

## 16. Failing to respond the cheaper of four-card suits

In the British-style Acol system we play (Four-card Majors and Weak Notrump), you should respond the cheaper of four-card suits to ensure no fits get missed.

♠ KJ32	♠ AQ32
♥ J964	♥ 74
♦ Q82	♦ Q982
♣ 62	♣ J62

With the first hand, respond 1♥ to a 1♣ (or 1♦) opener. With the second, respond 1♦ to 1♣ and 1♠ to 1♥.

Players can get confused with the meaning of the (reasonable) expression, “Don’t bypass a four-card major”. The point is that responding 1♦ to a 1♣ opener (on the second hand) is not bypassing a four-card major — you haven’t got there. An example of bypassing a four-card major would be responding INT to a 1♥ opener with the second hand — a clear error.

### What Happened

With the heart fit undiscovered, North rests peacefully in 2♣ and makes plus one, losing two clubs and two diamonds.

### What Should Have Happened

After South responds the cheaper of fours, 4♥ is easily reached. With the 4-1 club split, however, good technique is required.

West leads ♦A, East signalling with ♦Q (to show ♦J and invite an underlead). West duly continues with ♦7, East winning ♦J and defending best by leading ♦3, forcing dummy to ruff.

You cash ♣A (West playing ♣J) and now carefully cross to ♠A to

Dealer: North, Vulnerability: Neither

♠ 2		♠ KQ10									
♥ AQ63		♥ J9									
♦ 85		♦ QJ93									
♣ AK6532		♣ Q1098									
♠ J8764	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 1087		♠ A953									
♦ AK107		♥ K542									
♣ J		♦ 642									
		♣ 74									

### What Happened

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

(1) Oops.

(2) Normal six-card repeat, and better than the less economical 2♥ (which tends to imply extra strength).

Contract: 2♣ (by N), Opening Lead: ♦Q

### What Should Have Happened

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

(1) Yes — responding the cheaper of fours.  
 (2) North’s hand skyrockets in value after the heart fit is unearthed.

Contract: 4♥ (by S), Opening Lead: ♦A

lead up ♣7. West does best to discard, so you win ♣K and ruff ♣2 with 2♥. West is welcome to overruff and lead ♠7, for you can ruff in dummy, ruff ♣3 with ♥K and now cross to ♥AQ, needing the four outstanding trumps to split 2-2. When they do, you can enjoy dummy’s ♣65 and claim your game.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk