

LEARN WITH LARRY

Larry Cohen
Date of publish: 03/21/2019
Level: Intermediate

Vul: Both Dir: South		♠ A64 ♥ AQ1073 ♦ Q97 ♣ Q8	
♠ 1092 ♥ K52 ♦ K32 ♣ K1095		♠ K875 ♥ J96 ♦ 84 ♣ 7632	
		♠ QJ3 ♥ 84 ♦ AJ1065 ♣ AJ4	

South has a normal 1♦ opening and North a normal 1♥ response. South's proper rebid is 1NT. This shows 12-14 balanced (with 15-17 balanced, South would have opened 1NT). The 5-3-3-2 shape is considered to be balanced (along with 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2). Do not rebid the 5-card suit (many inexperienced players would rebid 2♦ instead of 1NT—to tell their partners that they have more than 4 diamonds. But, rebidding the diamonds should show at least a 6-card suit).

After the 1NT rebid, North immediately knows that this is a game (not a slam) hand. North has 14 HCP and his partner has shown 12-14. That means 26-28, surely in the game (not *partscore*, not slam) range.

Which game? North thinks of only 2 possibilities: 3NT or 4♥—nothing else is in the picture. North could simply jump to 3NT, but that would be premature. The partnership could easily have an 8-card major suit fit in hearts. Opener could (though not in this actual deal) have been dealt 3 hearts. How does North investigate?

He can't bid 2♥ (that wouldn't be forcing—it could end the auction). He shouldn't bid 3♥ (that would be invitational and would typically show at least 6 hearts). He can't bid 4♥—that would be too committal and take the partnership past 3NT. I'm not a big "convention fan," but this deal illustrates the need for "New Minor Forcing." This animal came up in a previous deal in this series. The gist of it is that a 2♣ bid here ("new minor") functions like Stayman, but looking for a 3-card, not a 4-card major. So, North would bid 2♣ (the new minor) to look for a 5-3 heart fit. South would bid 2♥ if he had 3 of them, but here, he bids 2♦ to deny 3 hearts. North now knows there is no 5-3 fit, so he signs off in 3NT.

THE PLAY

With diamonds and hearts bid by the opponents, West will likely consider leading a spade or a club. Against notrump, one usually leads their longest and strongest suit—in this case clubs. The alternative, spades, is also quite attractive. The opponents would have bid spades if they had them, so East is marked with at least some spade length. The 10 from 109x is usually a safe lead, and that is a possible choice. We'll see later how a spade lead would have done, but let's go with West's best suit, a club. Which club?

One possibility is the 5 (4th best). Another possibility is the 10 (the top of the interior sequence). On the actual deal, it doesn't make much difference. After a club lead, how should declarer play?

If the ♣K is with East, trick one won't matter. Putting up the queen would result in East covering and declarer would get his ace-jack. Playing low from dummy would mean declarer scores his jack. Later, the defense would use the ♣K to cover dummy's ♣Q, and declarer would get his ace. Best is for declarer to play the ♣Q at trick one. In the actual layout (where the opening leader has the ♣K), this gives declarer a nice gain. The queen wins the trick and declarer still remains with the AJ. So, if West ever gets in, he can't safely continue the club attack.

After the ♣Q holds, declarer will surely go after his long diamond suit. He leads the ♦Q from dummy, intending to finesse. East plays low, and the finesse loses to West's ♦K.

Should West continue clubs? If he does, it goes into declarer's AJ—giving him an extra club trick. West needs to have observed East's signal at trick one. When dummy's ♣Q won the first trick, East should have played the ♣2. A low card as a signal to partner's lead says: "Partner—I don't like the suit you led—try something else."

West should get the message and shift. With the opponents owning both red suits, West will try the ♠. Declarer has nothing better to do than try the finesse. He plays low from dummy and East wins the ♠K. Now East is in, and likely will go back to his partner's first-led suit, clubs. The lead goes through the AJ and declarer can take his ace now, or put in the jack (losing) and get his ace later.

In either case, let's take stock. Declarer won the ♣Q at trick one and lost to the ♦K at trick 2. He lost to the ♠K and then clubs came through. When in with his ♣A, he can count the following winners: Spades: 2, Hearts: 1, Diamonds: 4, Clubs: 2. That adds up to 9 tricks. Declarer can choose to cash out those 9 tricks to make his game. But, at *matchpoint* scoring, where overtricks are crucial, he faces a common dilemma. He can try the heart finesse (low to the queen) and if it wins (the ♥K is outside) he will have a 10th trick. But, if it loses, he risks defeat (the defense will have taken all 4 kings, and likely will now have long clubs to take).

Should declarer take the risk? On this deal (I'm brilliant when I can see all 52 cards), yes. But, move the ♥K to East and the answer is no. It's just a guess.

What if the opening lead were a spade? East would win the ♠K and return the suit. Declarer could win in dummy and take the losing diamond finesse. Another spade would clear the suit. Later, declarer would have finesses to take in either hearts or clubs. This hand is a finesser's delight! It turns out that 3 of the 4 kings are offside and one is onside. It would be fun to follow this deal at many tables and watch to see how many of the finesses declarer takes. It is also possible to play a heart to the 10 in some variations.

Likely, 3NT would be a very common contract and my guess is 9 or 10 tricks would be the result.

Lessons:

- >Don't rebid a 5-card minor if balanced
- >The new-minor after a 1NT rebids asks for 3-card major suit support
- >Against 3NT, try to lead an unbid suit
- >From a holding such as K109x or Q109x, instead of leading 4th best, lead the top of the interior sequence (the 10).
- >A low card as a signal to partner's lead says: "Partner—I don't like the suit you led."

REQUIREMENTS TO OVERCALL

In order to make a simple (no jump) overcall at the one level, one needs a reason. Two good reasons:

- 1) To tell partner what to lead
- 2) To interfere with the opponents bidding and make it tougher for them.

To overcall at the ONE level, you need 8-17 points (including distribution). If you only have 8-12 points, then your suit must be headed by two of the top three honours or 3 of the top 5 honours.

Examples of the weakest overcalls are:

1D on your right:
Bid 1S with

S AK852
H 652
D 76
C 862

If partner does not lead your suit when you have OVERCALLED, she had better be void or get a new partner!
or 1D on your right: Bid 1H with

S 54
H QJ1076
D 76
C A954

If you have 13 or more points, you are more likely to become declarer and the quality of your suit does not have to be so sterling.

MAKING A SIMPLE (not a jump) OVERCALL AT THE TWO LEVEL:

In the world of modern day bridge, you are really expected to have close to an opening bid and a good 5 card or 6 card suit. Do not be frisky at the two level. You may wind up being double and it's not pretty.

Now for a quiz: You are South on all hands:

W N E S
1D 1S P ?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
S Axx	S Ax	S xx	S Kxx	S xx
H xx	H xxx	H Axx	H xx	H Kxx
D Kxx	D AQxx	D xx	D xxx	D KJ10x
C xxxxx	C xxxx	C AKxxxx	C AQJxx	C KJxx

1. Bid 2S. In the world of modern day bridge, responder to the overcall (sometimes called the Advancer) should raise with 6-9 dummy points. When you become dummy, length points go away but you have 3 card support, so your doubleton H is worth 1 point. You have 8 points.
2. Bid 1NT. This shows 8-10 HCP and a stopper in opponents' suit (D). It also says that you do not have three card support for partner's major.
3. Bid 2C. You cannot support partner's major and cannot bid NT, but you can bid a new suit. I like a new suit to be forcing by partner of the overcall but you and partner must agree on this. Bidding a new suit in response to partner's overcalled suit should show 10 or more points (including distribution) and a good 5 card or longer suit of your own.
4. Bid 2D. This time you have 11 dummy points. You show support for partners suit by cuebidding the opponent's suit. This says: "I have 10 or more points and at least 3 of your suit."
5. Bid 2NT. This time you have 11 HCP and stoppers in Opponent's D suit. The jump to 2NT will show 11-14 HCP and deny support for partner's overcalled major.

One more situation that merits discussion:

W	N	E	S
1S	2C	P	?

You are South with this hand:

S xx
 H AQxx
 D Kxxx
 C Kxx

South should bid 2S. This will show 10 or more points and Club support. But because we are never thrilled about being in minor suit contracts, it suggests to partner that if she has a stopper in Opponent's suit (Spades) that she should now bid NT.

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THINKING BRIDGE BY EDDIE KANTAR www.kantarbridge.com

North
S. KQJ1096
H. AKQJ8
D. A8
C. -

West

S. A32
H. 10
D. QJ10976
C. QJ9

East

S. 54
H. 96532
D. 5
C. K10843

South
S. 87
H. 74
D. K432
C. A7652

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

Opening lead: D5

Bidding Commentary: As North, you can practically make slam in your own hand. All you need is one measly trick from partner for his 3NT bid, a bid which is supposed to show something in diamonds-maybe the king or maybe the QJx. Go for it!

Play Commentary: As North, the bidding and the lead (lowest spot card outstanding) screams at you that the lead is a singleton. The danger is that West has the SA and will give East a diamond ruff. The answer is to win the DK (key play #1), discard the DA on the CA (spectacular key play #2), and now lead a spade.

Defensive Commentary: As West, if a spade is led at trick two, rush up with the ace and give partner a diamond ruff. As East, clutch your five hearts for dear life. If declarer plays a slew of spades, there is no need to hang on to clubs, declarer is void. As it happens, your H9 is the setting trick-but only if you save all five hearts.

Play Commentary: As North, your last five cards should be hearts. In case one opponent has five hearts, you want to give that opponent every opportunity in the world to discard one before you cash your heart winners.