

## A DELICATE BALANCE

The opponents have bid to 2♥ and it's up to you:

West	North	East	South
Pass ??	2♥	Pass	1♥ Pass

Both sides are vulnerable and you, sitting in the West, hold: ♠J9862 ♥1073 ♦A2 ♣K93.  
Do you pass or compete?

You are sitting in the balancing seat. What does that mean? South didn't make a game try when his partner gave him a single heart raise. Therefore, he has a minimum opener and North has between 6 and 10 points. Together they probably have 20 to 22 points. What that means is that you and your partner have between 18 and 20 points yourselves. That is, you have the "balance" of power. You might say that you have as much right to the 2-level as your opponents. You should do everything in your power to either play at the 2-level or push them to the 3-level. Two-level contracts are usually easy to make; a 3-level bid is much harder with only 20 points.

Since you hold 8 HCP you expect your partner to have about 12 points. Furthermore, he should have no more than two hearts since you hold three and North/South have eight. That limits your heart losers to 2 and makes it more likely that partner holds 3 or 4 spades. When the opponents have found a fit in one suit, it is very probably that you and your partner have a fit in another suit. So you "balance" with 2♠ and it is passed out.

Here is the entire hand:

<div style="border: 1px solid white; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: auto;">11</div> <div style="font-size: 8px; margin-top: 5px;">D</div>	<b>N North</b> ♠ K53 ♥ Q42 ♦ QJ103 ♣ 1065	W N E S P 2♥ P 1♥ 2♠ P P P	
<b>W West</b> ♠ J9862 ♥ 1073 ♦ A2 ♣ K93		<b>E East</b> ♠ A107 ♥ 98 ♦ K9864 ♣ QJ7	
	<b>S South</b> ♠ Q4 ♥ AKJ65 ♦ 75 ♣ A842		2♠ W NS: 0 EW: 0

2♠ makes no matter what the defense. But notice that if the opponents took the push to 3♥ they would have gone down 1 trick.

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/md7rbwu> . 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.