

## **Unit 191/119 Mentor-Mentee Game December 17, 2025**

### **3 Tables**

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

##### **Board 1 neither vulnerable, North deals**

After North passes, East opens 1C and South may pass or make a weak jump shift bid of 2D. If South passes, West will bid 1S (not 1D), East will bid 2NT and West will be happy to sign off in 3NT. If South bids 2D over 1C, West is not strong enough to bid 2NT and should pass. East can now bid 2NT and West will raise to 3NT. Whether South starts with the Q of diamonds or the 7 of diamonds, East should make 3 diamond tricks. If the diamond 7 is led, the rule of 11 will show that North can't have a diamond higher than the 7 so declarer could play the diamond 8 at trick 1 but might not have an entry to the diamond Ace later in the hand so declarer should win the King at trick one not the 8. If the queen is led declarer runs it to the King and takes the marked diamond finesse, but not at trick 2, working to set up club or spade tricks.

##### **Board 2, NS vulnerable, East deals**

Most players will pass with the East hand – 11 HCPs, only 2 quick tricks, 3-3-3-4 distribution and aces or tens. But some players open all 11-count hands and West will likely bid 1S, East will bid 1NT and West likely will jump to 3NT (I am not sure how the contract played from the West side

on this hand). South doesn't have a particularly good lead and I would guess the opening lead would be a low spade or diamond (not a club). On a low spade, North will likely switch to a heart and this should result in down 1 (3 hearts, ace of spades and ace of diamond) or down two if declarer tries the club finesse.

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

South opens 1C and West will likely pass with a 9-count vulnerable. I would pass the North hand but some may bid a diamond or a spade (but with Jx in clubs, it doesn't seem urgent to take a bid). I am guessing that East players reopened with a double and South might redouble to show values. West has support for both majors and ten support points and may have jumped to 2H, explaining the contract at one table. I would have bid 1S with the East cards rather than double, and EW will not get in too much trouble if West raises to 2S, which is down one on best defense.

### **Board 4, both vulnerable, West deals**

After West passes, North will open 1NT and that should be the end of the bidding (unless West decides to bid 2D (I wouldn't vulnerable with the big hand behind the 2D bidder (and that contract went down 200. On lead, East has three choices – a passive spade lead or more aggressive leads of the J of hearts or the 10 of clubs. The heart lead works better on this hand – EW take the first four hearts and likely will get a club and a diamond, holding declarer to

seven tricks. The club lead (10 not the 7) doesn't work out very well. Declarer wins the Jack and leads a diamond, West can split honors but declarer now has 2 or three diamond tricks plus 4 spades and 2 clubs.

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

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

North deals and passes. North and South should pass throughout.

East has a clear 1H bid. West responds 1S. East's rebid should be 2D, not 1NT. It is best for a 1NT rebid to "promise" 2 spades here (but this is a [style decision](#) and should be discussed with your partner), and there is also no need to rebid a mediocre 5 card heart suit, when you have an easy and descriptive 2D bid available.

West has diamond support, but only 9 high card points and the shortness is in partner's primary suit. I think passing 2D here is best, especially at Matchpoint scoring. Interestingly, none of the pairs in our game played in a diamond partial.

What should South lead against 2D? Clubs is the unbid suit and is a viable option. Another reasonable choice is a trump, hoping to cut down on potential spade ruffs in dummy. Listening to the auction indicates West has fewer spades than diamonds and that spade ruffs may be important for declarer. A heart or spade lead does not

look attractive at all, given these suits were bid by the opponents and we have an unsupported honor in each suit. It turns out a trump lead (if followed by additional trump leads at every opportunity) is the most effective lead here.

With opposing singletons against length in two side suits, a crossruff approach looks appealing to declarer. Declarer should either win the lead in dummy if a trump is led (or get to dummy with the Spade Ace after winning the Club Ace on a club lead) and then lead the singleton Heart. North has to decide whether or not to duck the Ace and put declarer to a guess. Let's assume North plays the Ace, which is best double-dummy on this hand. If the original lead was a club, the defenders should cash two clubs now, and then play a trump to cut down on ruffs. If the original lead was a trump, a second trump should now be played to continue reducing available trumps for declarer to crossruff with.

Declarer will now cash the Heart King and commence with the crossruff. Declarer comes to either 9 or 10 tricks depending on whether or not the defenders led a trump at every opportunity.

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

Should you open 1NT with a 5 card major? There are differing opinions. See [this article](#) for a good discussion. For this analysis, I am assuming that pairs

will open 1NT with a 5 card major.

East opens 1NT. South and West have clear passes, and I think North should pass as well. North's spade suit is poor, and the hand doesn't have a secondary 4+ card suit. 1NT passed out was the auction at 2 of our 3 tables.

What should South lead? With AKQ in clubs, it makes sense to lead a Club and take a look at dummy to determine the best next step. Which Club? There are two schools of thought on an Ace vs. King leads against a notrump contract. One lead should ask partner for attitude, the other lead asks partner to unblock (if possible) and give count if there is no card to unblock. You can see the final section of [this article](#) for a discussion. Since you only have 3 cards in the suit, you definitely don't want partner to unblock a Jack from Jxxx, so you should lead the card asking for attitude. We will assume here that it is the Ace (Ace for attitude, King for Unblock/Count). Here partner will give you a negative attitude card (as he can work out that AKQ is your best possible holding after seeing dummy), and seeing 5 clubs in Dummy, you should know that you need to make a shift to another suit, otherwise you will just be setting up club tricks for declarer. Which suit to shift to? Since dummy has a doubleton in both majors, it makes sense to shift to one of these suits. Either could be right, but you need less from partner in Spades (since you have the Queen), so I would choose Spades.

If you shift to Spade, you will set up the spades and be

able to cash them when your side wins the Heart Ace, and you will eventually set the contract by two tricks. If you shift to a heart, declarer will be thrilled, and he will make his contract, taking either 7 or 8 tricks.

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

South deals and opens 1NT with a balanced 15 count. East and West will pass throughout.

North has a 5 card spade suit and with 10 high card points has sufficient values for game. North should bid 2H as a transfer to spades and then follow up with 3NT. This perfectly describes the hand and allows South to decide between 3NT and 4S. With 3 card spade support, South bids 4 spades over 3NT and that is the final contract. One of our 3 tables duplicated this auction.

West could lead the Diamond 3 as top of a doubleton, or could choose a Club. If a Diamond is led, declarer can take 11 tricks double-dummy, but the practical result of either lead is taking exactly 10 tricks to make his contract.

When playing the hand, declarer does need to ensure that he sets up a club ruff before drawing trumps. He can do this either by playing Ace and another club early, or by ducking the first round of clubs. After ruffing one club, he can turn his attention to drawing trumps. With the given layout, he will lose 2 trump tricks regardless, as long as he leads twice towards the South hand. Note that the 4th

club will eventually be pitched on the good third round of Hearts. So declarer loses 2 trumps and one Club.

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

West deals and opens 1C. North has a clear 1D overcall. East, with only 4 high card points and no club support, passes. South with 11 high card points, but only 2 card diamond support needs to find a bid. 1NT looks right here, showing 8-11 high card points and a club stopper. See [this article](#) describing how to advance overcalls for more information.

West with only a balanced 13 count and opposite a passed partner has no reason to make another bid. North with a "bad" 6 card diamond suit and some high cards in the two unbid suits has a decision to make. Passing 1NT is reasonable, and an argument can be made for rebidding diamonds as well. I lean towards passing 1NT, hoping to take advantage of the scoring table where notrump contracts score better, which is so important in a matchpoint game. If you take 8 tricks in notrump, you score 120, where making 9 tricks in diamonds only scores 110 (as an example).

If N/S end up in a two diamond contract, East will likely lead the Club 9, top of a doubleton of partner's bid suit. While declarer can avoid losing any trump tricks by pinning the diamond 10 (which did happen at one of our 3 tables), in practice he will likely lose one trump trick, one

spade, one heart and one club, taking 9 tricks to score 110.

If N/S end up in a 1NT contract, it isn't clear what West will/should lead. It turns out a small heart will likely hold South to 7 tricks, while other leads may allow him to escape with 8 tricks.

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

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

Hand 9 is huge!! 6/5 hands are always great especially with a void. Think slam with only 3 losers. I would open the major and if West overcalls clubs even better. N needs to do whatever they do with a limit raise. With the overcall bid 3 clubs a cue bid raise, using Bergen with no overcall bid 3 diamonds. Do whatever you do to show a limit raise. If north bids spades south must jump in diamonds. South should then use RKC blackwood. When n shows one control south bids 6 hearts. Any lead will help. finesse the queen with a club lead, a diamond lead gets the ace out a spade lead sets up the king and a heart lead clears the trumps. This hand should make all day. Don't miss it. These hands don't come up that often.

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

I would open 1nt with the east hand. 16 hcp and every suit stopped. South has a hard overcall being vul. West



will transfer to hearts and after the heart bid will pass or bid 3clubs. When east sees the club fit may go to 4 hearts. or maybe just bid hearts to be in the major. If south bids 2 diamonds they will be down 1 vulnerable. Actually with the good clubs East can make 4 hearts. Tough game. Easy when you can see all the hands.

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

South should always open 1 spade. west and north pass. East must decide what to do. Probably 1nt having spades stopped. South will then pass and west should probably trust his partner and go to three with 10 hcp. If south leads the top spades it is all over. probably won't lead a heart. East just had to set up his spades and take his 9 or 10 tricks. He just had to keep north off the lead to lead the hearts.

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

West will pass and North will open 1nt hoping his partner will bid Stayman. Unfortunately his partner just bids 3nt with 14 hcp. Should take 11 tricks depending on the lead. A diamond will hold it to 11 a club lead will let them make 12. Always good transportation in the spade suit. Try the clubs asap.

### **Boards 13-15 Michael Lavine**

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

Bidding: N has an easy 1n opening bid so the first interesting decision is East's. See <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/defense-vs-notrump> for discussion of when to intervene over the opponents' opening 1nt. If EW have a system for intervening then EW will use whatever bid shows both majors in their system. West won't like it, but will either choose hearts or bid his own long club suit. So EW may well play in either hearts or clubs.

If E intervenes over North's 1n, what should South do? There are complicated systems like lebensohl, but see <https://larryco.com/bridge-articles/lebensohl-stolen-bid-doubles-and-interference-over-1nt> for a simpler idea.

Play: It's hard to say how the play will or should go if EW buy the contract, but two points are worth mentioning. (1) At some point, E will lead the diamond ten and will have to guess whether to play for South to hold the ace or the queen. Since North showed strength, it's probably right to play for North to hold the ace and South to hold the queen. (2) Playing in hearts, EW may want to ruff spades in West. Playing in clubs, EW may want to ruff a diamond in East. Those ruffs must be taken before trumps are drawn.

Lesson: When and how to intervene with opponents' notrump. What to do if the opponents intervene over your notrump. A reason to delay drawing trump.

**Board 14 Neither vulnerable, E deals**

Bidding: West has a balanced 18 hcp. Such a hand is normally expressed by opening 1 of a suit, then jumping to 2nt. West might decide to downgrade this particular hand and open 1nt, because the KQ doubleton may not be pulling its full weight if the opponents have the ace. But even if W decides to open 1nt, East may bid Stayman and invite game when West shows 4 hearts. West has a maximum notrump, so should accept the invitation. If West opens 1c then the bidding may well go 1c-1h; 3h-4h. In any case, East should play a heart contract.

Play: South will likely lead the spade queen. That gives declarer, East, the chance for a nice inference. Since defenders almost never underlead aces against a suit contract, East should infer that North has the spade ace. Therefore East should not play the spade king from dummy. Instead, E should hope that North's spade suit is 3 cards or fewer, in which case the ace will fall before the king is used. EW should make 4 natural heart tricks, the spade king, one diamond, 3 clubs, plus a ruff of either a spade in hand or a diamond in dummy. That's 10 tricks, making game. On this particular hand, the clubs break 3-3 so the fourth club is another way to score the 10th trick. EW should lose just 2 spades and 1 diamond.

Lesson: Inference from the opening lead.

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

Bidding: West will open 1c and North has a problem. When the opponents open the bidding with your best suit it

is often right either to pass or, if your hand is balanced and strong enough, to overcall 1nt. Here, North is unbalanced and I think N should pass. Then there are several ways the bidding could proceed. (1) The opponents bid strongly. That tells you your partner is broke and you were wise to stay out of the bidding. (2) Responder passes and partner makes a balancing double. Then you can pass and convert the double into penalties. (3) The opponents bid weakly. Then you can bid your suit on the second round. This sequence — passing on the first round and bidding the opponents' suit on the second round — is natural and says you have a long suit and want to play there despite the opponents' bid. (4) The hand is passed out. Then the hand would still be played in your best suit, but you'd be defending.

On this particular deal the bidding is likely to start (1c)p(1h)p (2h). Now you can bid 3c, a natural bid and an example of scenario 3.

Lesson: What to do when the opponents open your suit.

## **Boards 16-18 Eric Hamilton**

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

West opens the bidding 1D, and this comes around to east who can invite game by bidding 2N or force to game by starting with 2C. The invitational 2N is absolutely textbook (12 HCP, balanced hand, no major suit) but is a slight

underbid with this hand because the honors are working together; this xxx,AQx,xxx,AQxx is a better twelve points than Qxx,Axx,Qxx,Axxx. Conversely, forcing to game is a slight overbid; if partner has a minimum opener 3N is going to need some good breaks. (spoiler - no good breaks this time).

No matter what east does, they'll end up declaring in NT, either 2N after 1D-2N;P or 3N after 1D-2C;2S-2N;3N-P, and the most likely opening lead will be a small heart. With that lead the overbidders seem to be vindicated: two heart tricks, four diamond tricks after the most likely 3-2 break, three clubs by brute force even if the king is offside adds up to nine tricks. However the diamonds don't break and even 2NT won't make against careful defense.

(There are eight tricks in NT if declarer never touches the diamonds, but that is an unrealistic double-dummy line that only works for this exact lie of the cards).

## **Board 17 Neither vulnerable, North deals**

North has a nice hand with a lot of offensive potential, but it doesn't qualify for an opening bid in first seat: One point short for meeting the rule of 20, lacks two defensive tricks, we would much rather have the diamond king than the spade king, and if partner doesn't have a fit for one of the minors it's not a good hand at all. So north passes, south opens 1S (this is also not such a great opening bid, but it does clear the rule of 20 and it's in third seat not first). North makes a 3S limit raise (experienced

partnerships will have more sophisticated methods here, but 3S is fine). South is happy to pass this, in fact they're even a bit anxious about being at the three level opposite a passed hand.

The natural opening lead is the KH, and south pauses to take stock: three heart losers, two diamond losers, and we have to lose the ace of trumps. We can ruff the hearts, but only if we do it at once - we cannot risk losing the lead even once or the defense will play ace of spades and another leaving us with heart losers in our hand. So ruff the heart in dummy, come to hand with the club king, ruff another heart, ruff a club to our hand, ruff our last heart loser in dummy, and all we have to lose are the two diamonds and the trump ace - ten tricks come in.

### **Board 18 NS vulnerable, East deals**

After west opens 1S in third seat east is looking at three card support and a near-maximum for their initial pass, but the sterile 4x3 shape and bad spots are a bit discouraging. They can take the low road with a simple 2S raise, or they can take the high road by bidding 1N forcing and then rebidding 3S to show a three-card invitational raise.

Here east should choose the low road. Their hand is borderline for an invite and partner's third seat opening may be light; there's a real danger that 3S will be too high if partner rejects the invitation. (As an aside, many experienced partnerships have a gadget for showing a good passed hand with three or four card support without

going past the two level. It's called "Drury", it holds the dubious distinction of being the most often forgotten convention in all of bridge, and there are many more valuable conventions to learn first - but it would have been handy here).

So East bids their low road 2S, and it turns out that all their soul-searching was unnecessary because west has more than enough to go to 4S no matter what east does.

Against 4S north leads from one of their empty side suits (no reason to make declarer's job easier by taking away any possible guess in the trump suit). We see that all our problems are in the trump suit: as well as the inevitable ace and king there is the ten to reckon with and the possibility of a club ruff. Our best chance in the spade suit is to lead twice towards our hand from dummy, but there are two subtleties:

First, how do we get dummy twice? Our two entries are the heart ace and the club jack, and we have to use the heart entry first. If we start with a club to the jack and play a spade, north will win and play a second club, then when they get in with their second high trump they will play a third club to give south a ruff. (Note that if the opening lead is a club we're forced to use the club entry first and they'll always get their ruff).

Second, suppose the first round of spades goes small from the dummy to our queen and north's ace. We win any return, cross to dummy with the club jack, lead

another spade towards our hand, and RHO plays small. Now what? Do we play the nine winning when LHO started with AK, or do we play the jack winning when RHO started with AT? Get this right and we lose just two spade tricks; get this wrong and we lose three.

The jack is the percentage play here

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principle\\_of\\_restricted\\_choice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principle_of_restricted_choice)) but on this particular deal the lower-percentage play turns out to be the winner.

If the opponents don't get their club ruff and you guess the spades right, you'll take eleven tricks, otherwise just ten.

## **Boards 19-20 Michael Lavine**

### **Board 19 EW vulnerable, South deals**

Bidding: Both North and South have 12 hcp and either could open the bidding. On the other hand, Both North and South might downgrade their hands because they're flat and have no honors working together. So this hand could be passed out. If either N or S decide to open then the bidding should start 1c-1h; 2h-2n. Unless NS have a special agreement, 2n shows a flat hand of invitational strength. Since opener has a minimum and is also flat, opener should probably pass 2n.

Play: If N plays the hand, E will likely lead a spade, and that spade should be the queen. See <https://www.bridgewebs.com/porthcawl/TUTORIAL%2012%20-%20OPENING%20LEADS.pdf> or



<https://www.betterbridge.com/misc/StandardArticles/Standard200909.pdf> for standard agreements about opening leads. If E does lead the spade queen, North has the chance to make a nice inference. The lead of a queen usually shows the jack, so North can infer that he can win the king now and finesse later against East's likely jack, thus winning three spade tricks.

Lesson: Opening lead from a sequence; Inference from opening lead.

## **Board 20, West deals, both vulnerable**

Bidding: West has an easy opening bid of 1n. East's hand is on the border between passing and inviting game. If East decides to invite, then E will likely start with Stayman; W will bid spades; E will bid 2n; and West, with a maximum, will bid 3n.

Play: Against West's notrump contract, North should lead the diamond 10. See <https://www.bridgewebs.com/porthcawl/TUTORIAL%2012%20-%20OPENING%20LEADS.pdf> for standard agreements about opening leads. West can count 7 tricks but is in no immediate danger and should try to develop more. Those can come from hearts and spades. Leading up to the heart king, even if it wins, may develop potential heart tricks for NS, so West should start by developing spades. The heart play can wait.

Lesson: Opening lead from an interior sequence. Which suit to work on.