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IMPROVE YOUR GAME

RESPONDER'S STRATEGY

Suit Quality Test for Responder

Just as the Suit Quality Test is useful for overcalls, pre-empts and opener's rebid, so it can be used for responses and responder's rebids.

WEST **EAST**
 1♣ 4♥

WEST **EAST**
 1♦ 4♠

Responder's immediate jump to game should be based on a hand with seven playing tricks, about 6-9 HCP and a 7+ suit which has a Suit Quality of 10+

Beware of the 1♠: 4♥ sequence if you are using that as a splinter raise of spades. With a single-suiter (6+ suit) and 10 HCP or more, prefer to start with a simple change-of-suit response.

WEST **EAST**
 1♣ 1♥
 1♠ 3♥

Jump-rebid your suit to the three-level with 10-12 points and a suit quality below 10.

WEST **EAST**
 1♣ 1♥
 1♠ 4♥

Jump-rebid to game in your major with 10-12 points and a suit quality of 10+.

W **E**
 1♦ 1♠
 2♣ ?

EAST (1)
 ♠ K Q 8 6 5 3
 ♥ A 6 2
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ Q 7

EAST (2)
 ♠ K Q J 10 5 3
 ♥ A 6 2
 ♦ J 2
 ♣ 6 3

With (1), rebid 3♠. The suit quality of the spades is only 8. With (2), you have a suit quality 10 and should therefore rebid with a jump to 4♠.

Once you hit 13 HCP or more with a strong single suiter, your rebid will depend on whether opener made a narrow range rebid (e.g., rebid of suit opened) or with a wide-range rebid (change of suit). After opener has rebid the suit opened, it is sensible to play that a jump rebid by responder is forcing.

For example:

W **E**
 1♦ 1♠
 2♦ ?

EAST (1)
 ♠ K Q 8 6 5 3
 ♥ A 6 2
 ♦ A 2
 ♣ Q 7

EAST (2)
 ♠ K Q J 10 5 3
 ♥ A 6 2
 ♦ A 2
 ♣ 6 3

With (1), it could be very silly to jump to 4♠ (which might fail if opener is void or singleton in spades, with 3NT laydown). Jump to 3♠, forcing after opener's rebid in the suit opened. With (2) your spades are KQJ10xx and you should rebid 4♠.

When opener rebids with a change of suit, you can use fourth-suit forcing with strong hands. This allows the jump-rebid to be used for the 10-12 point hands and fourth-suit forcing for the stronger hands.

For example :

W	E	EAST (1)	EAST (2)
1♦	1♠	♠ A Q 8 6 5 3	♠ A Q J 10 5 3
2♠	?	♥ A 6 2	♥ A 6 2
		♦ A 2	♦ A 2
		♣ 7 2	♣ 7 2

Both of these are too strong for a rebid of 3♠. As opener may yet have a strong hand, you do not want to give up on slam chances. Use 2♥ fourth-suit forcing. Over opener's next bid of say, 2NT, 3♣ or 3♦, follow up with 3♠ on (1) and 4♠ on (2). The 3♠ rebid will be forcing: after fourth-suit, responder's next bid below game is forcing.

The same principle can apply after a jump-shift :

W	E	EAST (1)	EAST (2)
1♦	2♠	♠ K Q 8 6 5 3	♠ A Q J 10 5 3
3♠	?	♥ Q 6 3	♥ Q 6 3
		♦ A K	♦ A K
		♣ A J	♣ K 2

With (1), bid 3♠ while with (2), you should rebid 4♠, showing the self-sufficient suit. That may enable opener to bid on to a slam. If not prepared to stop in game, rebid 3♠ even with a suit SQ 10.

Fourth-Suit Forcing

WEST	EAST
1♠	2♠
2♥	3♦
?	

Where the fourth-suit bid comes at the three-level, it is sensible to play the sequence as forcing to game.

Where the fourth-suit bid occurs at the two-level, it is standard to play that a minimum rebid by opener can be passes but any rebid by responder below game is forcing.

WEST	EAST
1♦	1♠
2♣	2♥
?	

At this point, 2♠, 2NT, 3♣ or 3♦ by openers is not forcing. Over any of these, responder's 3♠ or minor-suit support is forcing.

WEST	EAST
1♦	1♠
2♣	3♥
?	

Opener's jump-rebid in the fourth suit is played as natural, showing at least 5-5 in the suits bid and forcing to game.

There is only one sequence where the fourth suit rebid occurs at the one-level.

WEST	EAST
1♣	1♦
1♥	1♠
?	

This sequence is played as natural and 1♠ is forcing, showing 4+ spades but only 6+ points (like 1♣ : 1♠ at once).

To create a fourth-suit action, you need to make a jump-rebid to 2♠ :

WEST	EAST
1♣	1♦
1♥	2♠
?	

The jump to 2♠ *denies* four spades, but shows 10+ points. Bidding continues as in a normal fourth-suit auction.

Raising opener's major

There are four basic hand types which responder wishes to convey :

- (1) The weak raise, 6-9 points
- (2) The pre-emptive raise, less than 10 HCP, 4+ trumps and an unbalanced hand.
- (3) The invitational raise, 13+ points
- (4) The game-forcing raise, 13+ points

Different approaches show these hand types in different ways. Obviously you and partner will need to decide which of these methods you wish to adopt.

Standard forcing raises

1♥ : 2♥ or 1♠ : 2♠ = 3+ support, 6-9

1♥ : 3♥ or 1♠ : 3♠ = 4+ support, 13+ points. If playing splinters, these raises deny a singleton or a void.

1♥ : 4♥ or 1♠ : 4♠ = the pre-emptive raise

The invitational 10-12 point raise is shown by changing suit and supporting opener on the next round, usually at the three-level.

Limit Raises

1♥ : 2♥ or 1♠ : 2♠ = 3+ support, 6-9 points

1♥ : 3♥ or 1♠ : 3♠ = 4+ support, 10-12 points

The invitational raise figures to be a balanced hand. With 10-12 points, 4+ support and a singleton or a void you have enough for game. With an unbalanced hand with 4+ trumps and below 10 points, you should use :

1♥ : 4♥ or 1♠ : 4♠ = the pre-emptive raise

That leaves the 13+ raise. In Acol, this is shown by a change of suit, followed by a jump to game when responder is in the 13-15 range (the 'delayed game raise') and by a jump shift followed by support when responder has 16+ points.

Growing in popularity is a response of 2NT to cover the 13+ raise. This is known as :

The Jacoby 2NT Response

This shows support for opener's major, 13 points or more and a balanced hand. (If unbalanced, use a splinter response.) With a natural 2NT response, change suit and follow up with 2NT (10-12 points) or 3NT (13-15 points). The 2NT response leaves the three-level available for opener to describe the hand further. For example, after 1♠ : 2NT —

3♣ / 3♦ / 3♥ = singleton or void in the suit bid

3♠ = moderate opening, 14-15 points, no shortage

3NT = strong opening, 16+ points, no shortage

4♣ / 4♦ / 4♥ = strong second suit (at least two of the top three honours in a 5-card or longer suit)

4♠ = minimum opening, 11-13 points

Other structures for opener's rebids are possible.

After opener's rebid, responder can sign off with a minimum 2NT or if the hands do not fit well (wasted honours opposite opener's short suit). With excess values or if the hands do fit well, responder can push on to slam, either by asking for aces / key cards or by starting a cue bidding sequence.

Whether the jump-raise is forcing or invitational, most experts agree that it should contain at least four trumps, even when playing 5-card majors. With only 3-card support, choose a change of suit sequence and support later.

Expert Methods

W E
1♠ ?

EAST (1)
♠ Q 8 6 5 3
♥ 6 2
♦ 9 7 2
♣ J 8 4

EAST (2)
♠ K 10 5 3
♥ 2
♦ A 7 4 2
♣ 6 5 3 2

Hand (1) has no suitable action in standard methods. With no short suit, a jump to 4♠ is not recommended and the strength is not close to a single raise to 2♠. Few would want to pass, however, with such excellent support. Hand 2 is very strong for a single raise, given the 4-card support and the singleton.

Some partnerships have adopted two pre-emptive raises. This is one such structure for 5-card majors:

1♥ : 2♥ or 1♠ : 2♠ = 6-9 points, 3-card support

1♥ : 3♥ or 1♠ : 3♠ = pre-emptive raise, 0-5 points, 4+ support (less than two defensive tricks) : Hand 1

1♥ : 4♥ or 1♠ : 4♠ = standard pre-emptive raise

To cover the stronger hand types, some use : Bergen Raises

1♥/1♠ : 3♣ = 6-9 points and 4+ support (Hand 2)

1♥/1♠ : 3♦ = 10-12 points and 4+ support

1♥/1♠ : 2NT = Jacoby 2NT raise

One advantage of this structure is that some scope exists for trial bids over the 3♣ and 3♦ replies. The theory underlying the 3♣ response is that strong players are sure to compete over 1♥ : 2♥ or 1♠ : 2♠. When you have at least nine trumps, it is worthwhile for your side to compete to the three-level. Therefore, if you know that you have nine or more trumps, you may as well commit your side to the three-level at once. There is also some pre-emptive value in the 3♣ response.

Another method which uses the above pre-emptive jump-raise to the three-level is —

Power Raises

To show the better hand types, the Power System uses :

2NT = 6-9 points, 4+ support (Hand 2)

Power 2♣ response (1♥ : 2♣ or 1♠ : 2♣) = artificial, 10-12 points.

Power 2♦ response (1♥ : 2♦ or 1♠ : 2♦) = artificial, 13+ points.

These artificial responses can be grafted on to any standard system. The strength is shown at once and you show the support on the next round. One benefit of the Power structure is there is plenty of room for trial bids after 1♥/1♠ : 2NT, and with the stronger hands, you may be able to set the trump suit at the two-level (e.g. 1♠ : 2♦, 2♥ : 2♠). This allows slam bidding sequences to start at the lowest possible level.

Bidding by a passed hand

If not playing the Drury Convention (see below), the standard approach for a passed hand is :

New suit at the one-level : Normal, 6+ points. This is not forcing (no natural bid by a passed hand is forcing) but opener should pass only with 3+ support. If the opponents re-open, as they almost always will, responder can bid on with the knowledge that opener has this 3+ support.

New suit at the two-level : 10-12 points with a suit of 5+ cards. The two-level change of suit denies primary support for opener. With 10-12 points and a 1-4-4-4, respond 2♣ to a 1♠ opening and hope for the best.

Jump-shift : 10-12 points, strong 5+ suit plus support for opener's suit

Jump-raise : 10-12 points with primary support

1NT : Normal, 6-9 points (bad 10s)

2NT : 11-12 points (good 10s). The 2NT response denies primary support for opener's major. Given the tendency of top players to make light third-seat openings, it is not very appetising to jump to 2NT with a non-fitting 10-12 points. That explains the popularity of the Drury 2♣ response to show a maximum passed hand.

Drury 2♣ guaranteeing support for opener

In this approach, 2♣ shows 10-12 points and primary support for opener's major. If not interested in game, opener signs off in the major. One advantage of this approach is that 2♦ over 2♣ is available as a trial bid. Another benefit is that opener can jump straight to game over 2♣ without giving the opponents any extra information.

If playing this version, the passed hand response of 2♦ (or 2♥ over 1♠) shows a maximum pass and a 5+ suit, while the jump to 3♣ shows a maximum pass with a 6+ suit. In each case, support for opener's major is denied.

The drawback is that there is still a problem when responder has 10-12 points with no support for opener and with no 5+ suit.

For example :

<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">W</td> <td>E</td> <td style="padding-left: 40px;">EAST (1)</td> <td style="padding-left: 40px;">EAST (2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>♠ 5 3</td> <td>♠ 6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1♠</td> <td>?</td> <td>♥ A K 6 2</td> <td>♥ A 8 7 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>♦ Q 7 2</td> <td>♦ Q 8 4 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>♣ Q 9 8 4</td> <td>♣ K Q 5 3</td> </tr> </table>	W	E	EAST (1)	EAST (2)		Pass	♠ 5 3	♠ 6	1♠	?	♥ A K 6 2	♥ A 8 7 2			♦ Q 7 2	♦ Q 8 4 2			♣ Q 9 8 4	♣ K Q 5 3			
W	E	EAST (1)	EAST (2)																				
	Pass	♠ 5 3	♠ 6																				
1♠	?	♥ A K 6 2	♥ A 8 7 2																				
		♦ Q 7 2	♦ Q 8 4 2																				
		♣ Q 9 8 4	♣ K Q 5 3																				

With each hand, East cannot respond 2♣ if that promises support for spades, while a bid of 2♥ on (1) or 2♦ on (2) should show a long suit. That leaves a response of 2NT, no thing of beauty in either case. Opposite a possible light opening in third seat, you do not want to travel too high.

Drury not promising support

In this approach, the 2♣ response by a passed hand does not guarantee support for opener's major but merely a maximum pass. Opener's reply to show a minimum or sub-minimum opening is 2♦.

Any reply other than 2♦ is natural and forcing to game. Responder can show support for opener with the rebid whether opener rebids 2♦ or not. On hands (1) and (2) above, responder would bid 2♣ and if opener bids 2♦, responder can continue with 2♥, showing only a 4-card suit. (With 10-12 points and a 5+ heart suit, responder would have bid 2♥ without support for opener.) If opener has fewer than three hearts, opener can rebid to try to locate a decent partscore.

WEST	EAST
	Pass
1♠	2♣
2♦	3♥

The jump to 3♥ after opener's 2♦ negative shows 5+ hearts and spade support as well. With only four hearts, rebid 2♥.

One plus for this approach is that a passed hand reply of 2♦ or 2♥ guarantees a 5+ suit. The 2NT response by a passed hand is not needed as a natural bid and can be used for 5-5 in the minors.

In both versions of Drury, the maximum pass with support travels through 2♣. The jump raise by a passed hand is then best played as pre-emptive (excellent support but less than 6 points).

Expert methods

Double Drury

You may wish to adopt the Power System's approach to passed hand bidding :

2♣ = Maximum pass, no support or poor support for opener's suit

2♦ = Maximum pass, good support for opener

Over 2♣, the negative response is 2♦ and over 2♦, the negative action is the signoff in the major. Over 2♦, opener can jump to game with suitable values

without disclosing anything further to the opponents. If responder has a maximum pass and long diamonds, responder can bid 2♣ and pass opener's 2♦ reply.

This approach enjoys the best of both Drury methods and has very few drawbacks. Also, the passed hand 2NT response can show both minors.

Weak Jump Shift Responses

If your system does not need strong jump shifts, you can use the jump shift for awkward weak hands. The jump shift to the two-level shows 0-5 points and a 6+ suit while the jump-shift to the three-level shows a 7+ suit (or a 6-card suit with a SQ of 9+) and 5-8 HCP. In each case, responder denies support for opener. A two-level response followed by a rebid of that suit (1♥ : 2♣, 2♦ : 3♣) would then show 9-11 HCP and a 6+ suit.

WEST	W	E	EAST
♠ 6 3	1♣	?	♠ Q J 9 8 7 5
♥ A K 7 2			♥ 8 3
♦ J 7 2			♦ 8 5 4
♣ A Q 5 4			♣ 3 2

Passing 1♣ should lead to two down at best. Being able to respond 2♠ figures to do somewhat better.

PARTNERSHIP BIDDING : Bid and discuss these hands with your favourite partner. West is the dealer each time.

WEST
 1.
 ♠ 3
 ♥ K 7 5
 ♦ A J 4 3 2
 ♣ A Q 3 2

EAST
 1.
 ♠ A 8 6
 ♥ Q 8 6 4 3
 ♦ K 9
 ♣ K 7 5

2.
 ♠ Q 7
 ♥ A 9 7 3 2
 ♦ A 7
 ♣ K 6 5 3

2.
 ♠ A K J 6 5 2
 ♥ 8
 ♦ K Q 3
 ♣ Q J 2

3.
 ♠ 9 4 3 2
 ♥ A K J 8
 ♦ 4
 ♣ K J 6 2

3.
 ♠ A 8 7 5
 ♥ 7 2
 ♦ K J 7 5 2
 ♣ 8 4

4.
 ♠ A J 9
 ♥ K J 6 2
 ♦ 4 3
 ♣ A 8 5 3

4.
 ♠ 7 5 2
 ♥ Q 5
 ♦ A K 9 6 5
 ♣ K J 4

5.
 ♠ 8
 ♥ K 8 2
 ♦ J 7 3
 ♣ A 8 6 3 2

5.
 ♠ 7 5 2
 ♥ Q 5
 ♦ A K 9 6 5
 ♣ K J 4

6.
 ♠ 7 3
 ♥ A 9 5 3
 ♦ Q J 6 2
 ♣ A 6 3

6.
 ♠ K Q 10 4 2
 ♥ Q J 7 2
 ♦ K 4
 ♣ 7 5

WEST
 1.
 ♠ A J 7 4 2
 ♥ K Q 3
 ♦ K 8 4 3
 ♣ 5

EAST
 1.
 ♠ K Q 8 6
 ♥ A J
 ♦ A 5 2
 ♣ 8 7 4 2

2.
 ♠ A J 7 4 2
 ♥ K Q 3
 ♦ K 8 4 3
 ♣ 5

2.
 ♠ K Q 8 6
 ♥ 8 7 4 2
 ♦ A 5 2
 ♣ A J

3.
 ♠ A K 7 4 3 2
 ♥ 9 6
 ♦ K 8 3
 ♣ A K

3.
 ♠ Q 9 8 6
 ♥ A K 3
 ♦ A 7 5
 ♣ 7 5 2

4.
 ♠ J
 ♥ Q 8 4 3 2
 ♦ Q 7
 ♣ A K J 7 4

4.
 ♠ A 7 6 2
 ♥ A K 9 6 5
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ Q 9

5.
 ♠ 4
 ♥ Q 8 4 3 2
 ♦ K 7
 ♣ A K 8 7 4

5.
 ♠ A 7 6
 ♥ A K 9 6 5
 ♦ A 3
 ♣ Q J 3

6.
 ♠ K Q 8 4 2
 ♥ Q J 7
 ♦ K 4
 ♣ Q 7 5

6.
 ♠ A J 9 7
 ♥ A 3
 ♦ A Q J 3
 ♣ 8 3 2

PLAY HANDS ON RESPONDER'S STRATEGY

Jacoby 2NT — Locating a missing queen

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

	NORTH	
	♠ 10 8	
	♥ Q J 8 5 4	
	♦ A 10 6	
	♣ A J 10	
WEST		EAST
♠ Q 7 6		♠ A K J 5 2
♥ 7		♥ 10 6 2
♦ Q 7 5 2		♦ 8 4
♣ 8 7 4 3 2		♣ Q 9 6
	SOUTH	
	♠ 9 4 3	
	♥ A K 9 3	
	♦ K J 9 3	
	♣ K 5	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	1♠	2NT
Pass	4♥	All pass	

Bidding : When playing Jacoby, the 2NT heart raise still applies after a 1♠ overcall. After a two-level overcall, however, 2NT would be natural and you bid the enemy suit with the game force raise. North has a minimum opening with no short suit and no strong second suit and shows that with the game rebid.

Lead : Ace of spades. Obvious choice.

Recommended play : West signals encouragement and East continues with the ♠K and a third spade ruffed by North. Trumps are drawn in three rounds, followed by the ♣K, ♣A and the ♣J ruffed in dummy. Declarer plays West for the queen of diamonds : cash the ♦K followed by the ♦J, letting the jack run if West plays low. When the diamond finesse works, declarer scores an overtrick.

Notes : (1) North's 4♥ is absolutely safe but the overtrick is essential to secure a good score. (2) There is no benefit in taking a club finesse either way. Even if this succeeds there is no useful discard. (3) It may seem attractive to play East, the bidder, for the ♦Q. North can place East with five spades for the overcall, three hearts (discovered when drawing trumps) and ♣Q-x-x (discovered on the play of the clubs). East therefore cannot hold more than two diamonds and so West began with 4+ diamonds. East could have ♦Q-x but you need a powerful reason to counter the 2-1odds in favour of West holding the queen. (4) On the hearts, West should discard two clubs. One diamond discard is safe but looks suspicious.

Jacoby 2NT — Setting up an endplay — Passive defence

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

	NORTH		EAST
WEST	♠ A 6 ♥ 6 5 3 2 ♦ A 9 7 5 3 ♣ Q 2	WEST	♠ K Q 10 9 7 ♥ A Q ♦ 6 4 ♣ A 7 5 4
	SOUTH		
	♠ 4 ♥ J 10 9 7 4 ♦ Q 10 8 ♣ 9 8 6 3		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Bidding : Although 2NT normally shows 13+ points, West should choose 2NT, given the excellent trump support. It would be far too timid to treat West as a limit raise. In standard Jacoby 3♠ by East = 14-15 points and 3NT = 16+ HCP. East is entitled to upgrade to 16 because there are no wasted honours and East has the best shape possible without a singleton or void. West is keen to sign off at the first opportunity and East has nothing to spare. Some pairs use 3NT as Blackwood after Jacoby 2NT. If so, opener repeats the major with 14+ HCP and no shortage.

Lead : Jack of hearts. The other suits are much riskier.

Recommended play : Win ♥A and play a heart to the king. Then lead the ♠J from dummy. If North plays low, continue with a second spade. North has to give declarer a ruff and discard or solve the diamond or club position.

Notes : (1) The hearts are cashed at once in order to endplay North if North began with singleton ♠A. (2) If ♠J is led from dummy, it is hard for North to rise with the ♠A (South might have ♠Q or ♠K bare). If North takes the first spade (e.g., the spade is led from the East hand), North should exit with a spade. Declarer should then tackle clubs. The normal play with this club combination is a first round finesse but even if South has the ♣Q, there is no useful discard on the fourth club. Here East should cash ♣A and then finesse ♣J. The second round finesse gives you a better chance to endplay North. In with the ♣Q, North has to give East a ruff and discard via a third heart or eliminate East's guess in diamonds. If East takes a first round club finesse, North should exit with the second club and let East guess the diamonds.

Jacoby 2NT — Slam technique

Dealer South : N-S vulnerable

NORTH
 ♠ A 2
 ♥ A Q 7 4
 ♦ K 7 2
 ♣ 9 7 6 2

WEST
 ♠ J 10 9 7
 ♥ 2
 ♦ J 10 8 6
 ♣ A Q 10 5

EAST
 ♠ 8 6 5 4
 ♥ 8 6 5
 ♦ Q 9
 ♣ K J 8 3

SOUTH
 ♠ K Q 3
 ♥ K J 10 9 3
 ♦ A 5 4 3
 ♣ 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♥	All pass	

Bidding : If you appreciate the value of splinters, you must also appreciate Jacoby 2NT which allows opener to show a short suit. If the bidding had started 1♥ : 3♥ (forcing), South would probably rebid 4♥ and it would be very tough to reach 6♥.

3♣ showed a singleton or void in clubs and with only one club loser and 4 outside losers, North could see the slam potential. Playing Roman Key Card Blackwood (Chapter 12) South would answer 4NT with 5♥ (two key cards but no trump queen).

Lead : Jack of spades. Prefer the stronger sequence.

Recommended play : South should win with the king of spades and lead the singleton club at once. Win any return, say a spade taken by the ace. Draw two rounds of trumps with ♥K and ♥J, cash ♠Q and discard a diamond from dummy, followed by ♦K, ♦A and a diamond ruffed with a top trump in dummy. Ruff a club to hand and ruff the last diamond in dummy. South has only trumps left.

Notes : (1) The slam is excellent with just 26 HCP and many pairs will stop in game. It is important to play the hand as safely as possible. You could ruff three clubs in hand but this line has no superiority unless the opponents start with two rounds of clubs, thus helping your entry position. (2) You could win ♠A, cash ♠K and ♠Q discarding a diamond, and follow with ♦K, ♦A, third diamond ruffed high in dummy. If you ruff low, you will be overruffed. However, it is slightly safer to draw two rounds of trumps before playing to ruff the diamonds as long as you keep two top trumps in dummy. (3) You must not start with three spades, ♥K, ♥J, ♦K, ♦A, diamond ruff because then you have no easy way back to hand. East can win the club exit and lead a third trump. Playing the club first solves this.

Rebid with a weak hand after Jacoby 2NT — Playing it safe

Dealer West : E-W vulnerable

	NORTH		EAST
	♠ 10 9 7 2		♠ A 4
	♥ 8 4		♥ A J 7 2
	♦ 9 8 4		♦ A K 10 7
	♣ K J 9 5		♣ 8 7 4
WEST		EAST	
♠ Q J 6		♠ A 4	
♥ K Q 9 6 5		♥ A J 7 2	
♦ Q J		♦ A K 10 7	
♣ Q 10 2		♣ 8 7 4	
	SOUTH		
	♠ K 8 5 3		
	♥ 10 3		
	♦ 6 5 3 2		
	♣ A 6 3		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1 ♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
4 ♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Bidding : West may have to check twice to ensure that this is worth an opening bid. It sure looks like 13 low card points. Over 2NT, West is anxious to bid 4 ♥. If ever there was a minimum opening, this is it. Although East has a strong hand, East has too many losers to push on over 4 ♥ which will usually be an 11-13 point 5-3-3-2 hand.

Lead : 10 of spades. A near-sequence is usually better than leading from a suit with broken honours or from a rag suit.

Recommended play : West rises with dummy's ♠A, draws trumps and then runs the diamonds, discarding two club losers. A spade is played and declarer makes eleven tricks, losing one spade and one club.

Notes : (1) A club lead would give the defence three tricks but North has no way of telling. (2) North's lead might be from K-10-9-x but it would be foolish for declarer to take the first round spade finesse. Firstly, it is not likely that North has led from the ♠K. Secondly, declarer has eleven safe tricks by rising with the ♠A. It is silly to jeopardise a normal contract when an overtrick is perfectly safe. Thirdly, other tables might receive a club lead and be held to ten tricks. Therefore, make sure of eleven. (3) If declarer received a trump lead or a diamond lead, declarer would draw trumps, cash the diamonds and discard two clubs. Later declarer could safely try the spade finesse for an extra trick.