

## Balancing by Derrick Browne

Your left hand opponent opens 1D and the next two players pass this around to you. What is your call with each of these hands?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| (a) S T 9 8 4 2<br>H 4 3<br>D A Q<br>C J 6 5 2   | (b) S T 9 8 4 2<br>H A Q 7 6 4<br>D J T 7<br>C - | (c) S A K Q T<br>H 9 8 7 2<br>D 8<br>C J 5 4 3 |
| (d) S -<br>H A 4 3<br>D Q J 8 7 3<br>C A 9 8 5 2 | (e) S A K J 6 2<br>H 4<br>D A J 7<br>C A 7 3 2   | (f) S 8 6 4<br>H J 8 2<br>D Q 8 6<br>C A K J 3 |

When there is an opening 1-of-a-suit bid followed by two passes, it is clear that responder is weak. You should strive to act, especially if short in the enemy suit. You are “balancing”, bidding in the expectation that partner has values.

Hand (a) is worth 1S in the pass-out seat, even though it would not be quite good enough to overcall otherwise. Hand (b) bids 2D if you use Michaels Cue Bids (showing 5-5 in the majors) in this position. Hand (c) makes a takeout double – remember, with shortage in the enemy suit you don’t want to leave them to play there.

With hand (d), you should pass. With diamond shortage and a good hand, *partner* would have acted. Your strong diamonds and spade void suggest you let sleeping dogs lie. Hand (e) is another double. The hand is too strong for a mere 1S overcall, especially in balancing seat where partner knows you may stretch. Finally, overcall 1NT with hand (f). Normally a 1NT overcall shows 16-18 (or a good 15), but in balancing seat it is commonly played as showing about 11-14 HCP.

Cover the East-West cards on the deal below. After West opens 1D followed by two passes, what action should South take? And another question: how should declarer play clubs to try to make the queen?

Dealer West, nil vul.

NORTH		EAST	
S A 4		S 9 8 7 6	
H A J 5 3		H 8 2	
D K 8 2		D 7 6 5 4	
C 8 4 3 2		C J T 9	
WEST		SOUTH	
S K J 3 2		S Q T 5	
H K 7 6		H Q T 9 4	
D Q J 9 3		D A T	
C K 7		C A Q 6 5	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1D	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2C	Pass	2H
Pass	3H	Pass	4H
All pass			

Over West’s 1D opening, North lacked the 5-card suit needed to overcall, and the shape needed for a takeout double, so passed. South had a closer decision – to double or to bid 1NT (a balancing 1NT, 11-14ish). Perhaps the fact that South’s diamonds are A-10 (better than just A-x) may sway the decision to 1NT, after which Stayman locates the major fit.

The DQ is led, won by declarer in the South hand, ready to lead a high heart for the finesse, and trumps are drawn in three rounds.

When time comes to play clubs, resist the finesse. West is marked with the CK, so play the CA and another club, hoping the king is doubleton. A thoughtful play, and it pays off this time, allowing 11 tricks to be made, maybe even 12 tricks if West broaches spades.