

Mentor/Mentee game
12-Sep-2023
Mentor Discussion

Comments from Michael Lavine and Eric Hamilton on the Unit
191 September 12 mentor/mentee game.

Board 1. North deals. No one vulnerable.

	North	
	♠ 872	
	♥ QJ542	
	♦ 542	
	♣ K9	
West		East
♠ T4		♠ QJ65
♥ AT73		♥ K
♦ T87		♦ A3
♣ JT54		♣ AQ8762
	South	
	♠ AK93	
	♥ 986	
	♦ KQJ96	
	♣ 3	

N passes and E opens 1C. South now has to decide between a double and an overcall of 1D. Because major suits are so much more important than minor suits, we prefer a double, which would help us find a fit in either major. If South's spades and diamonds were reversed, we would prefer an overcall of 1S. If South's hearts and diamonds were reversed then it would be a close decision between DBL and 1H.

If S overcalls 1D then N should raise to 2D. If S doubles, then N should bid 1H and be willing to compete to 2H later. In either case, East has a good enough hand to compete further.

If East buys the contract in clubs, South will lead a diamond. E has four apparent losers: two spades, a diamond, and a club. Is there a way to get rid of one of them? Yes: East can overtake the HK with the HA and take a club finesse. There is no need for East to save the HA for later because E cannot get to dummy to use the HA before NS have cashed all their winners.

Board 7. South deals. Both vulnerable.

North

♠ 2

♥ KJT4

♦ QJ2

♣ AT843

West

♠ AKJT

♥ Q8532

♦ A73

♣ J

East

♠ Q86

♥ A76

♦ KT54

♣ KQ5

South

♠ 97543

♥ 9

♦ 986

♣ 9762

With NS passing, a sensible bidding sequence for EW is 1H-2D; 2S-3H; 4H. Note 1: the way for East to show a game forcing hand with three card heart support is to start with a game-forcing 2D, then reveal the heart support. That shows exactly three card support because, with four card support, East would start with either Jacoby 2N or a splinter. Note 2: after East bids 3H, West should consider whether to try for slam. Though W's hand seems at first glance to be a minimum, it's actually quite good because all the points are working (The SAK figure to take tricks and the DA is in partner's suit) and it has a potentially useful singleton. If W decides to try for slam, one method is to bid 3S, which shows a spade control and, by inference, slam interest, because without slam interest West would simply bid 4H. On this particular hand EW should stay out of slam.

Against 4H North is likely to lead either a spade or a diamond. West is going to lose a club trick, some number of heart tricks,

and possibly also lose a diamond. If N leads a diamond and West starts by pulling trump then, when NS win a heart, there's a danger they can lead another diamond which would establish a diamond trick for them before EW knock out the club ace. (On this layout NS cannot establish a diamond, but EW don't know that.) Therefore EW should begin by playing clubs, establishing a club trick in dummy so, when NS lead the second diamond, West can discard a diamond loser on the good club. Once the clubs are established then EW can try to draw trump.

There's another thing EW can do to help themselves in diamonds. If N leads the diamond queen, it's a good bet N also has the diamond jack. So if W wins the first diamond with the ace, then dummy's DKT will be a tenace over North's presumed jack.

Board 8. West deals. No one vulnerable.

North

♠ KJ854

♥ Q72

♦ A7

♣ Q65

West

♠ T2

♥ JT53

♦ QJ43

♣ 942

East

♠ A6

♥ 9864

♦ T92

♣ K873

South

♠ Q973

♥ AK

♦ K865

♣ AJT

With EW silent N might open the bidding 1S. North has a very minimal opener. N has only 12 HCP and does not meet the suggestion of 22. See

<https://www.nvba.org/novices/The%20Rule%20of%2022.pdf> for details. I wouldn't criticize any North who passed. But once N opens 1S, South should bid 2NT — Jacoby. To remind you of opener's rebids after Jacoby 2NT see

https://www.bridgebum.com/jacoby_2nt.php. Briefly, opener's priorities are i) showing a good five card side suit by jumping in it, ii) show a singleton or void by bidding that suit, and iii) showing overall strength by bidding either 3 of the major, 3NT, or 4 of the major. Those are arranged in decreasing order of strength. We use the lower bid to show more strength in order to save room for slam exploration. We use the higher bid to show lack of slam interest because without slam interest there is no need to conserve bidding room. On this hand the slam depends mainly on the club finesse so it's a marginal slam.

Board 11. S deals. No one vulnerable.

North

♠AQJT973

♥2

♦43

♣AK3

West

♠42

♥QJ7

♦KQJ952

♣T8

East

♠85

♥T83

♦AT86

♣Q974

South

♠K6

♥AK9654

♦7

♣J652

South will likely open 1H. Then there is disagreement about whether West should bid 2D or 3D. Personally, I like my two-level overcalls to be stronger than this — closer to an opening hand — and I think West should overcall 3D. That's a great diamond suit with little outside strength and the weak jump overcall will make it tough for NS to find their best contract. See <http://kwbridge.com/comp.htm> and <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/simple-overcalls> for expert opinions on two-level overcalls. Some mentors disagree with me and would overcall 2D with the West hand.

Assuming the hand is played in spades, NS have three possible losers: two diamonds and a club. On the other hand, they have 11 tricks: seven spades, two hearts, and two clubs. The discrepancy is resolved by seeing that one of North's losers can be discarded on one of South's hearts. It's the club that should be discarded because N can try to get one more winner and one

less loser by trumping a diamond in dummy. This is another hand where declarer should postpone drawing trump in order to use one of dummy's trumps to trump a loser. By playing it properly, NS should make 6.

Board 15. S deals. NS vulnerable.

North	
♠ 95	
♥ 53	
♦ AK83	
♣ JT964	
West	East
♠ 6	♠ JT73
♥ QJ92	♥ AK74
♦ QJT	♦ 97654
♣ Q8532	♣ —
South	
♠ AKQ842	
♥ T86	
♦ 2	
♣ AK7	

A very likely bidding sequence for NS is 1S-1N; 3S-4S. West is on lead and is likely to lead either HQ or DQ. For the sake of discussion let's say West leads DQ. Then the number of tricks won in a spade contract becomes a contest between the declarer and the defense. First, how should declarer think about the hand? Declarer should expect to win 5 or 6 spade tricks depending on whether the suit breads 3-2 or 4-1. There's nothing to be done about the spade suit except to pull trump eventually. Declarer should also expect to win no hearts, two diamonds, and two clubs, for a total of 9 or 10 tricks depending on the spade break. The potential losers are one club, no

diamonds, three hearts and either 0 or 1 spades. Can anything be done about the losers? Yes: either a heart or club loser can be discarded on one of dummy's high diamonds. Can anything else be done? Yes: declarer could take a club finesse or try to ruff the third heart in dummy. Let's follow how the play might go.

If declarer tries to ruff a heart then South must play hearts before drawing trump. (This is an example of one reason for postponing drawing trumps.) So declarer should win the diamond and immediately lead a heart. How should the defense react? The defense should ask themselves why declarer is leading a heart instead of drawing trump. And they should arrive at the answer that declarer wants to ruff a heart in dummy. And then they should try to prevent that by leading trump themselves. If the defense leads trump each time they win a heart they can get rid of all dummy's trumps before declarer can use one of them. This is an example of when the defense should pull trump.

If declarer can anticipate all this, (s)he will see that the defense can prevent a heart ruff, so declarer should try the club finesse instead. Further, when declarer wins the diamond lead (s)he is in dummy for the last time. So South should cash the second diamond now because there won't be a chance to cash it later. And declarer should discard a heart on the second diamond because there's no other way to get rid of the third heart loser, while the club finesse may provide a way of getting rid of the club loser. So declarer should win two diamonds and lead the club jack for a finesse now, because there won't be a chance later. Declarer's plan is to play just one round of clubs, then draw trump. But declarer gets a big surprise when East shows out on the club. Now it's East's turn for a big decision: whether or not to ruff the club jack. East should not ruff, for two reasons. First, East is likely to get a trump trick later even without ruffing now. After all, declarer is not likely to take a trump finesse and is more likely to play spades from the top, in which case East's jack will

eventually be good. Ruffing now would be trading a spade trick now for a spade trick later. The second reason for not ruffing is that, from East's point of view, it looks like declarer is getting ready to finesse in clubs. If East ruffs declarer will just play a low club and East's trump trick will win a club that South was going to lose anyway. It's better for East to discard on the CJ and leave South with an eventual club loser later. South may have to lose a spade, two hearts, and a club, and end up with only nine tricks.

Declining to ruff is analogous to playing second hand low. That is, if East held the club ace then, when declarer leads CJ from dummy, East would normally play low and not waste the ace on declarer's low cards. The situation is similar here where East is void. Don't waste your natural trump trick on declarer's low cards.