20. Failing to factor in the power of a short suit when supporting

When supporting (only), a doubleton is worth about one extra point, a singleton three, and a void five. When making your supporting bid (Two level = 6-9, Three = 10-12, Four = 13 or more), don't forget to factor in your shortage points as well as your high-card points.

Partner opens 1. What would you respond with these?

<b>♠</b> KJ32	<b>♠</b> KJ32	<b>♠</b> KJ32
<b>♥</b> 752	<b>¥</b> 2	<b>V</b> -
♦A52	♦ A 5 4 2	♦ A6542
<b>4</b> 852	<b>♣</b> 8542	<b>♣</b> 8542

With the first, bid 24, eight high-card points and nothing for shortage. With the second, you can add three points for the singleton making 11 support points, enough for 34 (10-12). With the third, you can add five points (for the void) to make 13 support points, enough for 44.

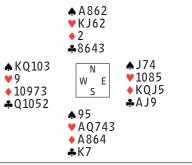
Let's give opener a typical mini-

Facing the first responding hand, even 2 will probably be too high. Yet facing the third responding hand (the same eight high-card points), 4 will be easy-peasy. That void is massive.

## What Happened

Game was missed, the quiet 2♥ making plus three — like this ...

What Should Have Happened You win West's ♠K lead with dummy's ♠A and seek to ruff all your diamonds. You cross to ♠A and ruff ♠4, then lead ♣3 to ♣K, the finesse succeeding. You ruff ♠6 Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither



## What Happened

S W N E 1♥ Pass 2♥(1) Pass Pass(2) Pass(3)

- (1) Oops fails to factor in the singleton.
- (2) Correct to pass, facing a One-Two ("that'll do").
- (3) Should probably reopen with a protective (take-out) double but that's another story.

Contract: 2♥, Opening Lead: ♠ K

## **What Should Have Happened**

S	W	N	Ε
1♥	Pass	<b>3♥</b> (1)	Pass
<b>4♥</b> (2)	end		

- (1) Adding three for the singleton, North's hand is worth about 11 support points, amply enough for 3 ♥ (10-12).
- (2) Nice shape and honour structure. [For Losing Trick Count fans, you have a six-loser hand, one better than the seven losers of a minimum opener, so should go up one level.]

Contract: 4♥, Opening Lead: ♠ K

and lead 44.

East rises with A and switches to 5 (best) but you win J, ruff 6, ruff 8 (with K), ruff 8, cash AQ and concede 9. Eleven tricks made — only 9 lead (not recommended) holds you to ten tricks. andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk