

A GAME ON 20 POINTS

You are the dealer. You are vulnerable while your opponents are not. Would you open this hand?

S	South
♠	A9874
♥	J532
♦	Q7
♣	A2

I wouldn't. There are 11 HCP here and a 5-card spade suit, but you are in 1st position so you should bid on real values. Your two points in diamonds are almost worthless. You have a 4-card heart suit but unless partner has the major honors, you can't expect to take many heart tricks. Finally, your spade suit is not very good. Aside from the ♠A, you haven't many winning tricks in the trump suit.

West passes and partner opens 2♥. East passes and it's back to you. North's weak-two makes your hand much better. Your 4 hearts are now trick taking. Your partner shouldn't have as many as 4 spades, so you can ruff some of those low spades. Your 2 minor suit doubletons now have "dummy" values. You can take one of several approaches. You can pass and hope partner doesn't make a game. You can invite a game with a bid of 2NT. This is an artificial and forcing bid either asking for an outside feature (called Feature Ask) or asking for the quality of the hand and the trump suit (called Ogust Convention). The third option is to just bid 4♥ on the basis of the Law of Total Tricks. You have 10 hearts between you and should be protected to the 4-level. The Law applies to a competitive auction and this auction isn't yet competitive. But if you pass, West is surely going to strain himself to get into the bidding. So a jump to 4♥ is a type of advanced preemptive jump raise.

That is the option that I would suggest. If West bids 4♠ now, you have a perfect penalty double. You also have the hope of your partner making the contract. East leads the ♦A from ♦AK. Take over the contract from North:

N	North
♠	Q
♥	AQ1076
♦	J982
♣	753

East leads ♦A

S	South
♠	A9874
♥	J532
♦	Q7
♣	A2

Take a look at North's hand. Can you justify his bid? Remember, he opened in the 3rd seat. He can be weaker in 3rd seat than in the 1st or 2nd seats. Since you have already passed, he knows you won't go crazy. He is trying to preempt the opponent in the 4th seat. Not only doesn't he have 12 HCP, he only has 5 hearts. But they are good hearts, with 3 of the top 5 honors. He realizes that you will expect a 6-card heart suit.

How would you plan the play? You have 4 diamond and 2 club losers. You also may have a heart loser. You can trump 2 diamond and 1 club loser in the dummy. You also have the possibility of setting up the diamond suit for a loser discard. Keep your eye on diamond spots!

East wins the ♦AK and switches to a low spade. Do not try to finesse against the ♠K. This is a losing play..Win the ♠A in the dummy. You have plenty of trump to take care of any spades led by the opponents. Now go right to the hearts and lead the ♥J. West will play low and so will you. The ♥J holds. Now lead another heart up to your ♥Q. The hearts split 2-2 so you don't have any trump losers.

When East was playing the ♦AK, you noticed West played the ♦10. That makes your ♦J9 good for a club and spade discard. Cross ruffing the rest of the hand, your losers are now just the first two diamond tricks. With a little luck, you have made 5♥ on just 20 HCP.

This is the entire deal:

15 D	N North	W N E S
	♠ Q ♥ AQ1076 ♦ J982 ♣ 753	P P P P 2♥ P P P P P
W West		E East
♠ KJ1032 ♥ K8 ♦ 104 ♣ Q984		♠ 65 ♥ 94 ♦ AK653 ♣ KJ106
	S South	
	♠ A9874 ♥ J532 ♦ Q7 ♣ A2	4♥ N NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/y9j4252m> , or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own. If you click on GIB, the software will analyze the hand and show the result for each opening lead.

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