

Learning Points – Take the Sure Plus

by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

E Deals	♠ KJ9742	
NS Vul	♥ 8	
	♦ 86	
Mike	♣ J1062	Steve
♠ 83	N	♠ A1065
♥ AJ62	W 18 E	♥ K543
♦ K1073		♦ A
♣ 753	S	♣ AKQ4
	♠ Q	<u>Duplimate:</u>
	♥ Q1097	EW: 2♦, 3♠,
	♦ QJ9542	4♣, 5♥, 5N
	♣ 98	

East	South	West	North
1♣	2♦	Pass*	Pass
Double	Passed Out		
West led the ♥2			

Here's another hand from the recent Independence Ohio Regional January 2008 Open Pairs Flight B.

At favorable vulnerability, East finds a strong 4414 hand with 5 losers and 20 HCP in first position. Using standard or 2/1 methods many would open 1♣, though some would want to open 2NT to get the point range off their chest and enable 4-4 major suit location. Others might choose to open a Roman 2♦ if that's in their arsenal. Best is to bid with least distortion when you have a thoughtful partner.

The Bidding

Mike and I play Precision. 1♣ covers all hands 16 HCP or more (except 1NT 15-17 and 2NT 23-24 Balanced). Our approach allows opener to force with 4 card major(s) in an unbalanced hand at the one level. This Blue Club approach is built for hands like these. We need no special tools to show opener's 4441 patterns.

South surprises with a 2♦ preempt. Many defenders like to interfere over our strong club auction. We've found that discipline and good judgment often delivers good results in our direction. Now West has some choices. In our approach, a double by responder shows exactly 6-7 HCP any shape. 2NT is 8+ HCP and a stopper in diamonds. 2♥ would show 5+ Hearts and tends to deny a diamond stopper. Our 2NT response here implies but does not promise a balanced hand. Likewise 3♦ by West would be a 3-suited takeout with a singleton in Diamonds.

This leaves two choices for West: a game forcing 2NT declared by West, or a penalty pass. West's pass showed one of two kinds of hands (and is alertable). Either partner has 0-5 HCP or a penalty pass in ♦. East's double is right on shape, strength and agreement. West's penalty pass is an interesting choice and not a gamble. East would reopen with a suit bid on those hands where offense is best. East's double says I have a standard takeout hand with normal values (16-20 HCP). West can count on 6-8 winners in East's hand alone. Plus 2 or 3 from West's hand gives 8-10 winners combined. Setting 2♦ for more than a nonvulnerable game is very likely.

The Play

The opening lead is by agreement 4th best from length and promises a top honor (A, K, or Q). West holds a useless doubleton in Spades. there's no reason to believe leading spades would create tempo for the defense. East wins the ♥K, ♦A, and ♣AK in short order.

Now a small heart allows declarer to ruff in dummy. Declarer would likely play a spade out, which East gobbles up with the Ace. Returning a 2nd heart would then set the contract 3 tricks for +800 and all the match points.

Instead East erred and tried to cash the CQ at trick 5, setting up a winner in dummy for declarer in the process. South is able to arrange 2 heart ruffs in dummy, going down 2 for EW +500 and 10 of 11 match points.

Sometimes errors cost little, as on this hand. However reward partner with deeper thought and avoid giving away one match point at a time. You'll begin to see those 60%+ games happen more often.