

With nobody vulnerable East deals and passes.

	<u>South</u>	
	♠ Q62	
	♥ K8652	
	♦ AJ	
	♣ Q42	

Do you bid? Why or why not?

12 high card points are normally enough to open. This is a rather poor collection of 12 points, with Qxx holdings in two suits, and poor spot cards. To be honest, this hand is arguably just a bit too crappy to open in a 2/1 system. My opponents at the table are a strong pair however, and I have no desire to give them a free rein in the auction. So despite my conscience niggling me to pass, I bid 1H anyway. West passes smoothly, partner bids 2H, and East comes back in with 2NT. This shows both minor suits, asking West to pick a minor. I'd normally expect East to have at least 5 cards in each minor.

Do you bid? Why or why not?

I have told my story with my initial 1H bid (ok, so I may have over told that story a bit) so there is no reason to bid a second time. And lacking a 6th heart, I should not rebid 3H. I trust that if partner has 4 or more hearts, he will compete on a hand that justifies that action. West bids 3D, which is passed by all at the table.

West	North	East	South
---	---	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	2 ♥	2NT	Pass
3 ♦	All Pass		

Partner leads the heart jack, and a somewhat unexpected dummy comes down.

<u>Dummy</u>	
♠	AK
♥	A43
♦	T952
♣	JT65
<u>South</u>	
♠	Q62
♥	K8652
♦	AJ
♣	Q42

East chose to pass initially, but then I think had second thoughts, and decided to get back into the auction. When North can bid only 2H, East decided that West might have some values, and since we are known to have at least 8 cards in hearts, West can have no more than a doubleton there. This increases the probability that they have a fit in one of the minors, although West could easily be 5233 in shape with weak spades, and be unwilling to overcall 1S.

Personally, I'd argue that East had a better hand to open the bidding than to re-enter with an under-shaped 2NT, but I must now defend the contract as it was bid.

What do you know about the hand before you play to trick one? How many HCP in each hand?

Partner should have roughly 6 to 9 points, so that leaves declarer with 7 to 10 points.

What else?

West has the doubleton queen of hearts.

How do I know this?

Partner lacks the queen since he led the jack, so West has the queen. Partner has at least 3 hearts, but if he had a 4th card in hearts, he would have competed to 3H. So West has the doubleton queen.

Partner has the heart jack, and at most the spade jack, so partner has 4 to 8 points in the minor suits. I temporarily guess that he has something like both minor suit kings.

Why do I guess this?

If partner had the AK in clubs, he might have led one of them. This strongly reduces the odds that partner has both missing club honors. And if partner has both missing diamond honors, then West might have preferred clubs with a weak diamond suit. So I'm betting that North has one honor in each minor suits. (Yes, this was the deduction I made at the table. **You should be thinking the same way when you play a hand.**) **Be willing to revise your assessment of a hand later on in the play as things change, but look for the most likely holding, and then play for that.**

At trick one, West thinks for a second or so, and then ducks. I know he has the queen, and I doubt he

would duck with a stiff queen, so I have more evidence that West has a doubleton queen. I fly up with the king, as ducking would prevent me from taking any tricks at all in hearts. At the same time, I know that this gives West a pitch in hearts on the ace. Declarer follows suit with the 9 of hearts under my king.

How many diamonds does West have?

With a decent 6 card suit, West may have had just enough points to overcall 2D. This makes West slightly more likely to have only 4 or 5 diamonds. Can West have only a 3 card suit? That would mean he is 5233 in shape, which is possible, but then he might have chosen to bid 3C over 2NT. Restricted choice makes that event less likely since he DID bid 3D. (Yes, restricted choice does apply in this context.) I think that West most probably has 4 or 5 diamonds, and from my previous argument, one honor in each minor suit.

It is possible however that North chose to lead the heart jack from JTx, despite holding the AK in clubs. Since I don't wish to see a club trick evaporate on a heart, I choose to switch to the club deuce. Anyway, spade, heart or diamond returns are not terribly appealing with that dummy, so I exit with a small club.

West wins the ace of clubs, as North plays the 7 spot. We play upside down attitude, so is the 7 a low card? Only the club trey is missing that is smaller than the 7, while the 8 and 9 are also out, so I bet that partner was signaling that he likes clubs, so he does probably have the club king. **(Update your mental estimates of the card placement as the hand unfolds! Do this continually with the play.)**

West has a plan though. He cashes the heart queen, North playing the 7. Then a spade to dummy, and he cashes the heart ace to pitch the club 3 spot. I'm disappointed to see that loser go away, but there was nothing I could do. I will pray that declarer has at least one more club to lose, and possibly two more.

Declarer now exits from dummy with the diamond 10 spot.

Should I duck here?

The standard rule is second hand low, but rules are meant to be broken. We have only taken one trick so far, but I hope to take a club and a diamond. A second club or a second diamond is possible, but no spade tricks, so I think we cannot set this contract. We must take a 4th trick if I hope to get a decent score at all though.

Suppose I play the jack. If declarer has the queen of diamonds, he will cover my honor, and we will never get more than 2 tricks in trumps, but then we were always going to get those two tricks. If declarer has the king of diamonds, then I expect that partner surely has the queen, since partner raised me before. In that case, if partner started with Qxx in diamonds, then we will always get two trump tricks. There is only one case where what I do will matter here.

Suppose that declarer started with Kxxxx in diamonds?

What does that leave as Partner's Diamond holding?

Then partner had Qx. Now I have a valid play for an extra trick that will not cost me anything if it does not work.

Suppose I win the ace of diamonds, and then play a 4th round of hearts? This will allow partner to trump in with the queen I hope he has, and dummy cannot over ruff.

What's wrong with this plan?

The problem is if I do make that play, declarer can pitch a losing club if he has one. So I must first cash the club queen. This line appeals to me. It offers a chance to make an extra trick on a very possible layout of the cards.

I do win the ace of trumps. Then I cash the club queen, while holding my breath. Declarer follows suit with the 9 spot, partner playing the 8. All that is left is to play a round of hearts. Declarer discards a spade, but that costs us nothing, since he could ruff his spade losers in dummy. At partner's turn to play, he ruffs in with the diamond queen we have promoted by forcing declarer to play before partner. If declarer ruffs high, then we score a high trump. If declarer ruffs low, then partner can over ruff. The hand is now over. Declarer can claim the remainder of the tricks, but we have held him to 9 tricks for a -110 score.

This is worth 5 out of 8 matchpoints, compared to 2.5 matchpoints earned by those where declarer made 10 tricks for 130. The difference is significant.

GHH 30 10/23/12		North ♠ T8753 ♥ JT7 ♦ Q3 ♣ K87		Dealer: East Vulnerability: None																																								
West ♠ J94 ♥ Q9 ♦ K8764 ♣ A93		East ♠ AK ♥ A43 ♦ T952 ♣ JT65																																										
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I'm a bit surprised that East passed initially, and had I chosen to simply pass on the board, we would probably have earned a top score for a pass out! West will probably pass, as will partner. So take this board as a lesson. I SHOULD have passed in second seat with this hand, so earning us a top for the board. But once I did not pass, I had to find the right defense to hold them to 9 tricks to salvage a good score.

Is the East hand good enough to open the bidding? It has 12 high card points, 3 quick tricks, 2 tens and a 9. The problem with the East hand, is it has the honors in short suits. A doubleton AK in spades is a terribly poor place to locate 58% of your high card points. The A43 in hearts is less useful than it would be if the ace were in one of the minors here, where the ace would combine with those minor honors to potentially help set up length tricks. So while I can understand that East passed, that hand was arguably better than the 12-point hand I opened the bidding on. Note that both the East and South hands have 8 losers using the losing trick count. In fact, one might describe this hand as a **Grosvenor coup** in the

bidding, a hand where a poor decision by their side was counter-balanced by a poor decision on my part.

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