

As the bidding progresses, some features of your hand improve, others decline. Take this situation: you open 1♥, your left hand opponent overcalls 2♦, your partner raises to 2♥ and your right-hand opponent bids 2♠. What now with these?

With the diamond bid on your left and the spade bid on your right, the first hand has declined markedly. Give partner, say, ♠KJ5, K1054, ♦654, ♣875 and you will make only six tricks, assuming ♦AQ are on your left (over ♦KJ) and ♠AQ are on your right (over dummy's ♠KJ). You should pass 2♠.

The second hand is better in terms of shape but the diamond honours are poorly placed (and when you try to ruff your third and fourth diamonds, you may be overruffed). Your expectations should be low. You may decide to compete to 3♥ to stop the opponents making 2♠ but don't be surprised to go two down.

The third hand, however, has improved massively. Your spade honours are well placed, and having length in the suit on your right is also good, for you can ruff the long cards in dummy without being overruffed. I'd pot 4♥.

West led $\clubsuit 8$ v $4\spadesuit$, East winning $\clubsuit Q$ and correctly switching to $\heartsuit 7$. Declarer's $\heartsuit J$ lost to West's $\heartsuit Q$, West cashing $\heartsuit A$ and giving partner a heart ruff. East cashed $\clubsuit A$

♠ 96
♥ 7
♦ K863
♣ AQ10432

S	W	N	E
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♣
4♠(1)	end		

(1) Oops. South's hand has declined considerably with his heart honours under West's hearts, while any club honours partner has will be sitting under East's honours.

Contract: 4♠ (by S) , Opening Lead: ♣8

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

(1) Yes, South is not even worth 3♠. Let the opponents stew in 3♣ — they may not even have a fit.

(2) Tricky. East could have $\clubsuit KQJ10xxx$ "and out".

Contract: 3♣ (by E), Opening Lead: ♠ A

and gave West a club ruff, and the defence also had to come to a diamond. That was four down vulnerable — mercifully undoubted.

What Should Have Happened

South leaves East in 3♣. Declarer may make his part-score if he guesses the play. He may not.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk