

59. Failing to protect

The opponents have bid but then stopped, and the auction has gone Pass - Pass to you. If you also pass, the bidding is over. In such situations — two passes to you — you are said to be in the protective seat. I like to call it the “cheat seat”, because all normal bidding criteria are relaxed. You should be loath also to pass and let the opponents declare their lowly contract.

Exercise: The auction has gone 1♥-P-2♥-P-P to you. What would you do with these hands?

♠ J842	♠ 86432	♠ Q2
♥ 82	♥ 972	♥ QJ9
♦ KJ6	♦ K72	♦ 8532
♣ A942	♣ AJ	♣ AJ52

The opponents have found a fit, meaning your side probably have a fit. They have stopped at a low level, meaning they do not have game values. Do something if you can.

With the first, double (for take-out). Your partner will know you don't have a proper double because you passed over 1♥. With the second, bid 2♠. Partner will presume you have five poor spades because of your failure to bid 1♠ over 1♥.

Your main aim on both is to push the opponents up a level to 3♥. And this is very likely — after all, they have bid and supported a suit and were winning the bidding a moment ago. Clearly it has to be better for you to defend 3♥ than 2♥.

With the third, a very defensive collection, you'll have to let the opponents play 2♥. Reluctantly.

What Happened

With East-West selling out to 2♥, West led ♠8 (leading high for

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

♠ 86432		♠ K5
♥ 972		♥ Q84
♦ K72		♦ A1085
♣ AJ		♣ 10854
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ AQ10
		♥ 65
		♦ 9643
		♣ Q632
		♠ J97
		♥ AKJ103
		♦ QJ
		♣ K97

What Happened

S	W	N	E
1♥	Pass	2♥(1)	end

(1) More helpful than the “dustbin 1NT” and not (quite) strong enough for a new suit at the Two-level.

Contract: 2♥, Opening Lead: ♠8

What Should Have Happened

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

(1) Yes — West is in the cheat seat. Her 2♠ bid rates to push the opponents to 3♥.

Contract: 3♥, Opening Lead: ♠8

hate). East won ♠Q and switched to ♣2. West won ♣J and cashed ♣A to void herself. Knowing East held ♠A (because ♠Q won the first trick), she led ♠2, East winning ♠A and leading ♣6. West ruffed declarer's ♣K and the defence had won the first five tricks. Declarer won the remainder by drawing trumps and running ♦Q but that was 2♥ made.

What Should Have Happened

Same defence but v 3♥. One down.
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