

If you have bid and supported a suit, the first bid of a new suit asks for help in that suit.

Partner will bid 4♠ with a useful diamond holding and sign off in 3♠ with a poor holding. For example ...

Holding (a), a decent diamond holding with two bolstering pictures, North will jump to 4♠, an easy make facing our South.

Holding (b), however, with three small diamonds, the very worst holding, North will hurriedly sign off in 3♠.

South's bludgeoning approach resulted in a 4♠ contract being reached — in five seconds flat. Declarer tried dummy's ♣J on West's ♣10 lead (a free finesse). East in turn covered with ♣Q and declarer won ♣A. He cashed ♠AK, drawing trumps and led ♥Q.

West won ♥A and led ♣9. Winning dummy's ♣K, it was time to play for the diamond miracle, East holding both ♦AK. However, when he led to (♦5 and) ♦Q, West won ♦A. He had no way to avoid losing ♦KJ to East and

♠ 10942
♥ K72
♦ 742
♣ KJ2

♠ J8
 ♥ A1096
 ♦ A108
 ♣ 10986

N		
W		E
	S	

♠ 75
 ♥ J854
 ♦ KJ5
 ♣ Q754

♠ AKQ63
 ♥ Q3
 ♦ Q963
 ♣ A3

S	W	N	E
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠(1)	end		

(1) South's lack of sophistication was to cost him. Sure, he has a nice hand — but that person across the table is on your side. Why not enlist their co-operation in the game venture?

Contract: 4♠, Opening Lead: ♣10

S	W	N	E
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦ (1)	Pass	3♠ (2)	end

(1) "I'm not sure whether or not we should play in 4♠. My main concern is diamonds, in which I am long and weak. Can you help me there?"

(2) "I'm afraid not." Three diamond rags — yuck.

Contract: 3♠, Opening Lead: ♣10

that was one down. The 4♠ game had been unmakeable.

What Should Have Happened

The play would proceed along identical lines. The difference — 3♠ makes.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk