

Using Bidding Space to Save Bidding Space

By Mike Lawrence

South opened a quiet one diamond and found himself guessing what to do on the next round when East jumped to five clubs. I sympathize with South's decision to bid six diamonds. Who can tell what the right bid is. If North has no aces, five diamonds is enough. If North has two aces, seven notrump may be the best spot.

How do you feel about South's bidding?

North suggested after the hand that South should have opened two clubs. That suggestion might have been sensible, but it would not have kept the opponents out of the bidding. South can bid spades, but East would still be there with his five club bid, giving South more or less the same problem.

How should South handle this situation?

West took his ace of clubs and late in the play, he got his ace of spades, setting six diamonds one trick.

There is a simple solution to this disaster. Play that a four notrump opening asks for aces. In an earlier hand in this Web Page, I mentioned this use for an opening four notrump bid. On that hand, it came up as a theoretical thought. On this hand, it came up as a reality.

Using four notrump as Blackwood means you can't open four notrump to show 27-28 points, but that is a small price. In my lifetime, I can remember only one hand where I wanted to show the big balanced hand. Since I have no idea how to respond to a 27 point opening four notrump bid, I am happy to have a meaning for four notrump that I can understand.

In my lifetime, I have opened four notrump to ask for aces on six or seven hands. I won't claim that I gained on all of them but I will claim that I never had a bad result by doing so. In every case, we avoided various potential dangers.

**N-S VUL
SOUTH DEALS**

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2C	2S	5C	1D 6D
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	♠K Q J 7 5 ♥Q 5 2 ♦J 4 2 ♣J 5		
♠A 10 6 4 ♥7 ♦9 3 ♣A K 10 9 7 3	♠9 ♥A K J ♦A K Q 10 8 7 6 5 ♣2		♠8 3 2 ♥10 9 8 6 4 3 ♦-- ♣Q 8 6 4

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SPECIAL ASIDE

Winning players have learned that when an opponent opens a strong two club bid, it is worthwhile bidding on weak hands with good suits. It disrupts the opponents' bidding.

Say that your RHO opens with two clubs and you have one of these hands. You note that you are not vulnerable and they are. Should you bid with these three hands and if so, what?

#1

♠QJ8763
♥43
♦873
♣32

#2

♠873
♥K3
♦KQJ83
♣873

#3

♠A
♥K1086543
♦3
♣Q1076

SUGGESTIONS

#1

♠QJ8763

♥43

♦873

♣32

Bid two spades if you feel conservative and three otherwise. Passing with this hand leaves opener room to develop his hand. He can show the kind of hand he has and his partner will have time to show what he has too. Do not let your opponents bid their big hands by themselves.

#2

♠873

♥K3

♦KQJ83

♣873

I would bid two diamonds with this. You might bid three if you felt brave. Even the two diamond bid can hurt their bidding. Say that your LHO passes and your partner bids three diamonds. Opener can't rebid at the two level any more. The lost bidding space can hurt them.

#3

♠A

♥K1086543

♦3

♣Q1076

Bid four hearts. It is true that you can go down a ton, but they may not know that doubling you is the best they can do. They will worry that they have a slam and may give up the penalty in favor of looking for a slam. If they do, their bidding may not be perfect since you have taken away three of their precious rounds of bidding.

Here is a hand as seen by opener.

SOUTH

♠AKJ942

♥Q

♦AKQ4

♣AJ

First, the uncontested auction.

West	North	East	South
			2C
Pass	2D	Pass	2S
Pass	3C	Pass	3D
Pass	4D	Pass	4NT
Pass	5C	Pass	6D
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Your partner has two small spades with five diamonds to the jack. Six diamonds is cold.

Now, the contested auction.

SOUTH

♠AKJ942

♥Q

♦AKQ4

♣AJ

West	North	East	South
			2C
2H	Pass	3H	3S
Pass	4S	Pass	?

Without knowing about partner's length in diamond, you more or less have to pass four spades. You will make it, but it is not the same as when you can explore during the bidding and find the diamond fit. Here is the complete hand.

West's gentle two heart bid and East's quiet raise stole enough bidding room from South that N-S missed their diamond slam. A serious loss. You will note that West was not in big trouble if he got doubled, either. With sensible play, West will take seven or eight tricks.

The message is clear.

WHEN YOUR OPPONENTS OPEN WITH TWO CLUBS, YOU SHOULD VIEW IT AS AN EXCUSE TO BID.

With discretion, you can bid effectively and will gain a lot of good results when the opponents fail to come to grips with the bidding. It will happen.

	♠8 5	
	♥9 7 4	
	♦J 10 6 3 2	
	♣Q 6 2	
♠7 3		
♥K J 10 8 2		
♦8		♠Q 10 6
♣10 8 7 5 3		♥A 6 5 3
	♠A K J 9 4 2	♦8 6 5
	♥Q	♣K 9 4
	♦A K Q 4	
	♣A J	