

5. Not opening “High Fives”

Say you are 5-5 in the majors. Which is the better auction with partner responding (say) 1NT? (a) 1♥-1NT-2♠; or (b) 1♠-1NT-2♥?

Clearly (b) is superior, because partner can give you a preference back to your first suit without having to go up to the Three-level. With two five-card suits, you should always bid the higher-ranking suit first, planning to bid the lower-ranking next, finishing the two-stage process more economically. Therefore, if you bid 1♥, then 2♠, you must have more hearts than spades.

What Happened

West could have led any one of his 13 cards and 3♥ would have gone one down. He chose ♦5 — from an unappetising series of options. Declarer won dummy's ♦A and started on spades (best), leading to ♠A then ♠2. East won ♠Q and led a second diamond. Declarer ruffed and led ♠4. East won ♠K and led a third diamond. Declarer ruffed and now cashed ♥AK. Leaving ♥Q out, he led the winning ♠10 and threw ♣3. East ruffed and switched to ♣4. West won ♣A and returned a second club to East's ♣J. One down — 'twas ever thus.

What Should Have Happened

After South bids his five-card suits in the correct order, high-then-low, declarer ends up at the more comfortable Two-level. West can lead any one of his 13 cards and the outcome will be eight-five (tricks) to N-S.

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

♠ 653		♠ KQ7
♥ 742		♥ Q108
♦ AJ73		♦ Q942
♣ Q53		♣ KJ4
♠ J8	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A10942
♥ J9		♥ AK653
♦ K1065		♦ 8
♣ A9762		♣ 108

What Happened

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

(1) Erroneously thinking, “I can bid 1♥ now and 1♠ next.” But how can you bid 1♠ next — the bidding will be above 1♠ when it comes back to you?

(2) Thinking (as he should) that partner has more hearts than spades, typically 4♠-5♥, even 4♠-6♥.

Contract: 3♥, Opening Lead: ♦5

What Should Have Happened

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

(1) “High fives”. Start high, finish low.

(2) Standard preference bid, knowing partner has five (or more) spades.

Contract: 2♠, Opening Lead: ♦5

The only marginal situation is 5♠-5♣, for there is an undoubted economical advantage in opening 1♣ and rebidding 1♠. However, such a route makes it hard to show the fifth spade. I'd stick with the simple rule, “High fives”, whether opening, responding or overcalling. andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk