

21. Failing to use the Responder's Support Line when giving delayed support

When, as responder, you are supporting your opening bid partner. Two-level support bids show 6-9 pts, Three-level support bids show 10-12, and game-level supporting bids show 13 or more pts. This applies to immediate support eg 1♥-3♥ but also, much overlooked, to delayed support eg 1♥-1♠-2♣-3♥.

Take the auction $1\heartsuit-1\spadesuit-2\diamonds$. Your partner opened $1\heartsuit$, you responded $1\spadesuit$ and partner now rebid $2\diamonds$, implying a $5\heartsuit-4\diamonds$ shape. What now with these responding hands?

| | | |
|--------|-------|-------|
| ♠AJ732 | ♠KJ72 | ♠KJ72 |
| ♥KJ6 | ♥KJ7 | ♥J73 |
| ♦K5 | ♦Q5 | ♦95 |
| ♣J84 | ♣J932 | ♣Q932 |

With the first, jump to 4♥. You have a 5-3 fit and the values for game.

With the second, jump to 3♥, showing your delayed (ie three-card) heart support and 10-12 pts, inviting game.

With the third, go back to 2♥, showing 6-9 pts. Note, this does not guarantee actual (three-card) heart support, for you'd have to go back to 2♥ with a heart fewer (and, say, a spade more). Going back to partner's first suit at the lowest level should be read as preference rather than support.

What Happened

Languishing in 2♥¹¹, declarer played somewhat carelessly (starting by playing ♣8 from dummy at trick one) but still made ten tricks.

What Should Have Happened

In 4♥, you cover the ♣10 lead with dummy's ♣J, beating East's ♣Q

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

♠ A8532
♥ K53
♦ 63
♣ KJ8

♠ KJ94
♥ J9
♦ 1097
♣ 10976

♠ Q10
♥ Q104
♦ KJ54
♣ Q432

♠ 76
♥ A8762
♦ AQ82
♣ A5

What Happened

| S | W | N | E |
|----|------|-------|------|
| 1♥ | Pass | 1♠ | Pass |
| 2♦ | Pass | 2♥(1) | end |

(1) Oops. This 2♥ bid shows 6-9 pts (and may not even have actual — three-card — heart support, merely preference).

Contract: 2♥, Opening Lead: ♣10

What Should Have Happened

| S | W | N | E |
|----|------|-------|------|
| 1♥ | Pass | 1♠ | Pass |
| 2♦ | Pass | 3♥(1) | Pass |
| 4♥ | end | | |

(1) Yes — 10-12 pts and three-card support.

Contract: 4♥, Opening Lead: ♣10

with ♣A. Placing West with ♣9 for his ♣10 lead, at trick two you lead back ♣5 and finesse ♣8 then cash ♣K, dumping ♠6. You finesse ♦Q then cross to ♠A and ruff ♠2. You cash ♥A, cross to ♥K and ruff ♠3 (East throwing ♣4 — ruffing no good). You cash ♦A, ruff ♦2 and ruff ♠5 (East throwing ♦K — ruffing no good). That's an amazing 12 tricks, leaving East to score only the last — with ♥Q.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk