

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

PART #4

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While the strategy needed to make the correct play is often obvious, some hands offer several possible solutions. As in the first three sessions, I am going to present a problem hand and then talk through various options as they occur at the table.

#1. Let's begin with a bidding problem. I picked up this great hand:

♠AK10983 ♥KQ4 ♦AQ ♣Q3

I'm up first and open one spade. LHO passes and my partner bid 2NT which we use as the Jacoby game forcing raise. I'm sure we must have slam but what do I do now?

Since I don't have a control in clubs it must be right to see if partner does. My rebid of three spades showed 17+ hcp and no shortness. Partner next cue bids four diamonds and this tells me we are without a club control. It is our style to cue bid first and second controls so when he bypassed the club suit, I knew partner did not have the club ace, king, singleton, or void. I really like my hand but I have to trust my partner and stop in game. Here is the complete hand:

Dir: West ♠ KJ54
Vul: none ♥ AQ5
 ♦ K53
 ♣ 1098

♠ 7	W North	E	♠ 62
♥ 1087	e	a	♥ 9642
♦ J732	s	s	♦ 10984
♣ AKJ75	t South	t	♣ 642

♠ AQ10983
♥ KJ3
♦ AQ
♦ Q3

West led the AK of clubs and I soon claimed the rest. At many tables after hearing the forcing raise, South jumped to 4NT, found they were not missing two aces, and bid the spade slam. Holding a small doubleton in an unbid suit is a danger sign. Remember: If the question is WHICH aces rather than HOW MANY aces, Blackwood may not help.

#2. Now let's consider some ethical problems.

I held: ♠ 10 ♥ K43 ♦ K982 ♣ AKJ53

My left hand opponent opened a 15-17 1NT and my partner and right hand opponent both pass. Our agreement is that in direct seat a two club bid shows the majors but in fourth seat it is natural. Opener passed my two club bid and my partner bid two spades. This is a bit of a surprise since he took no action in direct seat. But, I have shown my hand and must hope his suit is good enough.

Now let's change the auction. This time my partner alerts my bid as showing the majors. Partner bids two spades, my right hand opponent passes, and it is my call. What do I do now?

It is important to understand I have received *unauthorized information*. I must continue as if I was unaware of partner's incorrect interpretation of my bid. If I was going to pass without the alert it is important that I now take the same action.

Let's look at a similar dilemma. You hold: ♠ 4 ♥ KQ2 ♦ 765 ♣ KQ10984. You and your left hand opponent pass and in third chair your partner opens one spade. It's late and you are tired and forget you are playing the Drury convention and after your right hand opponent passes, you respond two clubs. Partner properly alerts this as a limit raise in spades and rebids two spades. Again you have now received *unauthorized information* and must pass.

Dealing with unauthorized information is a concept with which many players are not familiar. This great game must be played at the highest ethical level. Please give this a lot of thought.

#3. Here is a bidding problem. I held: ♠ 4 ♥ J10984 ♦ A85 ♣ KJ98.

With no one vulnerable, my RHO opponent starts the auction with a weak two spade bid. After waiting 8-10 seconds I passed. My LHO passed and my partner balanced with 2NT. The range for his bid in pass-out seat is 14-17. Opener passes and I bid

three diamonds as a transfer to hearts only to hear LHO now bid three spades. This is passed around to me. What do I do now?

Actually the three spade bid makes it easier for me. My hand is good enough to invite game but not insist upon it. The solution is to double. This gives my partner three choices: 1) Defend three spades doubled; 2) Bid three notrumps; or 3) Bid four hearts. He chooses four hearts and soon wins eleven tricks. Here is the entire hand:

				♠ 4
Dlr: West				♥ J10984
Vul: none				♦ A85
				♣ KJ98
♠ KQ10965	W	North	E	♠ J87
♥ K3	e		a	♥ Q62
♦ 973	s		s	♦ K1062
♣ 75	t	South	t	♣ Q32
				♠ A32
				♥ A75
				♦ QJ4
				♣ A1064

#4. Here is another bidding decision. I held ♠ 2 ♥ 9765 ♦ 8543 ♣ 8732.

Yes, it is a genuine Yarborough...not even a ten. Of course my partner opens a strong two clubs. I respond two hearts which we use to show a double negative. Specifically, it denies an ace or king or more than two queens. It gets worse when my partner rebids two spades. Well, that was predictable. What do I do now?

I can't pass because partner may have game in his own hand or a second suit that I can support. With this partner I use three clubs here as showing a club suit or a hand like this that has no other bid. Things look up when partner rebids three hearts. I raise to

game and am relieved when my partner passes. I'm reminded I am declarer when my left hand opponent leads the ace of clubs and partner puts down a beautiful hand:

			♠ AKQ109
Dlr: West			♥ KQJ82
Vul: none			♦ A
			♣ K9
♠ J763	W North	E	♠ 854
♥ 103	e	a	♥ A4
♦ QJ97	s	s	♦ K1062
♣ A54	t South	t	♣ QJ106
			♠ 2
			♥ 9765
			♦ 8543
			♣ 8732

The play of the hand was easy losing only to the two missing aces. The important points from this problem are: 1) When partner opens two clubs, you can't pass his first suit bid, and 2) You must have an agreement on how to continue when you cannot raise partner's suit. Holding unbalanced hands, most partnerships play a two club opening forcing to game or until opener has rebid a suit. It is important to discuss this with your partners.

5. We are vulnerable in a team game and I pick up ♠ 98 ♥ 8 ♦ J109532 ♣ AQ54. My partner opens 1NT, the opponents are silent, and I have to choose a response. Should I pass? Transfer to diamonds? What do I do now?

Since there is a slight chance for game, I'm not going to give up too fast. I respond 2NT which is a transfer to diamonds. If partner shows a minimum or no fit, I will sign off in three diamonds. Things look up when I partner bid three clubs which is a super accept

for diamonds. I continue with three hearts which by agreement shows a singleton or void. Partner continues to cooperate by cue bidding three spades. I next cue bid four clubs and partner slows down by just bidding four diamonds. I raise to five diamonds and hope I have enough. Here is a recap of the bidding:

PARD	ME
1NT	2NT
3C	3H
3S	4C
4D	5D

	♠ 98
Dlr: West	♥ 8
Vul: N/S	♦ J109532
	♣ AQ54

♠ 642	W North	E	♠ KJ53
♥ AK103	e	a	♥ Q9762
♦ 8764	s	s	♦ Q
♣ 63	t South	t	♣ J72

♠ AQ107
♥ J54
♦ AK
♣ K1098

West leads the king of Hearts before shifting to a trump. The diamond queen was singleton, the spade finesse worked, and the clubs broke favorably so my partner quickly wrapped up the contract with an overtrick. This was a big win when our opponents stopped in a part score.

The three heart bid showing shortness is a powerful agreement. It can keep you out of bad notrump contracts.

6. I was playing in a local pairs event and picked up this huge hand:

♠AK1087 ♥KJ3 ♦KQ ♣KQ6

My right hand opponent opened one club and I doubled. My left hand opponent passed and my partner could only manage a one diamond response. This shows he holds 0-7 hcp but I wasn't going to give up. I would have passed one diamond with 11-14 points, with 15-17 I would have overcalled 1NT instead of doubling, and doubled and then rebid 1NT with 18-20. I am now going to jump to 2NT to show 21-22 high card points. My partner rebids 3D. What do I do now?

It's time for me to recognize it is a partnership game and trust my partner. I reluctantly pass and that turned out to be the winning action. Here is the entire hand:

				♠ AK1087
	Dlr: West			♥ KJ3
	Vul: none			♦ KQ
				♣ KQ6
♠ Q93	W	North	E	♠ J52
♥ AQ8	e		a	♥ 9642
♦ A85	s		s	♦ 104
♣ J732	t	South	t	♣ A1054
				♠ 64
				♥ 1075
				♦ J97632
				♣ 98

My partner lost only the three aces for a score of +130. Most N/S pairs were going down in spade or notrump contracts. It was difficult to stop short of game with my hand but having accurately described it, I had to let it go.

7. In fourth chair I pick up this hand with both minors: ♠J ♥Q5 ♦AQJ86 ♣Q7543. While I am evaluating the hand, my partner opens 2NT. My partner and I have a way to show this distribution and I've been wanting to try it out. I respond 3♠ which is a relay to

3NT. Partner does as instructed and I now bid 4♠. This shows slam interest with 5-5 or greater length in the minors and shortness in spades. With no slam interest, partner will sign off in 4NT. I'm delighted when partner accepts my slam try by bidding 6♣. I have no way to check for keycards so I am not going to bid 7♣ but since this is a pairs event, I am going to consider 6NT. If partner has the king of diamonds along with the AK of clubs, both 6NT and 7♣ could be cold. What do I do now?

One of the experts, I think Bob Hamman, has a saying something like "Don't play me for perfect cards, I won't have them." I expect a successful small slam will receive an above average score and our session so far is good and it's not the time to swing. If I felt our game needed something extra, I might give more consideration to 6NT.

I pass and my opponent leads the king of spades. I put my hand down as partner is declarer. Here is the complete hand:

			♠ J	
Dlr: West			♥ Q5	
Vul: none			♦ AQJ86	
			♣ Q7543	
♠ KQ108	W North	E	♠ 6532	
♥ 876	e	a	♥ 10942	
♦ 543	s	s	♦ K109	
♣ J108	t South	t	♣ 92	
			♠ A974	
			♥ AKJ3	
			♦ 72	
			♣ AK6	

Our 2NT range is 20-21 hcp and I see partner with such prime cards has upgraded his 19 point hand. I agree with his evaluation.

Partner won the ace of spades, drew trumps, and took the diamond finesse for a possible overtrick. I was happy to see that lose because that meant we were in the right contract.

8. I'm playing in a strong pairs event and pick up this hand: ♠QJ852 ♥AK4 ♦8 ♣AQJ7. We are at unfavorable vulnerability and the auction has begun:

LHO	PARD	RHO	ME
3♥	4♦	Pass	??

I have a nice hand but no fit for partner and we are already at the four-level. What do I do now?

Auctions crowded by opponents' preempts require you and your partner to have agreements on many different sequences. Here we have an agreement that 4NT is natural so that is my choice. This ends the auction and here is the hand:

			♠ K10
Dir: West			♥ 7
Vul: N/S			♦ KQJ1095
			♣ K432
♠ 63	W North	E	♠ A974
♥ QJ109532	e	a	♥ 86
♦ 73	s	s	♦ A642
♣ 65	t South	t	♣ 1098
			♠ QJ852
			♥ AK4
			♦ 8
			♣ AQJ7

I won the first heart and only lost the two aces. The score of +660 beat the scores of those in five diamonds and in four spades. It is always important to keep in mind the form of scoring being used.

Another note on the auction. Too many partnerships use 4NT only as an ace-asking convention. A general rule is that if you have not agreed on a trump suit, the bid is natural.

9. Let's finish with a defensive problem. I'm on lead against a four spade contract (1♠ - 3♠ - 4♠) and I hold: ♠9 ♥QJ105 ♦874 ♣97654. I lead the queen of hearts and here is what I see:

	♠KJ642 ♥K8 ♦J632 ♣K3
♠ 9	
♥ QJ105	
♦ 874	
♣ 97654	

It appears my lead is a good one as I win the trick. However, my partner followed with the discouraging deuce. What do I do now?

I don't think my partner is short in hearts so it's clear he does not want me to lead another one. It's unlikely any diamond trick will go away but a club might. Therefore, I am going to trust my partner and shift to a club. My partner quickly wins two club tricks and then cashes the ace of hearts.

Here is the entire hand:

	♠ KJ642		
Dlr: West	♥ K8		
Vul: none	♦ J632		
	♣ K3		
♠ 9	W North	E	♠ 5
♥ QJ105	e	a	♥ A9632
♦ 874	s	s	♦ 1095
♣ 97654	t South	t	♣ AQJ2

♠ AQ10873

♥ 74

♦ AKQ

♣ 108

If I had continued a heart at trick two, declarer would eventually discard a club on the fourth diamond and wrap up his game.

Remember: It's a partnership game!