

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

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

♠ K J 3 2
♥ 9 4 3 2
♦ A Q 3
♣ 3 2



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♣	Pass
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 ♣
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 NT
All pass			

Auction Commentary: In the modern world, many Souths will make a takeout double of 1 ♣, even vulnerable, but the majority will still find that too rich and pass. When West also passes, North should balance with 1 NT. In the direct seat, a 1 NT overcall shows 15-18 HCP, but in the balancing seat, it shows 11-14 HCP. With 15-18 HCP in the balancing seat, start with a double, and then rebid in NT.

Holding two four-card majors, South can use Stayman - (the same as if it were a strong notrump in direct seat), intending to invite if partner shows a 4-card major. When partner denies a major, South bids 2 NT. This is still an invitational sequence; partner will bid a game at the top of the balancing range, with 14 HCP. When the vast majority of high cards are known to be in one hand, (here, that's East), the declarer will often play at least one trick better.

Opening Lead: ♣ A. Balancing 1 NT bids do not necessarily promise a stopper, especially in a minor, so East should lead the ♣ A and gauge the lay of the land. After that, they should exit in diamonds so as not to give up any easy tricks to declarer.

Planning the Play: North can set up 1 extra trick if the hearts are 3-3, and they can set up 2 additional tricks by playing on spades. We don't know yet whether the diamonds are worth 3 or 4 tricks. Since spades offer the most additional tricks, we should win the diamond in our hand and play a spade. This temporarily blocks the diamond suit, but we have plenty of time to straighten that out while we still have heart entries to our hand.

Takeaway: We see another instance where our bid means one thing in the direct seat and a different thing in the balancing seat. When you are filling out, or reviewing, your convention card with partner, make sure to discuss these situations while you do so.

Board 5

North Deals

N-S Vul

	♠ 7 3 2		
	♥ A		
	♦ K Q 10 8 4 3		
	♣ K 8 7		
♠ A Q J 9 8 6	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 5 4	
♥ K 9 6		♥ Q J 8 7	
♦ 7 6		♦ A 9 5	
♣ Q 6		♣ A J 10 9	
	♠ K 10		
	♥ 10 5 4 3 2		
	♦ J 2		
	♣ 5 4 3 2		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

Auction Commentary: If West were in the direct seat, they would bid 1 ♠, a simple overcall, with a wide range. A 2 ♠ bid in direct seat is weak, showing less than an opening bid with a six-card suit. It is preemptive, an attempt to disrupt the opponents' auction.

Here there is no need for a disruption; the opponents have had their conversation. One said they had an opening bid, the other said they were too weak to respond. In the balancing seat, it is better to use the jump to 2 ♠ as an intermediate hand. It shows a hand good enough to open the bidding with, but not so good that you want to double and then bid your suit. Additionally, it promises a good six-card suit.

With 12 HCP and a known fit for partner who has shown an opening hand and six spades, East should jump to game. The ♣ AJT9 is worth well more than 5 points, because any missing clubs are very likely dead to a finesse through North.

Opening Lead: ♦ K. North could lead the ♥ A and try for a ruff, but they are very unlikely to find partner with an entry. Additionally, if partner has ♥ JTxx(x), we may be giving away a heart trick on the defense.

Planning the Play: On a really bad day, we could have one loser in each suit and go down, but if both black Kings are wrong, there is nothing we can do about it. We might as well be positive about things. Win the ♦ A and play a spade to the Ace. We would like to finesse, but if the ♠ K is offside, North will cash a diamond trick. We are going to try and prevent that. Lead the ♣ Q. North will play low, and when the Queen holds, repeat the finesse and cash the ♣ A, pitching the losing diamond. Now you can play another trump and make 11 tricks. Try not to be annoyed with partner when she says you could have made 12.

Takeaway: Jumps are not preemptive when there is no reason to preempt. If the opponents' auction has stopped on its own, because responder wasn't strong enough to be able to respond, use the jump to show an intermediate hand (12-16 HCP) and at least a six-card suit.

Board 11
 South Deals
 None Vul

	♠ 4 3 2		
	♥ 5 4 3 2		
	♦ 6 5 3		
	♣ J 3 2		
♠ 8 7 5	♠ A Q		
♥ 10 9 6	♥ K Q 8 7		
♦ 4 2	♦ A J 10 8		
♣ A Q 9 8 7	♣ K 6 5		
	♠ K J 10 9 6		
	♥ A J		
	♦ K Q 9 7		
	♣ 10 4		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♠
Pass	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 NT	All pass		

Auction Commentary: In the direct seat (immediately over an opening bid), a jump to 2 NT shows length in the two lower unbid suits. In the balancing seat, it is more productive to use this bid to show a hand stronger than a 1 NT opener, at least 18 HCP, depending on what you and your partner agree to. If you have the minors in the balancing seat, you can always bid 2 ♦ at your first turn and then 3 ♣ on the next if it seems right.

West has only 6 HCP, but they are all in a good 5-card suit, and the possible missing King or Jack is very likely in the South hand where it can be finessed. West should bid a game.

Opening Lead: ♦ K. It is next-to-impossible that partner can hold a ♠ honor. The opponents have bid a notrump game, usually representing at least 25 HCP, and you have 14 HCP. On a good day, partner will have a jack. On a very good day, it will be the jack of diamonds.

Play Commentary: Assuming that East has 5 club tricks, they start with 7 tricks total and need to develop some more. They can create 1 trick each in hearts and diamonds by leading high cards in those suits. South likely has ♦ KQ9x, so we can probably only develop one additional trick in that suit. In hearts, if someone has a doubleton ♥ J, we can take 3 additional tricks. So, I think declarer should lead a high heart out of their hand. Even if clubs are breaking poorly, with careful play, East should be able to come to at least nine tricks.

Takeaway: It is important to discuss with partner which of your bids may have a different meaning when it comes to whether they were made in the direct seat or in the balancing seat. Any agreement is preferable to a disagreement when it comes to what your bids mean.