

237. How experts treat a 2-suiter

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♠	?

(1) Weak, 5 spades, 5+ minor

What would you do as South with:

♠ --
♥ A109854
♦ KQ952
♣ A2

You want to compete, but which is the best option? You could bid 5♥. That indicates the length in hearts, but it is putting all your eggs in one basket. If available, you could double for takeout. If partner bids 5♣, you will remove that to 5♦, offering partner the choice between diamonds and hearts. The downside of this sequence is that partner might play you for 4 hearts and 5+ diamonds. The upside for doubling is that partner might pass for penalties, which could be the best result for you. Another choice is 4NT, showing a freak 2-suiter. Again, if partner bids 5♣, you remove it to 5♦ showing at least 5-5 in the red suits. None of these captures your exact hand, but that is why opponents pre-empt.

What would you do as South if the bidding had started Pass : Pass : 1♠ : ?

The deal arose in the semi-finals of the 2017 World Teams:

Bd. 19: Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ KJ2	
	♥ Q7	
	♦ A1073	
	♣ 9863	
West		East
♠ 109753		♠ AQ864
♥ 63		♥ KJ2
♦ 8		♦ J64
♣ KQJ105		♣ 74
	South	
	♠ --	
	♥ A109854	
	♦ KQ952	
	♣ A2	

Venice Cup (World Women's Teams), China North-South:

West	North	East	South	
2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♠	4NT ⁽²⁾	South took the ♠K lead with the ♣A, cashed ♦K, ♦A and played the ♥Q, king, ace, followed by the ♦Q and the ♥4 to the ♥7 and the ♥K for 11 tricks, +600
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦ ⁽³⁾	
Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass		

(1) Weak, 5 spades, 5+ minor

(2) 2-suiter, at least 5-5

(3) Diamonds and hearts

Poland North-South:

West	North	East	South
2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♠	5♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Weak, 5 spades, 5+ minor

West led the ♦8, ace. Then came the ♥Q, king, ace, and the ♥10, taken by the ♥J. South won the ♣7 switch, drew the last trump and made 11 tricks, +650 and 2 Imps to Poland, who survived showing a 1-suiter when holding a 2-suiter.

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	South	
	♠ --	
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	♣ A2	

In the other Venice Cup semi-final, both Souths treated the 2-suiter as a 1-suiter:

England North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♠	4♥
4♠	Dble	All Pass	

(1) Weak, 5 spades, 5+ minor

After the 1♠ opening, South had the option of bidding 2♠, Michaels, to show 5+ hearts and a 5+ minor. Some play (1♠) : 3♣ as showing specifically hearts and diamonds, at least 5-5. Instead, South chose to blast 4♥. With her void in spades, it was not hard to foresee what would happen next.

South led the ♦K. North overtook with the ♦A and switched to the ♥7. Probably thinking it made no difference, East played the ♥K. South took the ♥A and returned the ♥4 to the ♥Q. North could / should have switched to a club, as the ♥4 suit-preference had suggested. South would win and North could ruff the next heart or over-ruff dummy for two down, North-South +300. Instead North switched to a 'clever' ♠2: four – ♥5 – ♠5. Declarer finessed the ♠Q and was one down, North-South +100, the normal result on ideal defence and declarer play.

Sweden North-South:

West	North	East	South
2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♥ ⁽²⁾	4♥
Pass	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	All Pass	

(1) Multi, weak two in hearts or in spades
 (2) Pass or correct

After a 3-level pre-empt or 2-Major – Pass – 3-Major or the actual auction here, some pairs forego a natural overcall of 4-minor and play non-leaping Michaels instead, where 4♣ shows clubs + a major and 4♦ shows diamonds + a major, at least 5-5 in both cases. If South had such a 4♦ 2-suiter bid available, she did not use it.

South led the ♦K. North overtook with the ♦A and switched to the ♥Q: king – ace – three. The ♥J won the ♥10 return. Declarer ruffed a diamond in dummy and played the ♠5: two – queen – four. Declarer was not prepared to run the ♠10 and lose to a possible bare ♠J with South, followed by a heart to allow North to score the ♠K. Declarer cashed the ♠A and lost a trick in each suit for one down, North-South +100, no swing.

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	♣ A2	

In the semi-finals of the Bermuda Bowl (World Open Teams), every South showed the 2-suiter:

Bulgaria North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♠	2♠ ⁽¹⁾
4♠	Pass	Pass	Dble ⁽²⁾
Pass	4NT ⁽³⁾	Pass	5♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Hearts and a minor, at least 5-5

(2) Strong 2-suiter

(3) Bid your minor.

West led the ♣K. South made the usual 11 tricks, +600.

USA2 North-South:

West	North	East	South
2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♠	4NT ⁽²⁾
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦ ⁽³⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Weak, spades + a minor

(2) Some 2-suiter, at least 5-5

(3) Diamonds + hearts

Club lead, 11 tricks, +600, no swing.

In the other semi-final, with France North-South, the auction was the same as the one with USA2 North-South above except that West's 2♠ opening was a natural weak two in spades (very weak). Despite the strength of the clubs, West led the ♠10: jack – queen – ♦2. Declarer played ♦K, ♦Q, over to the ♦A and the ♥Q, king, ace. The ♥10 knocked out the ♥J and South could ditch dummy's club losers and a spade on the heart winners for 12 tricks, +620.

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♣ KQJ105		♣ 74
	South	
	♠ --	
	♥ A109854	
	♦ KQ952	
	♣ A2	

New Zealand North-South:

West	North	East	South
2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♦ ⁽²⁾	3♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	4♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	All Pass	

- (1) Weak, 5 spades and a 4+ minor
 (2) Game invitation in spades

North's 3NT would have succeeded if East had led a low spade. North wins and can set up the hearts without losing a trick to West. To beat 3NT East needs to lead a club or lead the ♠A and switch to a club. Neither of these is likely, but you can understand why South removed 3NT to 4♦ with that 6-5 shape. With a 4-loser hand, South might have bid 5♦ over East's 4♠. Would 4♦ over 3♦ be non-leaping Michaels in your methods? If you play N-L M, there is certainly a strong case for it here.

Against France's 4♠ doubled, New Zealand's North led the ♥Q: king – ace – three. South switched to the ♦K, winning, and the ♦5: ♠3 – ♦7 – ♦6. Declarer played the ♠10: two – four – ♥4, the ♠5: jack – queen – ♦2 and the ♠A. Declarer knocked out the ♣A and had ten tricks, losing a heart a diamond and a club, North-South +590 and 15 Imps to France.

After winning with the ♥A at trick 1 and the ♦K at trick 2, South needed to revert to hearts to beat 4♠. If South does play a heart at trick 3, the ♥J wins. If declarer now plays diamond ruff, ♠10, jack, queen, followed by diamond ruff, spade finesse, ♠A, declarer is out of spades and South can cash a heart when in with the ♣A. If declarer wins the heart switch at trick 3 with the ♥J and plays a club, South can take the ♣A and play a third heart to give North a trump trick.

At three tables in the semi-finals of the D'Orsi Trophy (World Seniors' Teams), South showed a 2-suiter at once. In India vs Italy, both Souths were able to show a heart-diamond 2-suiter.

India North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♠	2♠ ⁽¹⁾
4♣ ⁽²⁾	4♦	Pass	4♠ ⁽³⁾
Pass	5♦	All Pass	

- (1) 2-suiter, hearts + diamonds
 (2) Fit-showing jump, 5+ clubs and spade support
 (3) Cue-bid

West led the ♣7, ace. Declarer drew trumps and played the ♥Q, king, ace, 11 tricks, India +620. The fit-showing jump could have been vital. Without a club lead, 6♦ can be made. Witness:

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	South ♠ -- ♥ A109854 ♦ KQ952 ♣ A2	

Italy North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♠	3♣ ⁽¹⁾
4♠	5♦	Pass	Pass
5♠	Dble	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Exclusion jump, the other two suits, hearts + diamonds

East led the ♠A, ruffed. Declarer drew trumps, pitched the ♣2 on the ♠K and played the ♥Q, king, ace, and the ♥10 for 12 tricks, +1370, 13 Imps to Italy.

With Sweden North-South, it went Pass : Pass : 1♠ : 2♠ (hearts and a minor), 4♠ : Pass : Pass : Double (strong 2-suiter), all pass. South led ♦K. North overtook and switched to ♥Q, king, ace. South returned ♥8: six – seven – jack. Declarer ruffed a diamond, followed by the ♠10: jack – queen – ♥4. Declarer ruffed the ♦J, followed by ♠7: two – four – ♥5. To draw the last trump would leave East with a heart loser and a club to lose and so East played the ♣10. South won and played the ♥10: ♠9 – ♠K – ♥2. That was one down, North-South +100.

At the other table, USA2 North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♠	2♥
4♠	Pass	Pass	4NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	5♥	Pass	Pass
5♠	Dble	All Pass	

(1) 2-suiter, hearts longer

4NT showed 6 hearts and a shorter minor. With 1-5-4-3 / 1-5-3-4 / 0-5-4-4 South would double 4♠ for takeout.

South led the ♦K, followed by the ♥A and the ♥10. East won, ruffed a diamond and played the ♠10, winning, and the ♠5, jack, queen, and the ♠A. Declarer lost to the ♣A for one down, North-South +100, no swing.

Problem for Tomorrow:

With both sides vulnerable, East deals and passes. What would you do as South with:

♠ K5
 ♥ 985
 ♦ AQ65432
 ♣ 3

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

WELL, TO BE FRANK, I'D HAVE TO CHANGE MY NAME.