

Unit 191/119 Mentor-Mentee Game February 18, 2026

3 Tables

Boards 1-4 Glen Anderson

Board 1 neither vulnerable, North deals

At one table, North opened 2NT (modern style, with a singleton honor provided opener has 3+ cards in other suits), preventing East from bidding spades. South bids Stayman and then signs off in 3NT after North denies a 4-card major. Against 3NT, East leads a spade, with the most popular leads being the Queen or Ace. As the cards lie, the Ace captures the stiff King and limits N-S to nine tricks. On the Queen lead, declarer has 10 tricks and may make 11 unless West keeps a spade to return after winning the club Ace. In 5D contract, N-S will make 11 tricks, losing only the two black Aces. North may open 1C or 1D (the hand is strong enough to open 1C and reverse into 2D), with East overcalling 1C with 1S. If South passes, North will now bid 2D and N-S should reach a 5D contract.

Board 2, NS vulnerable, East deals

After two passes, West may open 2H (at one table, there was a misclick and E-W played 4S down four), and North can double (right on HCPs) or bid 3D (conservative). Over double, South has two options: pass for penalties or 2S. Over 2S, North now bids 3D and South has an easy raise

to 5D. If North bids 3D, N-S will likely play in that contract. Interestingly, If North doubles 2H and South passes for penalties (likely minus 300 or 500), E-W have a great save in clubs, provided West redoubles to suggest another place to play) – East would bid 2S and if that were to be doubled could run to 3C which actually makes except on a trump lead. If East is on lead against a 5D contract, only a club lead and a heart ruff is likely to hold N-S to 11 tricks.

Board 3, E-W vulnerable, South deals

South opens 1S and North raises to 2S (one North chose a 1NT bid, possibly hoping to find a 9-card heart fit). Over 2S, East should bid 3D. This should be the final contract although one South decided to compete to 3S (not recommended, although North might be inclined to raise to 3S. East will lose at least 4 tricks and might lose five on careful defense to prevent West from cashing the third spade or setting up a club trick. I want to commend the E-W pair defending 3S. After the obvious diamond lead by West, East cashes two diamonds, lead a third diamond which West ruffs, club return and a fourth diamond provides an uppercut – if South ruffs low, West overruffs and if South ruffs with the King, E-W score another spade for down one.

Board 4, both vulnerable, West deals

West opens 1D, East bids 1H and at two tables, West bids 1NT, ending the auction. At one table, West raised 1H with

3-card support. Even if E-W are playing a convention know as “Spiral,” (to determine if opener raised with 3 or 4 card support and determine HCP strength), 1NT is the book bid – if East has a good hand with 5+ hearts, they can bid New Minor Forcing and West can show 3-card support. 1NT in the West will only make 7 tricks as long as North doesn’t set up West’s 9 of diamonds. E-W will make 7 or 8 tricks in 2H, depending on the opening lead. South is unlikely to lead dummy’s first bid suit, but that lead may hold declarer to 7 tricks depending on declarer’s play at trick 4 (first three tricks are diamond, diamond, diamond overruff with the 10, low spade from South. If declarer plays the spade ace and leads hearts, South wins the king, returns a spade and scores the heart 5; if declarer ducks the spade, the defense can lead another diamond but will only score 2 diamonds, 2 ruffs and the spade King).

Boards 5-8 John Cobb

Board 5 N/S Vulnerable, North deals

North deals and passes. East has a balanced 17 count with a 5 card Heart suit. 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 is Vulnerable vs. Not Vulnerable opponents so it is risky to compete over 1NT with only 9

cards in your two long suits (assuming you have an agreement like [DONT](#) that allows you to show two suits at a low level). I suggest a Pass for South.

West does not have many points, but does have a 5 card Spade suit. If East opens 1NT and South passes, then West should transfer to Spades by bidding 2 Hearts. East accepts the transfer with 2S, likely ending the auction.

Against a 2S contract, South has an easy lead of the Diamond Queen. North will overtake with the Ace. Returning either a Diamond or a Club looks reasonable and would likely happen at the table, but Double Dummy the best play is probably to return a trump, cutting down on potential Diamond ruffs.

Declarer needs to take care to try to ruff his losing Diamonds in hand before drawing trumps. Declarer will either need to ruff 1 or 2 Diamonds depending on whether the Heart Ace is onside. On the lay of the cards, there are 2 losing Diamonds to worry about. Whether both losing diamonds can be ruffed depends on whether or not E/W plays trumps at every opportunity.

Board 6 E/W Vulnerable, East deals

East passes, South opens 1C, West passes, North bids 1D, and East passes. These initial bids look clear.

South's best rebid is probably 2C. Although the hand has good playing strength, partner's 1D bid warrants a slight downgrade given that we have a singleton and a potential misfit. West passes again and now North has to reevaluate their hand.

With 10 HCP and a fit for partners suit and potential ruffing value in spades, this hand is worth an invite. The 2 possible invites are 2NT and 3C. Without a spade stopper, 3C seems right. If partner has a minimum hand and passes, then 3C is likely a safe contract.

East passes and South has to decide whether to make a move over 3C or not. South definitely has a better than minimum hand and would like to move towards a game. Since North did not bid 2NT, the Spade suit looks like a big concern for bidding 3NT. South could bid 3H here, which would show a Heart stopper and deny a Spade stopper (if South had both, they would just bid 3NT on their own). North does not have a Spade stopper and cannot bid 3NT, and retreats to 4C. South should probably grudgingly pass 4C, but some would take a shot at 5C.

After all this effort to stay out of 3NT without a Spade stopper, take a look at the hands. The missing spades split 4-4, so if the opponents lead Spades, they can only take 4 tricks and then South will take the rest making 3NT. So pairs that blindly bid 3NT will get lucky and make their contract, while those that diagnosed the missing Spade stopper will be in Clubs.

In a Club contract, Declarer should be able to ruff the third round of spades and then pitch their losing heart on the second Diamond winner and come to 11 tricks without much trouble. Note that you need to prioritize ruffing the losing Spade over drawing trumps (although here with the 2-2 trump split you won't be penalized on this particular deal even if you don't).

Board 7 All Vulnerable, South deals

South deals and although they have only 11 HCP, the hand has 2.5 Quick Tricks, a good 6 card suit and a secondary 4 card suit. The hand should be opened 1 Diamond.

Although West has 13 HCPs and a 5 card suit, the suit is not great and must be bid at the 2 level and we are Vulnerable. Pass should be in the mix, but most will not be able to avoid the temptation of overcalling 2C.

North has a flat 7 count with 1 four card major, but not both. Assuming West overcalled 2C, we are Vulnerable and at the two level already, I don't think the hand is good enough for a negative double and needs another Diamond to bid 2 Diamonds. I would pass.

East has 4 card Club support, 9 HCP and potential ruffing value in Diamonds. A raise to 3C is warranted and the hand might be considered a limit raise by some (and would therefore make a cuebid of 2D).

Assuming North passed and East raised Clubs, South

should reluctantly pass. South has a good suit and a singleton Club, but has minimum HCP, is Vulnerable, and partner hasn't shown anything.

West will either pass 3C if East made a simple raise or correct to 3C if E made a cue bid, and North with a bad hand and Qxx of Clubs should also pass.

North leads a low Diamond from 3 cards. South wins the Ace and likely returns a Diamond. West wins, plays a Club to the King and one back towards their hand. When South shows out, West rises with the Club Ace. Now a heart to the Queen, which wins. Cash the Heart Ace hoping to drop the King, which fails (but does drop the 10 from South) and now a heart to the Jack. This loses to the King, but sets up the Heart 9. Declarer can later get to dummy with a trump to pitch a losing Spade on the Heart 9 and then lead up to the spade King (which is successful).

This line of play results in making 9 tricks in Clubs. If N/S do manage to play a Diamond contract, it looks like the expectation is only 7 or 8 tricks depending on the defense.

Board 8 None Vulnerable, West deals

West and North pass. East opens 1C. South passes.

West with 7 HCP has enough to respond. Note that the recommended response is 1S (not 1D), bypassing the 4

card Diamond suit. The priority is finding an 8+ card major suit fit, and with a weak hand, bidding 1S instead of 1D is the best way to do this. See <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/walsh-style> for a discussion of this topic.

What does East rebid assuming West bid 1S? Now that we know we have an 8+ card fit in spades, the value of our hand has grown tremendously. We have 18 HCP and ruffing values in Diamonds, and a good 5 card Club suit. This should just bid 4S now, as the combined "value" of the two hands is at least 25 points. Another possibility is to bid 4D which is a Splinter bid showing 4 card spade support, game forcing values, and shortness (void or singleton) in Diamonds. This allows West to evaluate his hand with respect to investigating slam (although West is a passed hand here and unlikely to have a hand that can move towards slam). As an aside, technically 3D and 4D should be splinters here since 2D is a forcing reverse, and should have different meanings, but we can save that discussion for another day.

North should lead a Heart, with the exact spot card depending on the partnership agreements (fourth best, 3rd and 5th, etc.). Although we can see from the hand diagram that the Heart Queen will drop, declarer has no reason to know this in real-life. Our possible plans are take the Heart finesse now, take the Heart finesse later, or find a way to pitch a Heart loser from one of the two hands and ruff the third round of Hearts.

There are many options on how to play this hand, with some more successful than others. I would not take the heart finesse a trick one, as we can possibly do that later. After winning the Heart Ace in dummy, you could either play a Diamond towards the King (if the Ace of Diamonds is on, you can pitch a heart on the Diamond King later (if you can get over there). Another line is to lead a Club towards the Queen, planning on pitching a losing Heart on the third round of Clubs later. I would lead a Diamond towards the King which loses. Now North plays another Heart and although the Queen drops, it is difficult not to take the losing finesse. With the King of Clubs off and a 4-1 trump break looming, most roads lead to 4 Spades down 1.

Boards 9-12 Mary Jo Dunnebacke

Board 9 EW vulnerable, N deals

this hand is just a mess, no fits, bad distribution EW should be happy in 2D, 3 at the most

N bids 1C with a bare opener, E bids 1D, S can bid 1H, E doubles to show some values and the other suits

N should pass and see what happens. E probably should bid 1NT.

W should pass or bid 2D. I believe I would pass the 1nt. but most bid and made 2 diamonds.

In 2 D South will lead the heart 5 and N needs to play

the 10 because partner led 4th best (rule of 11 here doubt E would have the H Queen)

One N did well to lead trumps back Ace and small to stop the club ruffs. Making 2

If N does not lead trump back E can ruff the clubs making 3 or more.

1NT would be hard with a heart lead but should play better. If S leads a high club. E holds off until the third one and gets out the ace of diamonds. Should make at least 1nt. N probably gets 2 clubs and 3 aces.

Board 10 both vulnerable, E deals

Lots of EW pairs got in trouble on this hand

S opens 1C. W bids 1H (not quite enough to double) N passes,

With 7HCP east bids 1S. W then bids 2D which E should pass (no support in hearts and only 7 HCP. Not enough for 2NT!

Just take a preference for west's suits. Remember S has opened and you are Vul. Partner has not jumped STOP

Board 11 neither vulnerable, S deals

S opens 1D not 1C. Can bid clubs on second turn if necessary.

I think west should double to show an opening hand and at least 1 major. With only 6 HCP N should bid 2 D (at least

8 diamonds between them)

E can then double to ask what major w has. West bids 2 Spades and it should be over.

When w does not double N will bid 1spade. S could then bid 2 clubs (or 1NT) but N will probably take a preference to 2d. 1NT by S is easier but will probably go down one. Troublesome hand.

Board 12 NS vulnerable, W deals

East should open 1NT with 17 HCP, not 1H. Using Stayman all got to 4H and made it. The main thing here is to trump the small diamonds before drawing trumps. It should go 1NT, 2C, 2H 4H..

Boards 13-20 Michael Lavine

Board 13 both vulnerable, N deals

Bidding: It looks like there will be two passes to South. All three of our Souths chose to open. I can see the logic of opening but another reasonable strategy is to pass and hope to be able to describe the hand later with a Michaels cue bid. If South passes then West will open 1NT, which will be passed around to South. South's bid then depends on what system they use to interfere with the opponents' notrump. The hand is very likely to end with South declaring a contract in either hearts or spades.

Play: South has only one trick outside of the majors so, if playing in spades, the strategy will be to use dummy's

trump to ruff a heart or, if playing in hearts, to establish the spades.

Lesson: When holding a two-suited hand with less than an opening bid, think about whether it's better to open or better to wait and hope to describe your hand later with either Michaels or an unusual notrump.

Board 14 neither vulnerable, E deals

Bidding: If I were East I would plan to open 1S and rebid 3S. That sequence shows about 16—18 points, including distribution, plus a good six-card spade suit. South is not strong enough to overcall 2H, so I think the bidding should go 1S-1N; 3S-4S. East is too strong to rebid just 2S.

Play: East will want to develop tricks in clubs. I think the best play in clubs is to take the double finesse against South, hoping that S has either the King or Jack. The second-best play is to cash the ace, then finesse against North for the Jack. This time, the second-best play wins.

Lesson: Sometimes the best play loses and another play wins. Still, it's usually better to go with the odds and make the best play. For advice on how to play various card combinations — including this one where you're missing the K and J — see <http://rpbridge.net/4a00.htm>.

Board 15 NS vulnerable, S deals

Bidding: West has a powerful hand but not, in my opinion,

enough to open 2C. So West opens 1D. East should respond 1H. Now West can see that there are three key cards: SA, HK, and DA. If East has two of them, West wants to be in six hearts. If East has only one of them, West wants to stop in five hearts. So West should bid 4N; East will show 1 key card; and West should sign off in 5 hearts. I think playing in hearts is superior to playing in diamonds, especially at matchpoints.

Play: Diamond contracts will fail when N leads the singleton heart and later gets one or two heart ruffs. Heart contracts may or may not fail depending on whether NS knock out the club entry to West's diamonds.

Lesson: None of our EW played in hearts. At two tables, that's because East failed to show the heart suit. At one table it's because West chose to play in diamonds even though East bid hearts. So the lessons are (1) show your 4-card majors and (2) remember to use Blackwood.

Board 16 EW vulnerable, W deals

Bidding: The big question is whether North should open with a preemptive bid and, if so, how should South respond? Some good resources on preemptive bids are

1. <https://kwbridge.com/3bids.htm>

2.

<https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/opening-preempts>

3. <http://rpbridge.net/3j00.htm>

Play: Playing in diamonds, North will want to take the double finesse in hearts. See <https://www.advinbridge.com/this-week-in-bridge/388> or <https://kwbridge.com/finesse.htm> for a description of double finesses.

Lesson: (1) When and how high to preempt. (2) The double finesse.

Board 17 neither vulnerable, N deals

Bidding: North opens 1C. Should East overcall 1S? <https://www.advinbridge.com/this-week-in-bridge/482> provides a good summary of when to overcall. That page says, *“There are no strict suit quality requirements for making a simple overcall. But again, the weaker our hand, the better our suit should be. For a simple 1-level overcall non-vulnerable we only promise 7-8 points, but if we have a bad suit, we should not make an overcall with so few points. Partner is already in the dark about our hand, so they should be able to count on us for either a good suit or a good hand (or both).”*

The risk of East’s overcalling is that West may play East to have strength in spades. But with this strong a hand I think an overcall is warranted.

South has the next decision: pass, bid 2H, or (negative) double? South’s bid of 2H would show 10+ points and would be forcing — see <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/after-the-opponent>

s-overcall — so we can rule that out. Negative doubles are explained at https://www.bridgebum.com/negative_double.php and at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5127d3d2e4b0b304f0b6db24/t/5a6511e7c83025655b863d13/1516573160047/%28222%29+Negaive+X+Overview.pdf>. South's hand is similar to Example Hand 2 on the latter page, so yes, South should double.

West has an easy raise to 2S and North has a close decision whether to bid 3H. It's close because N would like to show heart support but a 3H bid on a minimum hand risks getting too high. If N does bid 3H then West has enough to compete to 3S.

Play: If NS play in hearts they will take 5 heart tricks, one top club, the 10 of diamonds, and a diamond ruff, for 8 tricks. If EW play in spades they should take 5 spades, 2 diamonds, and 3 clubs (take the double finesse through N and ruff the last club) for 10 tricks. Should EW have bid 4s? Not necessarily. Making 4 requires dropping the spade queen and having such well-fitting clubs.

Lesson: When to overcall and what to do when the opponents overcall.

Board 18 NS vulnerable, East deals

Bidding: South has close to an opening bid. Some players open such hands while others don't. Either style is okay as long as you and your partner agree and can

handle such weak openings. In our game, two Souths opened 1D and both Wests overcalled 1N. What should North do? <http://www.rpbridge.net/5c00.htm> says, "After a 1 NT overcall you should double for penalty with 10+ HCP or 11+ points ... Any bid after a 1 NT overcall is limited in strength by the failure to double. All suit responses are *nonforcing*."

<https://kwbridge.com/respcomp.htm> agrees and says, "**Double** = Penalty, showing a good 9+ high-card points ... **2 of a new suit** ... = Weak (5-9 points), with a good 6+-card (or very strong 5-card) suit." In other words, North should double, not bid 2C.

Play: If EW play in spades they should take 5 spades, one diamond, one club, and one diamond ruff, for 8 tricks. If S plays in diamonds they will likely try to ruff spades in dummy. If N plays in clubs, it will be difficult.

Lesson: How to handle a 1NT overcall by the opponents.

Board 19 EW vulnerable, South deals

Bidding: West opens 1D and East should immediately think of slam. After all, they have 20 HCP, a fit with partner, a solid major suit, and a void. At every table the bidding started 1D-1H; 2H. It's difficult for East to find out whether West has the right cards to bid a grand slam, but East should not stop short of a small slam.

Play: East can count 1 spade, 5 hearts, 2 diamonds, 3 clubs, and a diamond ruff, for 12 tricks. When the

diamond finesse wins there are 13.

Lesson: Recognize the strength of the East hand and bid accordingly. Don't bid 4H and let West pass.

Board 20 both vulnerable, West deals

Bidding: Every North opened 1S and every South responded 2S. That's good bidding; South's first priority is to support partner's major suit. On this hand NS have a better fit in hearts, but sometimes the best bid does not lead to the best contract.

Play: East should not underlead aces so should lead either a heart or a spade. Either is fine. North will want to take a spade finesse and lead up to the diamond king. North might pull one round of trump before taking the spade finesse, in case the queen is singleton. They should take 5 spades, 5 hearts, and a diamond: 11 tricks. If East had led a club then EW could take two clubs and a diamond, to hold NS to 10 tricks. But leading from a suit headed by an unsupported ace is not the best play.

Lesson: Sometimes the best bid or best play does not lead to the best result.