

3 0	N North	W N E S
	♠	values, GF P
	♥	2♣ 3♥ P 5♥
	♣	6♣ P
W West	E East	
♠	♠ 87632	
♥	♥ AJ4	
♦	♦ J8	
♣	♣ K54	
	S South	
	♠	
	♥	
	♦	
	♣	

On Board 3, East faces difficult bidding decisions.

(1) Would you make a bid instead after 3H?

(2) Do you pass 6S, or do you raise partner to 7S?

(1) I prefer the values-showing pass to 3S due to the anemic spade suit. I think bidding 3NT is also a reasonable option. 3NT is not the most descriptive call ever, but it does have the advantage of leaving us better placed if South further jams up the auction.

(2) Is our hand good enough for a grand? One way to evaluate our hand is to visualize the hands partner might have for their bidding. And to do that, we need to know the *options* available to partner during the bidding.

After making a values-showing pass in response to interference of the 2C auction, we are in a forcing situation, meaning we must either declare the hand or double the opponents. Partner could have passed after 5H, waited for us to double, *then* bid their spade suit, which in general shows a stronger hand than a direct bid.

Thus, partner had the following *four* options available, in order of increasing playing strength: bid 5S, pass-then-bid 5S, bid 6S, pass-then-bid 6S. (The 6S bids also imply 1st-round control of all suits, since they deny us the ability to cuebid.) I expect partner to hold 11 to 11.5 playing tricks. I also expect to contribute 1.5 tricks with the HA and CK, not to mention the great trump support, and I would bid the grand.

The full deal:

3 0	N North	W N E S
	♠ 9	values, GF P
	♥ KQ962	2♣ 3♥ P 5♥
	♦ 532	6♣ P P
	♣ 9762	
W West	E East	
♠ AKQJ105	♠ 87632	
♥ A104	♥ AJ4	
♦ AQJ10	♦ J8	
	♣ K54	
	S South	
	♠ 4	
	♥ 108753	
	♦ KQ976	
	♣ 83	
	64 W	NS: 0 EW: 0

It appears to me that West overbid slightly while East underbid. As it turned out, the grand is rather difficult to bid confidently even in the absence of enemy interference, since the critical 13th trick comes from ruffing a diamond in dummy, which is nigh impossible to diagnose in time using natural bidding methods.

7 0	N North	W N E S
	♠	P 1♠ P 2♠
W West	♥	P P X P
♠ 32	♦	3♦ 3♠ P P
♥ K753	♣	
♦ 96543		
♣ K8	E East	
	♠	
	♥	
	♦	
	♣	
	S South	
	♠ AK106	
	♥ Q92	
	♦ QJ10	
	♣ Q63	
	3♠ N NS: 0 EW: 0	

On Board 7, partner leads the DA against an enemy partscore of 3S. You discourage with the D9, and partner switches to the CJ-Q-K-2. You continue with the C8-4-7-3. Now what?

(Use the link <http://tinyurl.com/g8fp4l> to follow the play.)

It seems straightforward enough to put partner in with the DK and let partner cash the CA—or is it?

We know partner probably has four clubs from the play. Partner should also have four hearts; with three hearts or less, they could have balanced with 2NT instead as takeout for the minors. Declarer's shape is very likely to be exactly 5=2=2=4.

If partner has the DK, we can assume declarer's hand to be

Qxxxx (or Qjxxx)
 Ax (or AJ)
 xx
 xxxx

If we return a diamond, partner cashes the DK and CA and plays another club. If declarer is missing the SJ (unlikely), they have a guess to make. They might, for example, ruff high, cash the SA, and finesse the S9 to end up down 2. In any case, declarer can pitch a heart on dummy's last diamond—the HK is not going to take a trick.

Is it possible that partner does *not* have the DK? It depends on your partner's frequency of leading unsupported Aces—although sometimes, even those who say never don't have much of a say in the matter. Partner's hand could very well be

Qx / Axxx / Axx / AJTx

If that is the case, you will need to return a *heart*, lest declarer pitches a heart loser on a diamond and escapes for down one.

Which scenario is more likely? Your guess is as good as mine, though for a diamond return to succeed, declarer has to be missing the SJ *and* subsequently guess wrong. It seems to me that a heart return is the percentage play.

The full deal is shown on the right. Note that partner could have spared us the headache by overtaking the club and playing another, which would allow us to signal the presence of the HK.

7 0	N North	W N E S
	♠ Q9754	P 1♠ P 2♠
♥ 106	P P X P	
♦ K7	3♦ 3♠ P P	
♣ 9542		
W West	E East	
♠ 32	♥ J8	
♥ K753	♠ AJ84	
♦ 96543	♥ A82	
♣ K8	♣ AJ107	
	S South	
	♠ AK106	
	♥ Q92	
	♦ QJ10	
	♣ Q63	
	3♠ N NS: 0 EW: 0	