

Unit 191 Tier II Mentor-Mentee Game November 11, 2025

4 Tables

Boards 1-3 Debbie Hoveland and Bill Young

Board 1 North deals, neither vulnerable

Bidding: North and South pass throughout the bidding. East opens 1NT with 17 HCPs and a balanced hand. West bids 2♣, Stayman with 4♠ and East bids 2♥. West now bids 2NT inviting to game with 8 HCPs and East with 17 HCPs accepts and bids 3NT.

Play of the hand in 3NT: South should open the 5♠. Declarer count her sure winners (4) and realizes she needs to set up 5 additional tricks to make the contract. She needs to set up a ♠, and either 2 ♦s and 2 ♣s, or 3 ♦s and a ♣. At my table East wins the lead with the K♠. At trick 2 she played the Q♠ which South ducked. Declarer then led the Q♦ which South covered and dummy won. Dummy came back a small ♣ and the K♣ won. Back to the dummy with the K♥ and dummy now played a second ♣ which North won with the Ace. Declarer now has more enough tricks to make game.

Lesson from this Hand: Declarer should figure out how many tricks he/she needs to make their contract, and go about setting them up. Transportation and timing are key.

Board 2, East deals, NS vulnerable

Bidding: North and South pass through. East passes and West opens 1♣. East replies 1♠ and West bid 1NT.

East then bids a non-forcing 2♥ show 5 ♠s, 4 or 5 ♥s and 6-11 points. West now has to decide whether pass 2♥ or bid 2♠. 2NT is not an option, not enough points.

Play of the hand in 2♥: South should lead the J♥, trying to cut down dummy ruffing power. Declarer counts 5 sure winners and needs to set up 3 more. He can only ruff spades once in dummy so he has to set up 2♠s tricks. The best way to do that is to double finesse (75% chance of getting 2 or 3 tricks.) Dummy will win the A♥ and play a small ♠ to finesse the 10♠. South wins with the K♠ which is great news since now Declarer's A♠ and Q♠ are both winners. South should continue with the 10♥ which Declarer needs to duck guarding against a ♥ 4-2 fit. Declarer will win the last ♥ trick with the K♥ and since ♥ were 3-3 he is home free. Declarer will now only lose an additional ♣ and ♦, making 3.

Play of the hand in 2♠: If East decides to let West play the contract in 2♠, West needs to take the same double finesse in ♠s and will also make 3.

Lesson from this Hand: Declarer needs to realize that to make his contract he needs to set up East's ♠s whether he is playing in ♥, ♠ or even NT. To do that he must first double finesse by playing a small ♠ from West hand to the 10♠.

Board 3, South deals, E-W vulnerable

Bidding: Both East and West should pass. South should open 1 NT with his balanced 15. North will bid 2♣ Stayman and South will bid 2♦. North will now bid 3NT. North knows they have at least 25 HCP between them so they belong in game in NT.

Play of the hand in 3NT: West can lead either the 5♠ or the 3♣. In either case Declarer counts her tricks (3♠s, 1♦, 3♣), South can hopefully to make 1 more ♥ and one more ♦. As the card lay South will only make 8 tricks in 3NT.

Lesson from this Hand: Not all hands balanced hands with a total of 25 or more HCP make game. If you bid the

hand correctly and go down it should be an average board. Just because a game doesn't make, doesn't mean that you should not have bid it.

Boards 4-6 Michael Lavine

Board 4 West deals, both vulnerable

Bidding: In my opinion, the West hand is too good to open 2h and should open 1h. It meets the Rule of 20 (See <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/rule-of-20>) and suggestion of 22 (To use the Rule of 20 but don't open without 2 quick tricks. Both rules are only general guidelines and some hands should violate them) and, if it opens 1h, it has an easy rebid of 2h. East has 14 hcp opposite an opening hand, so should make sure the partnership gets to game. The way to do that when E has 3-card support is to make a game-forcing bid, then support hearts. (With 4-card support East would support hearts immediately.) In this case the auction would go

1h-2d; 2h-3h; 4h-p. The 2h bid promises 6 hearts. (See <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/two-over-one-gf-part-7-after-1m-2c>.) The 3h bid shows 2 or 3 hearts and a non-minimum. With a minimum, East would use the Principle of Fast Arrival (See <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/fast-arrival>) and bid 4h.

Play: After the opening lead, West counts tricks. West expects to win 1 or 2 spades, 5 hearts (the jack will probably fall in two rounds), 3 diamonds, and a club. That's a total of 10 or 11 tricks. West can try for an extra trick by ruffing a club in dummy. West needn't take the spade finesse because West's little spade can be discarded on dummy's diamond ace.

Lesson: (1) How responder shows a game-forcing hand with 3-card support for opener's major. (2) Noticing there's no need to risk the spade finesse.

Board 5 North deals N/S Vulnerable

Bidding: North has a clear 1c opening; East might or might not overcall 1d; South has a clear 1h response; West passes; and North has a clear 1s rebid. South has enough strength to force to game but isn't sure whether game should be 4h or 4s. Bidding either game is acceptable.

Play: Playing in 4h, South should expect to win 3 spades, 6 hearts (hearts will likely split 3-3 or 4-2) and a club, for 10 tricks. South may win an additional trick by leading up to dummy's diamonds and guessing whether to play the Jack or the King. On this deal South gets a bad break in hearts and neither diamond play works, so South is likely to fail. Playing in 4s, N should expect to win 3 natural spade tricks, 6 hearts, and the club ace. An additional trick or two may come from ruffing clubs in dummy.

Lesson: Reasonable contracts sometimes fail, as here, because of unusually unfavorable distribution.

Board 6 East deals E/W Vulnerable

Bidding: South has an excellent hand for opening 2h. West, with a balanced 18 hcp and two heart stoppers, has a 2n bid. North will likely pass, and East has to think. East's 7-hcp hand might produce a game, but West's bid has a typical maximum of about 18 hcp so, even with that maximum, game will be thin. Further, East's diamond suit is so weak it may be difficult to set up for tricks. I think East should take a conservative stance and let West play 2n.

Play: After North leads, West counts tricks. There are 2 hearts, a diamond, and 3 clubs: 6 tricks. The obvious place to look for more is in the diamond suit. West will hope to set up diamonds while losing only one trick or, if West has to lose 2 diamonds, he can hope to lose the second one to North and that North will not have another heart to lead back to South. When North leads the heart 9, a thoughtful West will realize that S promised 6 hearts so N probably holds only two. Therefore West can hold up one round in hearts and, if S continues hearts, North will not be able to return them when N wins any diamond trick.

Lesson: weak two-bids; the hold-up play; establishing dummy's suit.

Boards 7-9 Michael Lavine

Board 7 South deals Both Vulnerable

Bidding: South will open 1D and the first decision is West's: whether to overcall 1H. See <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/simple-overcalls> for when to overcall and what to do when partner overcalls. I think the suit is good enough and the hand is strong enough for West to overcall 1H. Then N has to decide whether to bid. If there were no overcall, then N should bid. One of the reasons for bidding is to keep the auction alive in case partner has a very strong hand. But when West has overcalled, the auction will still be alive when it gets back around to South, and South will be able to show a very strong hand. So it isn't necessary for North to bid with a lousy 7 points and I would pass. East's hand meets the criteria for bidding 1NT, which should end the auction. (Note: bidding after partner has doubled or overcalled is called "advancing." East is called the advancer.)

Play: South has no appealing lead. Leading the opponents' suit is usually poor, especially against notrump, as it is likely to help the opponents develop tricks in that suit. Leading away from aces in short suits is usually poor, as it gives up the chance to use your ace to capture one of declarer's honors. I would lead a diamond because it seems safest, but I wouldn't be happy about it because it's unlikely to help our side develop tricks and it may be leading into declarer's diamond honors. Declarer

can count four diamond tricks and needs to develop more. One trick can come from spades even if NS score both the Ace and Queen, but there's no hurry to take those tricks now, and taking them might help NS develop a length trick in spades. There's also no hurry to take the diamond tricks, and taking them may disrupt EW communication. So I suggest playing clubs, as EW are more likely to develop tricks in a 5-2 suit than a 5-1. It's not clear to me how the play will go in clubs nor how many tricks EW will end up with.

Lesson: Overcalling and advancing. Finding the best chance to develop tricks.

Board 8 West deals, Neither Vulnerable

Bidding: North will open 1D. East has a good hand but the wrong shape for a takeout double, so the bidding will be between North and South. It will likely start

1d-1h

2c-?

and it's not clear whether South should pass or bid 2h. South does not have the strength to bid 2n, which would show an invitational hand of about 11-12 points. I think passing is better because, in a club contract, South will likely score extra tricks by ruffing diamonds. So I think the contract will be either 2C by North or 2H by South.

Play: Playing in clubs, NS should try to ruff some diamonds before pulling trump.

Lesson: Stay low on misfit hands. Delay pulling trump if you want to ruff.

Board 9 North deals, EW vulnerable

Bidding: It's likely that N will open 1D and S will respond 1S. That leaves N with no good rebid. A rebid of 1N understates the strength; a rebid of 2C overstates the length of the clubs; a rebid of 2D overstates the diamonds and understates the strength; and a rebid of 2H is a reverse and overstates the strength of the hand. See <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/reverses-by-the-opening-bidder-after-a-1-level-response> for a discussion of reverses. With North's hand I would rebid 2C on the theory that it's better to lie about a minor suit than lie about a major suit or strength and 2C is South's only rebid that doesn't lie about strength. Other mentors disagree. South is relieved to be able to pass.

Play: Whatever East leads, NS will want to score one or two power tricks in hearts and a few other tricks by ruffing spades in one hand and diamonds in the other. NS will also want to lead up to the spade king at some point. Leading the spade will establish a spade trick if East has the ace and may also allow North to ruff a spade. North should use his entries to accomplish those things and try to score ruffs before pulling trump.

Lesson: reverses, leading up to honors, delaying pulling trump

Boards 10-12 Michael Lavine

Board 10 East deals, Both vulnerable

Bidding

South will open 1c; EW will stay silent; and the bidding should start 1c-1s; 1n. Then North has to decide whether to treat this as a weak hand or a hand worth a game invitation. Some authors write that responder should invite game with 10 points. Others write that an invitation requires 11 points. This hand has 10 hcp plus a strong spade suit that might be developed for additional tricks if South's hand fits well. I think it's a close call. Personally, I would treat the hand as weak.

If N treats the hand as weak then there is a second decision: whether to pass 1n or rebid 2s. Rebidding one's suit normally shows 6+ cards. Rebidding a 5-card suit risks playing in a 5-1 fit because South's distribution could be 1=4=3=5. (Note: rebidding a 5-card heart suit does not pose such a risk. In the auction 1m-1h; 1n, opener promises at least two hearts because opener cannot have 4 cards in the unbid major.) Personally, I would pass 1n.

If N treats the hand as invitational then she would rebid 2d, New Minor Forcing (NMF) (Pairs who play two-way NMF would rebid 2c.) and South would admit to having three spades. In my opinion, South is on the borderline between a maximum and a minimum. Bad features are

that South has only 13 hcp and 4333 distribution; good features are that there are no questionable quacks; there are three tens; there are three quick tricks; and all South's points appear to be working. So NS might play in either game or a partial and might even make 10 tricks on a good day.

Play

Playing in spades, East is likely to lead a club. North wants to start spades by leading from dummy. North also wants to finesse in hearts and, whether it wins or loses, discard a diamond on dummy's fourth heart. North expects to win either 3 or 4 spades, 2 clubs, either 3 or 4 hearts and either 0 or 1 diamond for a total of 8–11 tricks. North should not lead up to the diamond king until the fourth heart is taken, else NS risk losing 3 diamonds instead of only 2. To get things going, N might win the first club in dummy and immediately lead a spade. West will win and, not wanting to lead into dummy's red honors, return a club. North can win, pull trump, and finesse in hearts. The finesse loses and the diamond ace is offside, so NS should lose a spade, a heart, and two diamonds while winning nine tricks. The same nine tricks are available in notrump.

Board 11 South deals, Neither vulnerable

Bidding

South passes; West opens 2h; N overcalls 2s; and East passes. So much seems straightforward. Should South

bid now? Here's what Larry Cohen says at <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/simple-overcalls>: "A 1NT advance is approximately 8-11 points, 2NT is approximately 12-14. 3NT is more. The exact range depends on overcall style and vulnerability." But he's talking about the case where partner has overcalled at the one level. On this hand, partner has overcalled at the two level, which shows at least close to an opening hand. We have 10 points and partner could easily have the 15+ points needed for us to have a game. So I think an advance to 2nt is warranted. North has minimal points and a suit that will need more than a little help to set up. So North should either pass 2n or correct to 3s. In either case, NS stop short of game.

Play

Playing in spades, East will lead the singleton heart. The defense will take the first three tricks and later score the spade king. Playing in notrump, West will lead a spade, probably a low one, hoping to dislodge South's heart stopper and, further, that East will get in later and be able to play a second heart. Unfortunately for the defense, East doesn't have a second heart and NS may score 5 spades, 1 heart, 1 diamond, and 3 clubs.

Board 12 West deals, NS vulnerable

Bidding

The EW bidding will start 1c-1s; 1n. West's 1n rebid will quash any dreams East might have had about slam.

Even if West has a perfect 1n bid, with the spade ace, the heart king, and the diamond AQ, that still comes to only 11 tricks. A 12th trick might be available, but it would take a perfect West hand, so East should settle for game. East's spade suit is good enough to play opposite a singleton, so E might just blast 4s. Or, East could bid NMF first and then bid 4s.

Play

South will lead the heart king. East can count nine obvious tricks and must somehow develop a tenth. It could come from a diamond ruff or from knocking out the club AQ and establishing the ten. What about an 11th trick? I would try this: win HA and lead a club. Assuming S plays low, guess whether to play king or ten from dummy. On this hand, either works. But assuming North can win the club trick cheaply, NS do best to take their heart and lead a trump. Win in East, take diamond AK and ruff a diamond. Come to hand with a club ruff (That's why you played a club earlier.) and ruff the fourth diamond. Come back to hand with another club ruff and pull trump. Voila, 11 tricks even if you misguess clubs.

Boards 13-15 Ray McEntee

Board 13 North deals, Both vulnerable

Using the rule of 20 North should open one club. East has an easy Michaels bid with five- five in the majors. South will pass. West obviously likes spades and the question is should he bid 2S, non-forcing or 3S, preemptive, using

the Law of Total Tricks, also non-forcing.

The play: East sees a possible trump loser, 2 minor suit ace losers and the possibility of a club ruff because South is likely to have one club at most. South will probably lead 4th best diamond; North wins his ace, cashes his club ace, continues clubs giving South a ruff, and later South gets the trump king. 4 tricks for N/S.

Board 14 East deals, Neither vulnerable

Bidding possibly goes P-(1D)-1S-(P)-2S passed out. If West bids only 1S N might make a negative double. East might cue bid 2D showing a limit raise. Or, instead of 1S West can make a weak jump overcall of 2S.

From Bridge Bum: A weak jump overcall shows 5-10 high card points, although vulnerability too is a consideration. For instance, it may be advisable to pass rather than preempt at unfavorable vulnerability with only 5 points.

From Larry

Cohen, <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/jump-overcalls>: If you would open a weak two-bid, then you can make a jump two-level overcall. If you would open with a three-level preempt, then you can make a three-level jump overcall.

The play: North leads the diamond 8 (top of nothing) – partner's suit. South wins, returns a heart, again top of nothing. North switches to a club giving South 2 club tricks with the trump ace still to come. Making 2.

Board 15 South deals, NS vulnerable

Bidding: 12 hcp, 5-card major. Open it, 1S. North, 13 hcp, 5-card major, bid it. Note 2H shows 5 in this auction. South supports and North bids game.

The play: Counting losers you need to get rid of North's little clubs. Counting winners there are 5H + 3 aces. Either way North needs to develop spades. You'll need entries to dummy to establish and run spades, so you can't afford to pull trump immediately. I would start with two rounds of spades — ace and ten. East wins the queen. What does East return? If E returns a club, declarer can let it run to the queen. If East returns a diamond or a heart, N can win in hand, play three rounds of trump ending in dummy, and take a ruffing finesse in spades. At some point West will cover with the king, N will ruff, and N will return to dummy with the club ace. N will be able to discard two clubs on the good spades. N will lose 1 spade, 1 diamond, and 1 club. N will win 5 hearts, 3 aces, and two long spades.

Boards 16-18 Morris Weinberger

Board 16 West deals, EW vulnerable

Bidding: West has 5-card suits in both clubs and hearts; however, with only 6 high card points passes. North has a

weak 7-card diamond suit and otherwise flat distribution. However, with favorable vulnerability and using the rule of 2, 3, and 4 (See <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/rule-of-234>, https://www.bridgebum.com/rule_of_two_three_four.php, or <http://rpbridge.net/3j00.htm> for discussion of when and how high to preempt.), North could open 3D; 2D is a bit more conservative, but an alternative. In either case, East passes with 10 high card points. If North opens 3D, South with 19 high card points and great diamond support, will bid 5D. If North opens 2D, South bids 2NT asking for a feature and looking for 3NT if North has a club stopper. North bids 3D, denying an outside A or K. South bids 5D as slam is out of the picture.

Play of the hand in 5D: East will be underleading from an honor and will likely choose spades, which South lets ride to the jack. North leads a heart to the A and leads the diamond queen, only to discover the 3-0 diamond break. South wins the A in dummy, leads a spade, finessing if East plays the king. South plays another high spade, discarding a club. South then leads the top two hearts, discarding the remaining club and West trumping with the 8. Regardless of what East returns, the defense only gets two diamond tricks, making 5. Note that if East's opening lead is the low club, the contract goes down one, losing two club tricks and one diamond trick.

Board 17, North deals, Neither vulnerable

Bidding: Despite having a shapely hand, with only 11 points (3 of which are singleton or doubleton honors), North passes. With a 7-card suit headed by three of the top four honors, East opens 3 clubs. South cannot show this two-suited hand. With the adage “6-5 come alive” and being non-vulnerable, South must choose whether to bid diamonds or spades. Because the diamond suit is longer 3D seems reasonable. West, with strength in diamonds and a singleton in partner’s suit, passes, as do North and East.

Play of the hand in 3D: West leads the singleton 10 of clubs, and when North plays low, East plays the Jack in case South decides to pitch rather than ruff. South ruffs and leads a low spade to the Queen, which West wins. West has a difficult lead and chooses a diamond, hoping to cut down on the cross ruff in spades and clubs. South plays low from dummy and wins in hand with the 10. South ruffs a low spade in dummy. South then plays the Ace of hearts followed by a low heart, East winning the Queen. East then plays another heart, South ruffing. South then plays diamonds from the top, with West eventually winning tricks with the King and Queen, making 3 diamonds.

Board 18, East deals, NS vulnerable

Bidding: East and South pass. With 20 high-card points

and 5-5 in hearts and clubs, West opens 2 clubs. After North passes, East bids 2D (waiting). After South passes, West bids 2 hearts, which East raises to 4H.

Play of the hand in 4H: North leads the queen of spades, and N-S take the first two tricks ending in South. With no appealing lead, South tries a heart. West takes the top two hearts followed by the top 2 clubs, and a club ruff (to protect against the likely 4-2 split); the remaining heart in dummy is high and cannot be overruffed. Declarer plays a diamond to the A, draws the last trump, and claims, making 5.