

121. No country for old men

By Ron Klinger

With neither side vulnerable, what do you do as dealer with:

♠ 8
♥ QJ9532
♦ A10842
♣ 5

If you have chosen to open with a weak 2♥, the auction goes:

West	North	East	South
2♥	Pass	Pass	2♣
?			

What now?

The deal arose in a game on BBO against robots.

Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ Q964	
	♥ 874	
	♦ Q5	
	♣ A1086	
West		East
♠ 8		♠ A7
♥ QJ9532		♥ 106
♦ A10842		♦ KJ63
♣ 5		♣ KJ973
	South	
	♠ KJ10532	
	♥ AK	
	♦ 97	
	♣ Q42	

If you play a 2♥ opening shows hearts and a minor, this hand has a drawback in that it has six hearts. It is unlikely partner will become enthused with a doubleton heart if 2♥ shows 5 hearts and a 4+ or 5+ minor. At least a weak 2♥ shows six hearts. The hand is a touch strong for a weak 2♥ in terms of playing potential. A weak two normally has 7 or 8 losers. The West hand has 6 losers.

West	North	East	South
2♥	Pass	Pass	2♣
3♦!?	3♠	4♥	All Pass

East felt the hand did not have quite enough to look for game opposite a weak two and so passed. South came in with 2♣, natural enough, though some might bid 3♣ here as an intermediate jump (6-card suit, minimum opening hand). Now West tried 3♦. A weak-two opener should not bid again unless forced to or invited to by partner. Still, you can see the attraction of 3♦ when holding a 6-5 pattern.

Robot North led the ♦Q. That was a strange choice. I would have assumed a spade lead was normal, second choice a heart. Declarer won with the ♦K and played the ♥6: king – three – eight. South returned the ♦7. West was pleasantly surprised to find that this was not ruffed. South won the next heart and switched to spades. Declarer won with the ♠A, drew the last trump and claimed ten tricks, +420.

Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ Q964	
	♥ 874	
	♦ Q5	
	♣ A1086	
West		East
♠ 8		♠ A7
♥ QJ9532		♥ 106
♦ A10842		♦ KJ63
♣ 5		♣ KJ973
	South	
	♠ KJ10532	
	♥ AK	
	♦ 97	
	♣ Q42	

This is what happened in an international match:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
3♥ ⁽¹⁾	3♠	Pass	4♠
5♦	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Fit-showing jump: 5+ hearts, diamond support, maximum pass

Declarer won the spade lead and played ♦A, ♦K. West lost two hearts and a club, one down, -100. Meanwhile, 4♠ was going one down, losing a spade, two diamonds and a club. If West leads the ♣5 and declarer ducks in dummy, 4♠ will be two down.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾	2♠
3♦!?	3♠	4♦	4♠
5♦	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Weak two in hearts or in spades

(2) Pass or correct

Here a weak-two opener did not bid again just once, but twice, taking a sacrifice ahead of partner. West lost the same three tricks, -100, no swing.

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ 85
 ♥ AQ9
 ♦ Q10876543
 ♣ --

The hand has five losers, which translates into eight playing tricks. Given the modern style of pre-empting (bid three more than your playing tricks), that would suggest a bid of 5♦. The unfavourable vulnerability might temper that idea. The most likely outcome of 5♦ would be that you are doubled. It is enough to bid 4♦.

This arose in the same match:

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ K1042	
	♥ J762	
	♦ A92	
	♣ Q2	
West		East
♠ A97		♠ QJ63
♥ K		♥ 108543
♦ KJ		♦ --
♣ J1098743		♣ AK65
	South	
	♠ 85	
	♥ AQ9	
	♦ Q10876543	
	♣ --	

After robot East passed – some would open the East hand – human South opened 4♦. Robot West passed, as did human North and so did East. West led the ♠A and, not expecting South to be so strong in hearts, switched to the ♥K. South won and played the ♦5, jack, ace, 11 tricks, +150. As the cards lie, declarer will still make ten tricks if a losing heart finesse is taken.

In the teams' match:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	2NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	3♣ ⁽²⁾	Dble	3♦
Pass	Pass	Dble ⁽³⁾	Pass
4♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

- (1) 3-level pre-empt in clubs or in diamonds
- (2) Pass or correct
- (3) For takeout

Opening with a 3-level pre-empt is a mite timid with the South cards. North led the ♣2. Declarer took the ♣A and ♣K and claimed 11 tricks. Declarer lost a heart and a spade, East-West +150.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
		1♥	3♦
Dble ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

- (1) For takeout

A low heart lead to the ace, followed by the ♥Q and a spade switch will beat 3NT. A diamond switch after ♥A, ♥Q will take 3NT six down if declarer misguesses, but allows West to make by inserting the ♦J. There was no compelling reason for North to lead a heart and after the ♦2 lead, West won and made nine tricks, +400 and +6 Imps.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer South : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♣	3♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	?

(1) 10+ points, 3+ spades, limit raise or stronger in spades

What would you do as South with:

♠ QJ1053
♥ AQ
♦ KJ5
♣ 986

2. Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ K10
♥ A98752
♦ A
♣ K976

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

I love cooking with wine. Sometimes I even put it in the food.