard to find and 3S won't make if the eight and nine of diamonds are switched.

West cannot be expected to get it right every time, but as long as they're asking themselves the right question they'll get it right more often than not.

### **Board 14 Neither vulnerable, East deals**

If the partnership style allows aggressive preempts not vulnerable east will open a weak 2H and the partnership will be propelled to 4H in short order: 2H-2N;3H-4H.

If the partnership prefers some modicum of suit quality for a weak two, east must pass and the path to 4H is a bit longer. West opens 1S and from there the auction might proceed P-1S;3H-4H (playing weak jump shifts) or P-1S;1N-2N;3H-4H.

But one way or another east ends up declaring 4H, and south leads a black card. The key play here is not drawing trumps too soon.

East sees four potential losers: the trump king, two diamonds if north gets in to lead through the KT, and the third round of clubs. The losing club can be ruffed in dummy and we can finesse against the heart king. Both of these plays require that we be leading from our hand and the only entries to our hand are spade ruffs.

So win the opening lead and play off both top clubs so that when and if we get to our hand we'll be able to ruff a club. Play off both top spades (the queen falls from north which is oddly comforting as it means that we no longer need to worry about being overruffed by south).

Now that we're in hand we ruff the club and we have ten tricks for sure (five hearts even if we lose one to the king, black AK and AK, and the club ruff) and we're fishing for an overtrick. And now is it finally time to deal with trumps: back to our hand with another spade ruff to finesse against the heart king.

We're hoping to find the king of hearts doubleton with south and the diamond ace with north so we'll make two overtricks (finesse JH, AH kills the king, lead a diamond through the ace towards the king) but alas, the hearts are 3-1 and the KH doesn't fall. But all is not lost. If we've been paying attention we'll have noticed that our last spade is the only one left. It's now high, so we lead

it, pitch a diamond, and make 5H losing only the trump king and diamond ace.

### **Board 15 NS vulnerable, South deals**

South opens 1S, west overcalls 2H, and north has the values for one tiny little competitive raise to 2S. East competes to 3H and even if south is willing to let that go by west has enough to take a shot at 4H.

The play in 4H is straightforward: declarer loses two black aces and the second round of diamonds, making 4H with seven heart winners, the diamond ace, a diamond ruff, and a club trick (or if the defense cashes the club ace early, two club tricks but no diamond ruff).

### **Boards 16-18 Michael Lavine**

#### **Board 16 EW vulnerable, West deals**

This one is easy. Everyone passed. West dealt and has 11 hcp, but they're a lousy 11: no honors working together and no suits likely to provide tricks.

#### **Board 17, North deals, both non-vulnerable**

Bidding. North has a clear 2s opener. No one has enough to bid over that, so 2s should be the final contract. One North did not open 2s, which allowed EW to exchange information before N later overcalled 2s. That resulted in EW playing and making 2n, a top for EW and a

deserved bottom for NS.

Play. Against a spade contract, East will lead a heart or a diamond. One East led the club queen, but leading away from an ace is usually a poor tactic against a suit contract. This time it didn't hurt because partner held the king. North has three things to do: (i) take a spade finesse and pull trump; (ii) lead up to the king of diamonds; and (iii) see whether the hearts break 3-3. Of course (i) must come before (iii). So North will probably win an early heart in dummy and lead dummy's spade for a finesse against the king. When holding 7 or more spades missing the ten, it's usually better to hope for the 10 to drop than to finesse against it. The spade finesse loses but North can get back to his hand to pull trump in two more rounds. Then he can try hearts. If EW haven't already cashed their minor suit winners, N will get to discard a loser on the last heart. So NS will make 8 or 9 tricks, depending on whether EW cash their winners before NS can try hearts.

### **Board 18, East deals, NS vulnerable, E-W non-vulnerable**

Bidding. South has a clear opening of 1s, so the first interesting call is West's. West does not have the strength for either a takeout double or a simple overcall, but West could consider a Michaels cue-bid of 2s. See [https://www.bridgebum.com/michaels\\_cuebid.php](https://www.bridgebum.com/michaels_cuebid.php) or <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/michaels-cue-bid> for details. At this vulnerability, West would like to intervene and suggest a possible sacrifice over NS's

potential game, so I think a cue-bid of 2s is warranted. Most of our Wests recognized the value of entering the auction, but a few either doubled or bid 2h. In my opinion, the cue-bid is the better option. The cue-bid puts North in a tough spot. North would like to support spades but does not have the strength to be comfortable forcing the auction to the three level. Most of our Wests did not make the cue-bid, so North was able to bid 2s. Then S carried on to 4s.

Play. The usual rule for S, when holding 9 trump missing the queen, is eight-ever, nine-never. But if West has shown heart length then South might forego that rule in favor of finessing spades against East. In any case, South can pick up the spade suit. The question is what happens in hearts. S should play to lead up to the heart queen and West should play second hand low. That leaves South with two heart losers.