

by Steve Moese

I received this email today from two good friends Veida and Judy.

Veida Wasserman

7:37 AM (6 hrs ago)

to me, Judy, Veida

<https://www.bridgebase.com/tools/handviewer.html?bbo=y&lin=pn|MJKCH.ogoogle.herreup.pattiejam|st%7C%7Cmd%7C2S469KH67QAD23QACT%2CS2JH23TD57TC2579A%2CS35TQH58KD6JC368K%2C%7Crh%7C%7Cah%7CBoard%2016%7Csv%7Ce%7Cmb%7Cp%7Cmb%7Cp%7Cmb%7C1D%7Cmb%7Cp%7Cmb%7C1N%7Cmb%7Cp%7Cmb%7Cp%7Cmb%7Cd%7Cmb%7C2D%7Cmb%7C2S%7Cmb%7Cp%7Cmb%7Cp%7Cmb%7Cp%7Cpc%7CD4%7Cpc%7CD2%7Cpc%7CDT%7Cpc%7CDJ%7Cpc%7CS3%7Cpc%7CS7%7Cpc%7CS9%7Cpc%7CSJ%7Cpc%7CH2%7Cpc%7CH5%7Cpc%7CH9%7Cpc%7CHQ%7Cpc%7CS4%7Cpc%7CS2%7Cpc%7CSQ%7Cpc%7CSA%7Cpc%7CC4%7Cpc%7CCT%7Cpc%7CCA%7Cpc%7CC3%7Cpc%7CC2%7Cpc%7CCK%7Cpc%7CCJ%7Cpc%7CH6%7Cpc%7CS5%7Cpc%7CS8%7Cpc%7CSK%7Cpc%7CC5%7Cpc%7CH7%7Cpc%7CH3%7Cpc%7CHK%7Cpc%7CH4%7Cpc%7CD6%7Cpc%7CD8%7Cpc%7CDQ%7Cpc%7CD5%7Cpc%7CDA%7Cpc%7CD7%7Cpc%7CC6%7Cpc%7CD9%7Cpc%7CHA%7Cpc%7CHT%7Cpc%7CH8%7Cpc%7CHJ%7Cmc%7C10%7C>

Thanks for showing me how to find hands on line. This looks a bit bulky for a usual redirect on line but what the heck.

You see the bidding. It was Passed out way too soon. We each had the same question to each other: Should you have Doubled sooner?

Judy thought maybe after 2D I could have Doubled. With 9 pts I'm a bit reluctant. However, given the chance now Judy did which was good.

Question 1) Should I have Doubled?

Question 2) After South's Double does 2S imply 10 points- which would have been fine. Or if having more than a bare minimum should I have jumped? I know staying at the lowest level possible implies minimum; therefore jumping would show 10+. I'm thinking that's what I should have done. Judy thought with my 2 Passes I had very little. I'm not sure one can make that assumption. Judy Passed the 2nd time because she said she didn't have that 3rd suit covered (having a singleton in Clubs). Maybe South Doubles immediately after 1D to say I have 4/4 in Majors and it's as simple as that.

Can you tell us your preferred bidding sequence so we can learn from it?

Thanks so much as usual.

Hi Veida and Judy,

Thank you both for asking about this challenging hand from **#20591 Pairs <500 NKBC/Anderson/Cincy 01/22/2021 - Friday Afternoon MP Limits: 501/215/60** Silver Linings Week Tables: 7 <https://my.acbl.org/club-results/details/254643>

As you know I never take sides and always assume the question is for the benefit of both people in the partnership. This is a pairs event so scoring is Matchpoints.

Knowing the scoring is important when it comes to bidding and play decisions. In teams we stretch to bid and make games. In Matchpoints we play to be better than the field we are in. They are not the same. For example, when defending at teams it is appropriate to try to set a game contract at any cost because the price for overtricks is small. At Matchpoints the defensive calculation is more complex – risking overtricks can result in a poor score.

It is always very tempting to look at all four hands and try to decide what the best bidding sequence is. Since we never play the game that way you can imagine the bias that such an analysis introduces. It is also important to have a way to decide what the best possible result is to check our thinking and approach to bidding or play.

N	herreup
♠	Q1053
♥	K85
♦	J6
♣	K863

What I will try to do here is portray the thinking for North and South by looking only at one hand at a time. We are not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents. This gives us more permission to bid, and more permission to double them in close contracts. North is in second position. After a pass by West, North has an easy pass. East opens 1♦ and partner passes. West responds 1N denying a 4-card major. North passes (with a J or Q more, a takeout double could be right. West passes and South Doubles. We

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1N	Pass	Pass	X

come to the first serious question of the auction. What does the double of 1♦ mean here? There are many players who think this double is takeout – after all partner is doubling in the pass out seat making this a balancing double – a desire to compete with no clear direction. But is it? Experts will tell you that it cannot be a takeout double. If partner

wanted to make a takeout of 1♦ (which is what people think this double of 1N is) they would have doubled one round earlier. This is an important principle to consider. If partner could have made a takeout double of the same strain in an earlier round, the later double shows values in that strain. Also, partner has to have a good hand and not some random 8-9 HCP with Diamonds. Why? 8-9 HCP opposite a passed partner (we passed twice) cannot expect to thrive at the 2-level especially when not holding length in one of OUR suits. Therefore experts prefer to play this double as showing a good opening hand (14+HCP) unable or unwilling to bid 1N with values in the strain doubled. Here that strain is ♦. The 1N bid does not change the focus on the strain. We are essentially telling partner we can defeat 1N if they lead a ♦.

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1N	Pass	Pass	X
2♦	???		

The bidding continues with West bidding 2♦. (We will wait for the full hand to decide whether this bid was warranted). Now what? North has arrived at the moment of truth for this hand. Let's review what North should know.

Opponents are vulnerable and we are not. That means that doubled undertricks will score very well for our side. Partner has shown a good opening hand and likely 4♦ cards. (Why 4 Diamond cards? Because partner cannot have a pattern that could have made an earlier takeout double. If partner has only three ♦ cards they would have to be three very big ones (AQJ) AND we have to account for partner not overcalling 1N).

Continuing North's analysis, North sees 2♦ cards to go along with the 4 they put in partner's hand. This means EW have at most 7 cards in ♦ between them. Since West would likely not raise on 2 cards, they are splitting 3-4. Why does this matter?

We have to look at the **Law of Total Tricks** (better called the Law of Total Trumps) for guidance. Simply, the idea is that the **total number of trumps available to each side is roughly equal to the total number of trick both sides can make in their best trump fit.**

EW current trump fit is 7 cards. If they have an undiscovered 8-card club fit, the chances are they will not find it. North knows that NS best trump fit is 8 cards. That means that if NS can make 10 tricks in say ♠ then EW can only make 5 tricks in ♦. We see that because of the 15 tricks we project are available, take away 10 for NS leaves 5 for EW.

Now North has to do the math. If EW will make only 5 tricks, an 8-trick 2-diamond contract will be down 3-tricks for +800. Even if NS can only manage to set EW 2-tricks, they earn +500, more than the value of any game.

North holds 9 HCP. This is worth an invite opposite a normal takeout double. Opposite partner's minimum holding on this auction we have 23 HCP (known as the balance of power, and enough strength to compete to the 3-level in a fit at least) and enough to consider doubling a 2-level or 3-level contract especially in Pairs. (In teams, allowing a doubled partial (3 or 4 of a minor, 2 or 3 of a Major) to make causes a game bonus that will often lose the match. Doubling partials at teams has to be done with great caution and great resources. Note however that doubling 2♦ does NOT create a game bonus so the decision for Pairs and Teams is the same).

So all signs point to wanting to play 2♦ Doubled. How do we get there? Simple. There is a standard competitive bidding principle: **After a penalty double (or redouble) all doubles by our side are penalty unless specifically agreed otherwise.** Here the option exists to make a penalty double not on trump strength (partner has that) but on power (we hold at least 23 HCP). So the auction should proceed:

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1N	Pass	Pass	X
2♦	X	All Pass	

W	N	E	S
P	P	1♦	P
1NT	P	P	X
2♦	2♠	P	P
P			

If instead we decide to bid ♠, the right bid is 3♠ to show invitational values (9-11). This could lead to either -50, +140, or +420/450. It is very unlikely that we can make 12 tricks in ♠ after this start.

Before how we see our calculations do, let's take a look at the problem from South's perspective. South has perhaps the most interesting problem at their first turn.

S	MJKCH
♠	K964
♥	AQ76
♦	AQ32
♣	10

South was ready to open 1♦ themselves when East opened in third seat. While third seat openings can be light, this one portends a misfit. South has several options to consider at this point. 1N makes sense on strength but has a small defect in the singleton club. Small because a singleton there is less of a problem than if it were a major suit. An off-shape takeout double could work because the hand is stronger than average and has both 4-card majors. However, it suggests short diamonds – a major flaw.

Overcalling one of a major on a 4-card suit is favored when the suit is strong, the hand is strong (14+) and the hand is the wrong shape for a takeout double. Here the "flaw" is that we hold both 4-card majors (overcalling in a 4-card major tends to deny interest in the other). If we choose to overcall, 1♥ is much better than 1♠ due to the strength of the suit.

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	???

Consider:	Reject:
Pass	1♠
1N	2♦ Michaels
1♥	for Majors –
	55 please

South will narrow their choice to either pass or 1N. Noticing the vulnerability and the chance for doubled undertricks, south will opt for pass. Now the auction continues:

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1N	Pass	Pass	???

South gets to spring their trap. Double here is not for takeout. Indeed it says, partner I have a very good opening hand and made a trap pass originally. I have Diamonds and want you to lead one if you are on opening lead. They are in trouble and will not play the hand undoubled. Bid a suit only if you are very very weak and have 5 or better 6 cards or

more in that suit. If North is on the same page they will cooperate in doubling the opponents by looking at their general hand strength and defensive tricks, and not trump strength. Several outcomes are possible from here.

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1N	Pass	Pass	X
2♦	X	Pass	???

Here North tells South that if you have a defensive oriented hand we should defend diamonds. So that is what South will choose to do. Have they bid well? We'll see.

Let's look at three other scenarios:

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1N	Pass	Pass	X
2♦	2♠	Pass	3♠

Here North displays a hand with spades and 0-8 HCP. South has a hand worth 15 HCP plus 3 support points for the singleton club or 18 HCP. That means game is possible if North is near their maximum holding. So South invites by bidding 3♠. On the given hands, North raises to 4 because they are more than a maximum.

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1N	Pass	Pass	X
2♦	3♠	Pass	4♠

Here North has shown 9-11 HCP and spades. South has an easy raise to game.

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1N	Pass	Pass	X
2♦	3♦	Pass	4♦

Here North says pick your better major partner, I have 4 in each. Given the nature of South's hand, they want North to declare so South will bid 4♦ saying we belong in game played by you. Pick a major partner. NOTE: South needs 4-4 Majors to make this bid. 4♦ is not proper here.

So the two possible destinations are 4♠ and 2♦X. Given what we have already discussed, which contract do you think will score better? Let's take a look together.

First we can review the hand as played at the table. Let's look first at the auction as it occurred and the result at the table.

The first 4 calls are as experts would do. West's 1N was "enterprising". Pass is probably better. After a pass North will make a balancing double and EW will bid on toward their spade game. I'd expect something like →

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
Pass	X	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠

On the actual auction, South's double was fine. West made a mistake for their side by bidding 2♦. Note 2♣ is a much better bid, as partner is likely to have at least 2 club cards and could have 3 or 4. North erred slightly by bidding only 2♠. Quite likely North thought South was making a takeout double (we've already discussed why this isn't so) and bid 2♠ on 9 HCP. This is conservative, not wrong. However North should have considered a penalty double for reasons stated earlier. After only 2♠ South took a dim view of their hand (18 Support point discussed above) and forgot that games still get bonuses even at Matchpoints.

What did this cost?

Here is the traveller with the scores as played by the field. Only 2 of the 7 pairs in the field got to game. Bidding 2♠ and making 4 was an average result for 3 matchpoints. That means bidding game and making 4 would improve the score from 3 to 5.5 or 91.67%.

Board Results

Select a board: All 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 1

Dir: W
Vul: E-W

16

9	♠ Q 10 5 3
5 11	♥ K 8 5
15	♦ J 6
	♣ K 8 6 3
♠ J 2	♠ A 8 7
♥ 10 3 2	♥ J 9 4
♦ 10 7 5	♦ K 9 8 4
♣ A 9 7 5 2	♣ Q J 4
	♠ K 9 6 4
	♥ A Q 7 6
	♦ A Q 3 2
	♣ 10

Board 16

Contract	Lead	Result	Score		Matchpoints	
			N-S	E-W	N-S	E-W
3N S	♣5	+1	430	-430	6.00	0.00
4♣ N	♦4	=	420	-420	5.00	1.00
2♣ N	♣Q	+3	200	-200	4.00	2.00
2♣ N	♦4	+2	170	-170	3.00	3.00
2♣ N	♣Q	+1	140	-140	2.00	4.00
4♣ N	♥4	-1	-50	50	0.50	5.50
4♣ N	♥4	-1	-50	50	0.50	5.50

So far so good, but what was possible on the hand?

I happen to like a tool that works very well with any bridge hand shown on a website (not when shown in picture form - .jpeg, .png, .bmp, .gif, etc.). The tool is called Bridge Solver and is available for free to plug into your browser at:

<https://mirgo2.co.uk/bridgesolver/>

This tool provides double dummy analysis and offers play by play advise for the hand in any contract. This is an invaluable tool for learning how to bid and to play better. I recommend everyone have this plugin.

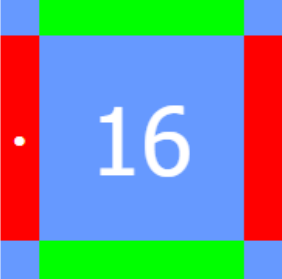
Using Bridge Solver online for this hand we get this display:

<p>Optimum: NS 4S+1; +450</p> <p>LoTT: 16-16 = 0</p>	<p>♠ Q 10 5 3 ♥ K 8 5 ♦ J 6 ♣ K 8 6 3</p>	<p>Bridge Solver Online: John Goacher</p> <p>Double Dummy Solver Module: Bo Haglund</p>																														
<p>♠ J 2 ♥ 10 3 2 ♦ 10 7 5 ♣ A 9 7 5 2</p>		<p>♠ A 8 7 ♥ J 9 4 ♦ K 9 8 4 ♣ Q J 4</p>																														
<p>5 9 11</p> <p>15</p>	<p>♠ K 9 6 4 ♥ A Q 7 6 ♦ A Q 3 2 ♣ 10</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <th>N</th> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <th>E</th> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <th>W</th> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	2	2	4	5	3	S	2	2	4	5	3	E	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-	-
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																											
N	2	2	4	5	3																											
S	2	2	4	5	3																											
E	-	-	-	-	-																											
W	-	-	-	-	-																											

We see in the lower right corner that the possible double dummy contracts are all in favor of North South. NS can make 2♣, 2♦, 4♥, 4♠+1, and 3N. So if NS are to bid a contract their way, they should be bidding to game.

However, our analysis suggested that 2♦X by East might be a profitable contract for NS. The DD analysis says they cannot make any diamond contract so we know that EW are down at least two. By using the double dummy trick by trick play function made available in Bridge Solver Online we can determine the double-dummy result in 2♦X. NS can make 9 tricks defending diamonds. That means 2♦X would have been set 4 tricks (5 is defensive book against a 2-level contract). That score is +1100 for NS and a clear top. Given the traveler, even down 2 at +500 would have been a top score increasing matchpoints by 3. Looking at the results from the game this would have given you 86 Matchpoints up from 83 and kept you in 2nd in Strat C. You might have knocked the pair you tied to 4th in B, reducing their MPs. I cannot tell if you would have materially impacted your masterpoint award. Likely so.

So, I would prefer to defend 2♦X, and if not that, then declare 4♠ making 4 or 5.

<p>Optimum: NS 4S+1; +450</p> <p>LoTT: 16-16 = 0</p>	<p>♠ Q 10 5 3 ♥ K 8 5 ♦ J 6 ♣ K 8 6 3</p>	<p>Contract: 1 ♦ -3 by E</p> <p>NS Tricks: 9 EW Tricks: 4 Finished</p>																														
<p>♠ J 2 ♥ 10 3 2 ♦ 10 7 5 ♣ A 9 7 5 2</p>		<p>♠ A 8 7 ♥ J 9 4 ♦ K 9 8 4 ♣ Q J 4</p>																														
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	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																											
N	2	2	4	5	3																											
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W	-	-	-	-	-																											

About that Monster URL

Finally let me address that “monster” URL from BBO. Since BBO created their newer HTML5 compatible user interface (necessary because they had to eliminate Acrobat Reader – a tool they used for many graphics, that was a major source used by hackers, and permanently removed since Jan1, 2021. They did not consider providing a short URL as a convenience to their users. First, let me say that the length of the URL is caused by including the play by play details for the hand – each card played is coded in the order played. That’s what makes it so long. Not to fear. There are several services that do this for free and make sharing links to BBO hands more intelligible.

Here a good article on URL shorteners: <https://buffer.com/library/url-shorteners/>

<https://tinyurl.com/> tinyURL is what I use because I like the convenience of a browser plug-in./

<https://bitly.com/> bitly is a free service

Google’s approach: <https://support.google.com/faqs/answer/190768?hl=en>

Google and bitly offer users a way to track how many times their shortened link has been clicked – good if you are an advertiser or influencer on social media.

Here is what tinyurl returns: <https://tinyurl.com/vy3vqhmX>

Try it to see what happens!

Thank you for sending me a very rich question about competitive bidding. I hope the answer helps. Of course, I am always interested to continue our discussion or answer more questions.

Hope to see you at the table.

Best Regards,

Steve Moese

