

A Hand With Extras

Usually this column deals with play and defensive problems, but this week it's all about the bidding. Take a look at the South hand. What do you see?

A hand that would open a weak two in spades? A hand that would pass in first seat? Or a minimum one spade opening bid? Actually, it's none of the above!

Back in the day, we needed 13 HCP to open the bidding (or 12 if we were feeling frisky), but experienced players don't just count their points, they also consider their distribution. One tool for doing that is the **rule of twenty** ... we add HCP to the length of our two longest suits ... if the total is twenty or more we have an opening bid. By this measure, South scores 11+6+3, and just manages to scrape up the magic number. So, let us agree that the South hand is worth a one spade opening bid.

North's three spades showed game-invitational values, saying "Bid game if you have something extra". Does South have said extras? Some might say "No!", on the grounds that the hand has only 11 HCP, and that it barely squeaked into opening territory on the rule of twenty basis. Maybe so, but nonetheless the South hand *does* have extras. There is that singleton heart ... the sixth trump ... and those lovely minor-suit tens! Extras, indeed!

So, South cheerfully accepts the game invitation, West makes his opening lead (probably the ♥Q) and dummy is revealed. It's a pretty poor specimen, what with the useless ♥K and not much cover in the minor suits. But, even so, it is good enough. The diamond finesse loses, but the club finesse wins and (thanks to the all-important ♣10) there are ten tricks!

Board 15

South Deals
N-S Vul

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

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|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
| Pass | 3 ♠ | Pass | 1 ♠ |
| | | | ? |