

Learning Points – Balancing in Partner’s Suit by Inference

April 12, 2008

by Mike Purcell; edited by Steve Moese

N Deals	♠ 83	←Mike
N/S Vul	♥ A97542	
	♦ A	
	♣ KJ75	

April 10, 2008 Thursday Evening Open Pairs, Ms. Annease Comer, Director, Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070
<http://www.cincybridge.com>

Partner: Bill Farris

♠ 942	N	♠ KQJ5
♥ J63		♥ K108
♦ KQ95	W 26 E	♦ J8643
♣ A84	S	♣ Q

Sometimes reaching the right contract depends on listening to what is not said, not just what is said. Choosing a 4 card 2nd suit can be right when holding a weak 6 card suit.

♠ A1076
♥ Q
♦ 1072
♣ 109632

Bill →

The Bidding

I open 1♥ and East’s 1♠ overcall sets the tone for the auction. South wisely passes with minimal values and singleton heart and West bids 2♥ to show a 10+ HCP spade raise. I pass with my minimum and East bids 2♠ to sign off, showing minimum values and no interest in game.

North	East	South	West
1♥	1♠	Pass	2♥ ¹
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
3♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

Many North’s would have passed out this hand. However, if opponents are willing to settle for 2♠, then maybe we can compete. The question is where. Let’s figure out South’s hand

West leads ♠K

¹ spade support, 10+ HCP

by inference. With opponent’s stopping at 2♠, it is reasonable to put South on 6-10 HCP. If this is true, we can further infer that South has and 0-2 hearts since partner did not raise to 2♥. If we assume opponents have 8 spades (a good starting point even if wrong) then partner only has 3 spades. This means that partner has 8-10 cards in the minors. However, partner did not double 1♠. This negative double would show 8+ HCP and 4-4 or better in the minor suits. If partner has 4 clubs and 4 diamonds they’re only with 6-7 HCP.

So by inference we can put partner on any 4-4 or better hand in the minors and 6-7 HCP or 6-10 HCP with 5-3, 6-3, etc. in the minors. How does that help us in the bidding? North’s hand clearly can play only in hearts or clubs. While this hand has 6 hearts, if partner does not have at least 2 making 3♥ will be difficult. On the other hand, if partner has clubs, North’s heart and diamond aces will play well. Even if partner has only 3 clubs and 1 heart, there is reasonable play to crossruff hearts and diamonds to a winning result. I bid 3♣ to give partner a choice. Clearly with 5 clubs, South accepts 3♣ to play.

The Play

East leads the ♠K as expected. 5 clubs in dummy and the ♠A are welcome surprises. I take the ♠A and then work on Heart ruffs getting to my hand with first the ♥A and then the ♦A. Seeing hearts break 3-3, noting the ♥K with East, it is time to draw trumps. I play a small club to my hand and West plays small. East has already shown 6 HCP (♠K, ♥K) and by inference the ♠Q for 8 HCP. In the bidding East represented a minimum hand, but I also know they only have 4 spades (West will not cue 2♥ with only 2 spades) so they could have a little more than a typical minimum. I will split the difference and put in the ♣K. When the ♣Q drops, I continue to draw trumps losing the ♣A and a spade, making 5 clubs for 150 and a top board. Average result is 2♥ making 2 for 110, making 3 for 140 if you guess the clubs.

Post Mortem

Without competition, many pairs playing 2/1 will bid 1♥-1NT (Forcing)-2♥, however, giving the poor quality of North’s hearts, it is reasonable to rebid clubs instead. If South has 2 hearts they will correct, if they have 0-1 hearts, then clubs will be the better contract.