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This series looks at suit opening bids, change of suit responses & minimum rebids. In the play there is a combination of drawing trumps and of ruffing on table. Some deals include play in a 4-4 fit. Part 1 of 2. Updated winter

2015/6	Contract: 25
Y1 VBlue #11 Opening bids & minimum rebids Part 1 ACOL	By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 1
Dealer: North	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

		North	
		♠ QT63	
		♥ AJ987	
		♦ Q3	
		♣ A4	
West			
♠ 98			
♥ Q532			
♦ AJ94			
♣ K85			
		East	
		♠ A54	
		♥ K64	
		♦ T72	
		♣ QJ63	
		South	
		♠ KJ72	
		♥ T	
		♦ K865	
		♣ T972	

This set of six deals (part one of two) is concerned with opening bids and rebids on minimum hands. Sometimes you will be the opening bidder and sometimes the responder.

Here, on Hand 1, you have to decide what to respond and subsequently how far to bid.

That shouldn't provide too much of a problem, we think.

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	P	1♠
P	2♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ 9

Bidding.

Partner opens 1♥ with his 13 points and 5-4-2-2 hand pattern. Obligated to respond with something with 7 points we bid 1♠ with our four-card suit and partner has to find a rebid.

With a four-card Spade holding North raises to 2♠, simultaneously showing trump support and a minimum hand.

A minimum raise of responder's suit shows a minimum hand – somewhere in the 12 to 14 point range (give or take a little). With nothing to spare for a simple response we should Pass 2♠ (hurriedly). However, we have located a 4-4 trump fit and that is usually the right place in which to play a hand.

Play.

With a revolting choice of leads against a suit contract West opts for a trump. From the defenders' viewpoint a trump lead might be right in one of two ways. It might prevent us from taking too many ruffs (the aim is for the defence to play as many trumps as they can). The other side of the coin is that a trump lead gives nothing away and forces us – as declarer – to do all the hard work.

A **count** of winners and losers isn't all that helpful but to preserve the harmonies we do it anyway. We have three Spade tricks by force and may be able to take a ruff or two on top of that. We have the ♥A for one Heart trick and superficially no Heart losers. We have one sure but slow Diamond winner and three Diamond losers. In Clubs we have one winner and three losers.

Now, we might be able to trump some of our losing minor-suit cards on table but the defenders are preventing that line of play by leading trumps.

We can count on three Spade tricks, one Heart, one Diamond and one Club. That's six. Where are two more coming from? Could we make **five** trump tricks?

East takes the ♠A and plays another trump. Instead of playing on Diamonds (aiming to ruff two losers on table) a more promising line of play is to make use of our Heart *intermediates*.

Winning the second trump in hand we run the ♥10, allowing East to take his ♥K. Another trump lead clears all the Spades from the defenders' hands (but achieves the objective of preventing us from taking ruffs in dummy). Note that we can only make *four* trump tricks now (three winners and one extra by ruffing).

We win this trump on table and continue with Hearts, cashing the ♥A and playing the ♥J. This is taken with West's ♥Q as we pitch Clubs from hand. This way we lose two Hearts but – by way of compensation – we establish three Heart tricks and dump Club losers.

Now we have – in total – three Spades, three Hearts, one Diamond (easy to set up), the ♠A and a Club ruff in the closed hand. That totals nine tricks so we record an overtrick.


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2015/6	Contract: 25
Y1 VBlue #11 Opening bids & minimum rebids Part 1 ACOL	By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 2
Dealer: East	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	2♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ J

Bidding.

We open 1♠ in second seat with our excellent six-card Spade suit and 11 points. The hand is certainly worth an opening bid, Passing would risk missing a game.

Partner responds 2♣ and we have to find a descriptive rebid. That task is easy on this hand. A simple rebid of our own suit shows a minimum opening bid and – usually – a one-suited hand. Here, by bypassing 2♥ and 2♦ partner can be confident that we don't have four cards in either red suit (and failure to support Clubs shows no length there either).

With a minimum two-level response and having been told that the hand has no future North wisely Passes 2♠. Bidding further (2NT?) would show poor judgement.

Play.

West leads the top of his Diamond sequence (the ♦J) and we count winners and losers. We have a trump to lose (surely we cannot capture the ♠K), the ♥A to lose and three Diamond tricks to lose. On the other hand we can see five Spade winners, two Heart winners and the ♣A. That's eight winners and five losers.

East-West cash two Diamond tricks and then, nervous about setting up the ♦Q on table, they switch to Hearts. West takes his ♥A and tries his luck in Clubs. We now have it easy.

We take the ♣A and immediately set about trumps, playing the ♠10 to the ♠J. West captures his King and persists with the attack in Clubs but we are home and dry. We ruff and draw trumps before cashing a couple of Hearts.

Eventually East takes his ♦A but that's all he can manage – we have our eight tricks.

North		East	
♠ T		♠ 753	
♥ Q93		♥ 764	
♦ Q843		♦ AK7	
♣ AQT97		♣ KJ65	
West		South	
♠ K42		♠ AQJ986	
♥ AT85		♥ KJ2	
♦ JT9		♦ 652	
♣ 832		♣ 4	

Here you have to decide whether you are strong enough to open the bidding.

How do you bid subsequently?



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Y1 VBlue #11 Opening bids & minimum rebids Part 1 ACOL Contract: 4H
By: South
Date: 24/03/2016 Board #: 3
Dealer: South Vulnerable: None
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West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	2♦	P	2♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ J

Bidding.

We open 1♠ (clear-cut with 13 points and a five-card suit) and partner responds 2♦. As yet we know nothing about partner's hand (other than the meagre information that North has at least 10 points and at least four Diamonds).

As opener it is our responsibility to make a *descriptive rebid* and best is to show our second suit by rebidding 2♥. Yes, our Hearts are tatty but so what? We won't play in Hearts unless partner likes the suit – what we are doing is trying to complete the crucially important task of describing our hand.

North alarms us a little by raising our gentle rebid all the way to 4♥ but we shouldn't worry too much. A well-brought up partner should have at least four trumps for this bid and sufficient values to play in game.

Play.

Dummy is displayed with exactly what we might expect – four trumps and 13 points.

West leads the ♣J from his Club sequence and we can see at once that the ♣Q is going to get crushed by East's ♣K. Nonetheless we may as well try our luck and call for the ♣Q. East naturally covers and we take our ♣A.

We should look at drawing trumps as our first shot, so we play a Heart to the ♥J, which wins, and then play the ♥K next. West takes his ♥A, cashes the ♠10 and leads a Diamond through the ♦K on the table. An elated East tries to cash his ♦A Q but we ruff the second of these, draw the last trump and we have the rest with five winning Spades.

There was never anything the opponents could have done about the hand. 4♥ was always making.

North

♠ Q4
♥ KQJ2
♦ K9853
♣ Q8

West

♠ T8
♥ A54
♦ 642
♣ JT952



East

♠ 9532
♥ 97
♦ AQT7
♣ K74

South

♠ AKJ76
♥ T863
♦ J
♣ A63

What should you bid on this hand on the second round of bidding?

A repeat of your excellent first suit?

No-trumps?

Your moth-eaten second suit?



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2015/6
Y1 VBlue #11 Opening bids & minimum rebids Part 1 ACOL Contract: 3D
By: South
Date: 24/03/2016 Board #: 4
Dealer: West Vulnerable: None
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North		East	
♠ A8732		♠ J5	
♥ Q4		♥ A852	
♦ K532		♦ JT4	
♣ KQ		♣ A932	
West		South	
♠ T964		♠ KQ	
♥ KT63		♥ J97	
♦ Q		♦ A9876	
♣ JT86		♣ 754	



Here you have to decide what to respond after partner's opening bid.

Subsequently you must decide whether to kill the auction or to carry on bidding.

West	North	East	South
P	1♠	P	2♦
P	3♦	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ J

Bidding.

With an *semi-balanced hand*, a term we sometimes use for 5-4-2-2 patterns, partner opens 1♠. When we respond 2♦ North rebids 3♦ to show a four-card fit with our suit and a minimum opening bid.

We shouldn't be tempted to bid again (we are minimum for our two-level response, after all) so we should simply Pass, leaving the contract in a Diamond part-score.

Play.

West leads the ♣J from his near-sequence (a holding of ♣J 10 8 counts as being worth ♣J 10 9. Near enough, anyway) and we can count five top tricks (three Spades and two Diamonds). However, with nine trumps between the two hands we can also do some ruffing. If the opponents are in charge they only have three top tricks themselves (two Hearts and the ♣A) so this deal is going to need just a little work.

We play the ♣Q from dummy on the first trick and East takes his ♣A. With nothing better to do at trick two East plays back a Club, allowing us to score the ♣K.

We have no reason to defer drawing trumps so try our luck with the ♦K and ♦A. Maybe trumps are 2-2? Nope, not today. On this lie of the cards East still has a winning Diamond. No matter – he can keep it for later.

We cash the ♠K Q, ruff a Club on table for entry and cash the ♠A. Maybe Spades are 3-3? Nope, not today. Still, by now all we have left to lose are the two top Hearts (the ♥A K) and the master trump. Together with the ♣A that makes just four losers overall and we have our contract.


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2015/6

Y1 VBlue #11 Opening bids & minimum rebids Part 1 ACOL

Contract: 4S

By: South

Date: 24/03/2016

Board #: 5

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: None

[Play this hand online!](#)

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♣
P	1♥	P	1♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ K

Bidding.

Here we open 1♣ naturally enough in third seat and rebid 1♠ when partner responds 1♥. Now North surprises us a little by jumping to 3♠ (he is a Passed hand, remember).

We are able to pinpoint partner's hand pretty accurately – he must have 10 or 11 points (he is unlikely to have more as he Passed as dealer) and he must have four Spades. We are being invited to the party – do we accept the invitation?

Well, with a robust 15 points, excellent trumps and a fine side-suit it would be lily-livered to Pass. We bid 4♠ as quickly as we can and await the dummy with interest.

Play.

North's hand is exactly what he advertised (we have a rare and valuable partner!) and dummy is just what we need. 3NT would be a poor contract but the 4-4 Spade fit is just where we want to alight.

West leads the ♦K from his Diamond sequence and we should **count our tricks**.

If trumps break 3-2 (a 68% chance, you may recall) the hand is easy. We can see four Spades, two red Aces and three Clubs. That totals nine tricks and an extra trick simply has to come from a ruff.

We take the ♦A and immediately test trumps. When they prove to be 3-2 we draw the last one and turn our attention to our side-suit.

The ♣A K Q bring no joy (the suit might have broken 3-3 but is 4-2 instead). Still, by ruffing a Club on table we score our tenth trick and – at the same time – establish our baby Club. Although the irritating opponents gain the lead and make two tricks we make the last two with our master trump and long Club.

That's an overtrick.

North

♠ K764

♥ A9763

♦ A4

♣ T2

West

♠ J9

♥ QT2

♦ KQJ8

♣ J976



East

♠ 532

♥ KJ5

♦ 97532

♣ 84

South

♠ AQT8

♥ 84

♦ T6

♣ AKQ53


This deal allows you an opportunity to show both of your suits; later you have to make a decision as to the level of the auction.

It's the old, old story – game or part-score?


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2015/6
Y1 VBlue #11 Opening bids & minimum rebids Part 1 ACOL Contract: 3N
By: South
Date: 24/03/2016 Board #: 6
Dealer: East Vulnerable: None
[Play this hand online!](#)

North	
♠ A	
♥ KJT4	
♦ JT7	
♣ A9762	
West	East
♠ 9832	♠ J7654
♥ A8	♥ 76532
♦ Q65	♦ A
♣ QJT3	♣ 85
	
South	
♠ KQT	
♥ Q9	
♦ K98432	
♣ K4	

Here partner (responder) shows a good hand.

How should you continue the bidding?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♦
P	2♣	P	2♦
P	2♥	P	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ 8

Bidding.

We open the bidding in second seat with our longest suit, 1♦. After partner responds 2♣ we rebid 2♦ to show long Diamonds (at least five) and to show a minimum hand.

Partner now bids 2♥ and we know that with a weak responding hand he would have bid 1♥ rather than 2♣ on the first round. This action on behalf of our partner shows sufficient values to have opened the bidding himself and is forcing us to bid something. With much of our hand wrapped up in Spades we try 2NT and partner raises us to game.

Play.

West leads the unbid suit, Spades, and – holding rubbish in the suit – follows the modern style of leading the ♠8 (second highest from a poor suit). We count our top tricks and realise we only have five (three Spades and two Clubs).

We need to set up Diamonds so lead a Diamond at trick two and see what happens. Even if we were to lose two Diamond tricks we'd still set up four Diamonds and that would be enough for our contract. As it happens, East takes the ♦A and plays another Spade. We are now certain to make our contract whether we carry on with Diamonds or whether we change tack and go after Hearts.

As this latter line gives us a slightly better chance of overtricks we take the Spade and lead the ♥Q. West takes the ♥A and plugs away in Spades, removing our last stopper. However, we have enough tricks when we cash our Hearts – three Spades, three Hearts, the ♦K and the ♠A K.

Had the ♦Q fallen on the King (or had West pitched his remaining small Diamond) we'd have racked up a lot of tricks. However, in the ending West defends well (by keeping his Diamonds and Clubs) and we are content to make our contract on the nose.

