

WHEN AUCTIONS BECOME AWKWARD

You, South, hold:

♠ J 10 5 4 3 2
 ♥ Q
 ♦ J 8 3
 ♣ 10 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♥	2♣	Pass
Pass	Double	Pass	?

Partner's re-opening double shows short clubs, allowing for you to have trap-passed. However, given the auction, with three passes to partner's opening bid, your North must have better than minimum values (given that you hold 5 HCP).

If I had been sitting South, I would now have bid 4♠. After all, South knows there is at least a 9-card spade fit. Whenever I have a 5+ card suit and partner makes a re-opening double after my pass of an overcall, I jump at least one level when I have about 5-6 HCP. Essentially, the jump assures partner that I have a 5-card suit, rather than a 4-card suit, for my bid in response to the re-opening double.

Try it, it works. Here's the full hand, just as an example:

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

North couldn't really bid again over 2♠, yet 11 tricks were easy.

Try this hand. Partner opens 1♣ and your RHO (West) overcalls 4♠. You hold:

♠ A
 ♥ Q 5
 ♦ A K J 10 9 6 2
 ♣ Q 7 4

Assuming that West holds decent spades (a risk against this particular player!), partner's values must be more useful to you than you may have expected without the pre-emptive intervene. Therefore, I just bid 6♦.

Only eight of the 27 pairs bid the slam. I suspect that many Wests just overcalled 3♠, an awkward intervene but one that leaves you more space to go wrong rather than right!

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

Partner held just the right cards for the slam, as expected.

I didn't think the next hand was that awkward, and many more pairs bid to the best contract, but several didn't. Here's the hand:

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

Playing 2 over 1 game forcing, this was the auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	2♣ (nat, GF)
Pass	2♥ (reverse)	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♣ (clubs)	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

I meant to rebid 4♣ over 3♣, but (automatic-mod) bid 3♦ instead. We don't play Minorwood, so 4♣ just sets the suit and asks for cue bids. Once partner couldn't cue bid in spades, she had to have 6+ good clubs, so 6♣ was easy.

(Note: My 3♦ then 4♣ was still reasonable, but 4♣ makes life far simpler for partner, which is something one should aspire to in the bidding! Keep it simple.)

Bear in mind, even playing Standard or Acol, once partner responds at the 2-level, opener's reverse becomes a game force, so South should be comfortable rebidding 3♣. There is no need to distort the auction with fourth-suit forcing or such. THAT makes the auction awkward, so should be avoid unless it is necessary.

The lesson from today:

1. Keep thinking about what partner has told you about their hand, or what you know about their hand.
The first hand, for example, reveals that partner has at least 15+ HCP, given that both opponents passed on the first round and you only have 5 HCP.
2. Make practical bids when in awkward situations.
3. Keep things as 'simple' as possible.

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