

Minor choices *by Derrick Browne*

Firstly, two questions about these East and West hands:

WEST	EAST
S AJT	S KQ987
H 43	H Q6
D AT9	D 865
C AJT97	C K86

What opening should West make? Assume East declares 4S after North has overcalled in hearts. North wins the first two tricks with the top hearts, then switches to the DK, won by the DA. After drawing trumps (North started with three of them), how should declarer play the clubs?

Before answering those questions, we conclude our recent series on minor suit openings, featuring the views of American bridge authority Larry Cohen.

With 5-5 in the minors, always open 1D. After bidding diamonds, bid clubs, then clubs again if the chance presents itself. With five clubs and five spades, it used to be popular to open 1C, planning to bid the other suit twice while keeping the bidding low. Nowadays, most players open 1S. With a 6-card minor and a 5-card major, you should usually open the minor, planning to follow by bidding the major twice.

If close between 1-of-a-minor or a strong opening, open the minor:

S A  
H AQJ2  
D KQJT93  
C K4

If you open a strong 2C or Benjamin 2D, you will have to bid 3D to show your long suit and it may be hard to ever show the hearts. Cohen states: "I'd risk 1D. Assuming it doesn't go all pass, I'll get to reverse into hearts and have a good auction at a much lower level."

You will usually open a minor with balanced hands of 12-14 HCP and no 5-card major. "If you have 14 HCP and a 5-card minor, feel free to upgrade to a 1NT opening" (if playing 15-17), says Cohen. This brings us back to the East-West hands at the start of the column, rotated to North-South for convenience and shown below:

Dealer North, nil vul.

NORTH	
S AJT	
H 43	
D AT9	
C AJT97	
WEST	EAST
S 53	S 642
H 872	H AKJT95
D 7432	D KQJ
C Q542	C 3
SOUTH	
S KQ987	
H Q6	
D 865	
C K86	

North opened 1NT (15-17), upgrading a point for the good 5-card suit and excellent intermediates (tens and nines). East overcalled 2H, and South bid 3S to show the good 5-card suit (2S would be a "drop dead" bid). North raised to 4S, against which the H7 was led. East won the two top hearts then led diamonds, forcing the ace. After drawing trumps, how should declarer tackle clubs?

East has shown long hearts and followed to three rounds of spades, so is likely to be short in clubs. West, being longer in clubs, is more likely to have the CQ. Declarer cashed the CK with everyone following low, then finessed to the CJ. This won, but the lead was now locked in dummy, so the finesse could not be repeated; one down.

When the CK was led, a middle club should have been played from dummy. The C8 is then led on the second round of the suit and, if West plays low, the C7 is played from dummy. This way, the lead is retained in hand, allowing a third round of clubs to be played, finessing again. The CA would then have felled the queen after which dummy's fifth club is a winner, allowing an overtrick to be made.