

13. Bidding a second suit when you shouldn't (1)

Bidding a second suit is often a good idea. However, there are times when it is inadvisable. If you have a balanced opening hand (too strong to open 1NT), it is better to rebid Notrumps to show your hand-type, rather than showing a second four-card suit.

♠ K3 ♠ AQ63
 ♥ KQ109 ♥ AQ72
 ♦ AK107 ♦ 932
 ♣ 873 ♣ K2

You correctly open 1♥ with both the above hands (on the first, preferring the major to the minor; on the second, bidding 1♥ with 4♥-4♠ to facilitate finding either 4-4 major-suit fit). Say partner responds 2♣. Do not bid your second suit (2♦ on the first, 2♠ on the second), for that would show an unbalanced opening hand and imply a fifth heart. Instead, rebid 2NT with both — to show your strong, balanced hand.

What Happened

Any one of West's 13 cards would have defeated the unpleasing 4♥ game. Not wanting to lead away from ♦K, West brightly chose a safe trump. Declarer played well but could not avoid losing three hearts and a diamond. One down.

What Should Have Happened

Declarer can make 3NT after the lead of any one of West's 13 cards. In practice, West is likely to lead ♦2 (the unbid suit), which makes life that bit easier. Declarer plays low from dummy, beats East's ♦Q with ♦A and promptly shoots back

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

♠ Q4
 ♥ J62
 ♦ 10952
 ♣ AK52

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 1082
 ♥ KQ109
 ♦ Q6
 ♣ QJ96

♠ AK53
 ♥ A543
 ♦ AJ7
 ♣ 73

What Happened

S	W	N	E
1♥	Pass	2♣(1)	Pass
2♠(2)	Pass	4♥(3)	end

- (1) Correctly responding the cheaper of fours.
 (2) Mistake. This shows an unbalanced 4♠-5♥ shape (probably with extra values but that's another story — next Friday).
 (3) Presumes there's a 5-3 heart fit.

Contract: 4♥, Opening Lead: ♥7

What Should Have Happened

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

- (1) Showing her strong, balanced hand (15+ points — too strong to open 1NT).
 (2) There may be a 5-3 heart fit, so shows her delayed (ie three-card) heart support.
 (3) There may still be a 4-4 spade fit — North could be 4♠3♥1♦5♣.

Contract: 3NT, Opening Lead: ♦2

♦J. West wins ♦K and declarer is soon claiming nine tricks via ♠AKQ, ♥A, three diamond tricks (including dummy's promoted ♦109) and ♣AK.

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