



## Be Bold When Protecting

AFTER TWO passes, you are in the protective, or balancing seat. If you pass, the bidding is over. Because of this, you should generally be bolder and normal criteria for bids are loosened – hence why you are in what is sometimes referred to as ‘the Cheat Seat’.

Bold protecting can backfire, however. This is not so much because the opponents suddenly wake up and bid game (although that may happen if they unearth a fit that had remained hidden until your protection). Generally, if the opponents thought they could make game, you would not find yourself in the protective position (below game level). The main danger of protecting is that your side has insufficient values and no good fit and instead of bidding one more (which is what you normally hope they’ll do), the opponents stop off and double you.

Yes, you should worry a bit about this danger of being doubled after a light protection. But we are back to that familiar pairs principle: do not worry about the odd disaster if most of the time your action works out. It’s frequency of gain, not amount of gain, which is all-important at pairs: *how often*, not by *how much*.

Now, an exercise for you. You are West on the following auction with neither side vulnerable:

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♥	Pass	1♥
?			Pass

<b>Hand A</b> ♠ 9 7 4 3 2 ♥ 9 5 2 ♦ A J 8 5 ♣ K	<b>Hand B</b> ♠ Q 9 5 3 ♥ 8 5 ♦ K 7 4 2 ♣ A 9 6
<b>Hand C</b> ♠ A 10 ♥ 9 5 4 3 ♦ 9 8 ♣ K J 9 8 4	

### Answers

Hand A: you should protect with 2♠. Yes, you might be doubled in the proverbial voice of thunder and ‘go for a number’. Pay off to those rare occasions. Most of the time, you’ll push the opponents to 3♥. Maybe they will make it – in which case your protection has achieved nothing (but cost nothing); maybe, though, they’ll go down. And now your protection has gained handsomely. Note that your well-trained partner will not punish you by bidding on

to 3♠ over the opponents’ 3♥. Ever. He must remember that you couldn’t act over 1♥, so do not have a good hand.

Hand B: double. You were short of high cards to do this over 1♥, but the fact that the opponents have found a fit means that your side almost certainly has a fit (if the opponents have an eight-card fit, you will always have an eight-card – or better – fit too, unless you have three seven-card fits). And the fact that they have stopped at a low level means that your side likely holds close to half the points in the pack.

Hand C: 3♣. More dangerous than Hands A and B because you’re at the three level – and you would probably have reluctantly to pass if you were vulnerable. However, letting the opponents play undisturbed in 2♥ simply isn’t winning pairs tactics. Your four small hearts are interesting: partner rates to have a singleton. Therefore partner has twelve outside cards and you’d be very unlucky to find him with fewer than three clubs. If, after you bid 3♣, it goes (Double) – Pass – (Pass) – back to you, you’ve probably earned your side a zero. But those occasions will be far fewer than those where you push the opponents to 3♥, then beat it by a trick.

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Love All. Dealer South.

♠ J 2		♠ K 9 8 6 4
♥ K 7 2		♥ Q
♦ K J 5 3 2		♦ A 10 7 6
♣ 10 5 2		♣ 7 6 3
♠ A 10	♠ W N E S	♠ K 9 8 6 4
♥ 9 5 4 3		♥ Q
♦ 9 8		♦ A 10 7 6
♣ K J 9 8 4		♣ 7 6 3
		♠ Q 7 5 3
		♥ A J 10 8 6
		♦ Q 4
		♣ A Q

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass
3♣	Pass	Pass	3♥
All Pass			

West would have been able to scramble eight tricks in 3♣ (that's only minus 100 even if you're doubled), so South really had to bid on to 3♥ to try to score his +140. It was a nip and tuck affair.

West kicked off with the nine of diamonds – the ace of spades would be far too active (and would enable declarer to make nine tricks) – as would a club from the king around to declarer's ace-queen. The nine of diamonds ran to South's queen (East correctly ducking – play his ace on nothing and again there would be no way for the defence to win the requisite five tricks).

At trick two declarer led a spade (best), the trick going ♠3, ♠10, ♠J, ♠K. East switched to the six of clubs (the seven – then low – might be taken as top of a doubleton). Knowing the king was offside, declarer rose with the ace and led a second (low) spade, West winning with his now

bare ace.

Refraining from cashing the king of clubs (which would let declarer home), West accurately switched to a trump. Declarer beat East's queen with the ace and led a second diamond. East beat dummy's jack with the ace and led the seven of clubs, West beating declarer's queen with the king and then leading the jack, declarer ruffing.

We have reached this five-card ending, with declarer needing the rest of the tricks:

♠ —		♠ 9 8 6
♥ K 7		♥ —
♦ K 5 3		♦ 10 6
♣ —		♣ —
♠ —	♠ W N E S	♠ 9 8 6
♥ 9 5 4		♥ —
♦ —		♦ 10 6
♣ 8 4		♣ —
		♠ Q 7
		♥ J 10 8
		♦ —
		♣ —

Declarer can get tantalisingly close but cannot quite do it. Best is to lead the queen of spades, but West ruffs low. Dummy overruffs with the seven and a diamond is ruffed with the ten. The seven of spades is now ruffed with the king, but West holds nine-small of trumps over declarer's jack-eight and must score a further trick.

Down one and an 80% board. All those quiet good boards will more than compensate for the odd minus 500 or minus 800 when North holds the equivalent of: ♠ 8 5 2 ♥ J 6 2 ♦ 7 6 ♣ A Q 10 6 5 and stands on his chair and doubles 3♣ in a voice of thunder. □

## CAPTION COMPETITION



What do you mean, 'Find a lead'?

THE winner of our December competition, with the caption above, is Don Smedley of Aston-on-Trent, Derby, who will receive an elegant bridge mug from our sponsors, Bridge and Golf Gifts Direct (see page 11). Other excellent captions were: . . . and that is why you must never tell your wife what she should have led! (Tom Crawley, Cambs); See, Fido – we should have drawn our trumps! (Jill Entwistle); I played bridge all the time when I was at university (Jane Jones, Manchester); The Homeless Team said I had to be vulnerable before they can help (Dave Robinson, Yorks); If only I hadn't called my wife out of that double! (Frank Tomlin, Essex); Now, an ace counts as 4 points, a king as 3 . . . (John Shaw, Notts); and OK, so I ruff, what next? (Richard Perryman, Essex).

The cartoon for our new competition is below. Please send your bridgy captions (multiple entries accepted) to the Editor, *English Bridge*, 23 Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LR or by e-mail to [elena@ebu.co.uk](mailto:elena@ebu.co.uk) not later than 20th February 2012. **Don't forget to include your full postal address!**



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