

COMPETING AGAINST OPPONENTS' OPENING

By Roger Lord

Hand A. You hold: S A874 H K1062 D QJ94 C 3. Your RHO (Right-Hand Opponent) opens one club. What call do you make?

Hand B. You hold: S A87 H K106 D Q764 C KJ7. Your RHO opens one club. What call do you make? Possible actions on each of these hands are: pass, or one of a suit, or a takeout double. With Hand A., the great majority of experts would choose to double. With Hand B., more experts would pass than bid or double. Yet Hand A. contains just 10 HCP, whereas Hand B. contains 13 HCP. How does this dichotomy arise?

In early-round bidding, the focus often is locating a fit, preferably eight or more cards of a suit held by a partnership, with emphasis on the majors. On hand A., where the slight chance that no eight-card fit exists, the partnership is obligated to bid only to the one-level. (Alternatively, doubler's partner may pass one club doubled with five or more clubs and no four-card suit to bid.) Instead, if you pass initially over one club, when the auction comes around again, the level may be too high to compete safely. Suppose we place the following hand as partner's, across from Hand A.: S K953 H A8 D K852 C J42. After a double by North, the auction might proceed:

West	North	East	South
1 club	double	pass	2 spades*
pass	3 spades	pass	4 spades
all pass			

*This jump bid by doubler's partner is invitational, non-forcing
Four spades has a good chance to make.

Meanwhile, with Hand B., a hidebound point-count bidder who doubles one club might encounter partner's cards such as: S K943 H A95 D J632 C 84, with which it may be difficult to get to a diamond partial. You're better off passing and defending two clubs or whatever the opponents land in. The key is that Hand B. holds three clubs, a liability in opener's suit, whereas Hand A. has a small singleton club, a desirable asset.

Cover the East-West cards and play four spades with the spade jack opening lead. The bidding is shown above. Assume normal distribution.

Dealer: West
Vulnerable: N/S

	North	
	♠ A874	
	♥ K1062	
	♦ QJ94	
	♣ 3	
West		East
♠ J10		♠ Q62
♥ Q73		♥ J954
♦ A7		♦ 1063
♣ AQ10876		♣ K95
	South	
	♠ K953	
	♥ A8	
	♦ K852	
	♣ J42	

Opening lead: Spade Jack

Did you win the first trick with dummy's ace? Your general plan should be to ruff clubs in the dummy, and to do that, you will need the spade king for a later entry to your hand. Win the spade ace, give up a club, and win the spade continuation with your king (spades break 3-2). Ruff a club, return to your hand with the heart ace, and ruff your last club.

Now, leaving the high trump outstanding, start playing diamonds—first, the queen, then the king (allowing them to take their ace along the way), and finally a finesse of the nine if necessary (it wasn't). You are in control for 10 tricks. Opponents are entitled to just one club, the diamond ace and one trump.

COMPETITIVE BIDDING QUIZ

You are South in all cases. The answers will appear on subsequent pages.

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. S 75 H KQ74 D A106 C KJ107 | West
1 Spade | North
Pass | East
1NT | South
? |
| 2. S Q8 H AJ7 D KJ92 C A743 | East
1 Diamond | South
? | | |
| 3. S K95 H AKQ1062 D 10 C A74 | East
1 Diamond | South
? | | |
| 4. S AKJ7 H 86 D 6 C AJ8542 | East
1 Diamond | South
? | | |
| 5. S AQJ9 H KQ102 D ---- C AKJ107 | East
1 Diamond | South
? | | |
| 6. S AKQ109 H J753 D KQ C 92 | East
1 Club | South
? | | |
| 7. S K1097 H 3 D A1082 C J983 | West
1 Heart | North
Pass | East
2 Hearts | South
Pass
? |
| 8. S A874 H 83 D K10 C K7632 | West
1 Heart | North
Pass | East
1 Diamond
2 Diamonds | South
Pass
? |
| 9. S A106 H QJ76 D Q72 C A86 | West
1 Club | North
Pass | East
Pass | South
? |
| 10. S J1097 H 3 D Q8642 C AK10 | West
1NT
2 Hearts | North
Pass
Pass | East
2 Diamonds*
Pass | South
Pass
? |
- *Transfer to Hearts

11. AQ1087 H KQ982 D 86 C J	East	South		
	1 Diamond	?		
12. S A7 H AJ1096 D K8743 C 5	West	North	East	South
	1 Club	Pass	1 Spade	?
13. S QJ975 H 8 D AK1097 C K6	West	North	East	South
	2 Hearts	Pass	3 Hearts	?
14. S A102 H K92 D Q10 C K9865	East	South		
	1 Diamond	?		
15. S AKJ10754 H AQ D KJ10 C 7	East	South		
	1 Diamond	?		
16. S AKJ10754 H AQ D KJ10 C 7	East	South		
	2 Hearts	?		

Here are the answers to the bidding quiz. You are South in each question.

1. Double, with support for unbid suits, regardless of whether one notrump is forcing.
2. Pass. Assuming opponents have heard of penalty doubles, you're better off not sticking your neck out by overcalling one notrump on these scattered values. Don't even consider double without support for spades.
3. Double. This is an old-fashioned standard double, which will be followed by a new suit bid (hearts) showing a good, long suit plus 17 HCP or greater.
4. Two clubs. Not a good enough suit or hand to double and rebid clubs. You may get another chance to bid spades.
5. Double. Don't let the void deter you. If partner passes one diamond doubled, it's probably your best spot. Otherwise, you will come back with a cuebid (or two).
6. One spade. Not good enough to double and rebid spades. The one spade overcall will get you to a 5-3 (or 5-4) spade fit, which might be lost if you double and partner bids hearts.
7. Double. Having passed originally, you should take action even in direct seat. It's a type of balancing bid. The principle is to compete aggressively when both sides have—or probably have—fits. Since you may have strained to act when you have shortness in opponents' suit, partner should not get carried away.
8. Pass. Opponents have not limited their hands, and they have not announced a fit. It's too dangerous to bid now.
9. One notrump, a balancing bid which shows about 11-15 HCP. With length in their bid suit, do not double, even with length in a major. Incidentally, in the passout seat, a double and then a rebid of notrump shows a bigger hand.

10. Double. Don't let the fact that one opponent has a strong notrump hand scare you out of the auction. Based upon opponents' having limited their hands, you are basing your balancing action partially on your partner's presumed high cards as well as your own cards plus distribution.
11. Two diamonds, a Michaels cuebid announcing five cards of both majors.
12. Double, for takeout of hearts and diamonds. Michaels is off the chart. After two suits have been bid, modern practice deems an overcall of either suit to be natural. Thus, one club—pass—one spade—two clubs, or one club—pass—1 spade—two spades show six cards or longer in clubs or spades respectively.
13. Double. Partner should strain to bid spades, even with a three-card holding. Your hand is not sufficient to cuebid four hearts, nor are your spades strong enough to name unilaterally at the three level.
14. Don't touch that club! Pass in tempo. Our favorite opponents, by their weak overcalls, enable responder to trap-pass and then pass opener's reopening double for 800 or more.
15. Double, followed, of course, by a game bid or a game force. Alternatively, you could chance a mere one spade overcall, and if this is not passed out, you would be well-placed. By the way, a direct (first-round) overcall of four spades rates a zero. Jump overcalls at any level are generally played as preemptive and deficient in outside honors. If you make a preemptive overcall of four spades, you'll never reach a slam.
16. Four spades. We do not preempt over a preempt. Over the opponents' preempt, the higher we bid, the better our hand.