

Trials of game bidding *by Derrick Browne*

Points are a great starting point for hand valuation but sometimes where the points are is important.

WEST	EAST
S AK932	S 654
H 4	H KQ32
D 97	D QJT
C AJ654	C 732

WEST	EAST
1S	2S
3S	?

East's 2S showed 6-10 total points and West's 3S invited East to go on to game if maximum (nearer 10 points) and pass if minimum (nearer 6 points). East is in the middle of the range and might reasonably accept. Yet there are two losers in diamonds, one in hearts, and at least one in each black suit. The bidding is already too high.

Now consider these hands:

WEST	EAST
S AK932	S QJT
H 4	H 732
D 97	D 654
C AJ654	C KQ32

This time West decides to stop in 2S, yet there are five top tricks in each black suit so game makes easily.

The East hand in both cases was the same, except that the suits have been swapped around so that in the second case, East's honours fill the gaps in partner's suits.

To help East recognise how well the hands fit, West might bid 3C on the second round. After a major suit has been raised to the 2-level, a new suit is used as a game try or "trial bid", inviting game and suggesting at least three cards in the bid suit. If West does bid spades then clubs, East with average strength but all the honours in the right spots should have no hesitation in accepting the invitation and bidding 4S.

Usually the degree of meld is less clear:

Dealer East, nil vul.

	NORTH		
	S A43		
	H J876		
	D Q54		
	C Q74		
WEST		EAST	
S T97		S KQ85	
H T53		H 9	
D AKT3		D J9872	
C T86		C K93	
	SOUTH		
	S J62		
	H AKQ42		
	D 6		
	C AJ52		

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

East's double on the second round showed a maximum pass and decent support for the unbid suits. Over any interference (such as this), a re-raise (3H) is purely competitive, not invitational. To show interest in game, make a trial bid, such as South's 3C.

With 9 points, North is nearer the upper end of the shown range, and with a club honour, an ace and decent trump support, the hand is worth a shot at game.

Good play would proceed along something like the following lines. West starts with a top diamond, while East signals discouragement. It would be wrong to continue with another diamond and make dummy's DQ good, so West switches to the S10, top of a sequence of sorts.

A low spade is played from North, and East wins with the SQ. Leading a black suit would sacrifice a trick so East leads a heart, towards the weakness in dummy.

Declarer draws trumps in three rounds, finishing in dummy. If the CQ is led next, East must “cover an honour with an honour”. Better is for a low club to be led from dummy but the defenders still end up winning a club. However, the clubs are 3-3 so declarer’s fourth club comes good and on that, a spade loser is discarded from dummy so ten tricks are made.