

## THIRD SEAT MENTALITY: REDUX

11 D	<b>N North</b> ♠ AK863 ♥ KJ ♦ 842 ♣ 973	W N E S P 1♠ P P P P P
<b>W West</b> ♠ J97 ♥ 102 ♦ K95 ♣ KQ1054		<b>E East</b> ♠ Q1042 ♥ A8763 ♦ 106 ♣ A8
	<b>S South</b> ♠ 5 ♥ Q954 ♦ AQJ73 ♣ J62	2♠ S      NS: 0 EW: 0

You are South and, as dealer, you pass. Your partner, in third seat, uses the Rule of 24. He assumes you and West have a total of 16 points. He therefore, subtracts his points (11) from the remaining 24 points and estimates that East has about 13 points. East will certainly open in 4<sup>th</sup> seat and therefore, makes North makes a “preemptive” opening himself. He bids 1♠.

Notice the pressure he put on East, who would have had an easy 1♥ opening had North passed. Now East must either double or overcall. A double is out of the question since he can't support the minor suits, which certainly will be advanced by West. A 2♥ overcall looks very dangerous, considering the poor suit and the fact that his partner has already passed. East passes and you are forced to bid. You can't let partner play in a 5-1 spade contract. You could respond 1NT, but you have a good 5-card diamond suit. Would it hurt to mention it? You partner opened in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat so he might have a sub-minimum opening point count and a two-over-one response could drive the auction too high.

Not to worry. When your partner opens light in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat with less than 13 points, he will read all your responses as non-forcing. He will be willing to play in any bid you can make, including 1NT or 2 of a lower ranking suit. In fact, if he does bid again, he will be promising a full opening strength hand!

North does pass 2♦, feeling that there will not be a fit in spades and, considering the alternative, that a part score in diamonds has the best chance of success.

Since there are three passes to East, he is now in the “pass out” seat and will consider a balancing 2♥. He decides this is too dangerous since he still doesn't know anything about West's hand. Furthermore, his long spades leads him to think that defending against a contract that might be based on a poor fit might be more profitable. Of course, if East had balanced with 2♥ you would have had a good penalty double.

West will lead the ♣K, the top of a broken sequence. You count losers: no spades, 1 heart and 3 clubs. That leaves diamonds and you must limit your diamond losers to one. If the ♦K is on

side, and the suit breaks 3-2 you can eliminate any diamond loser. Even if the  $\heartsuit K$  is off side, you have only one diamond loser if the suit behaves and breaks 3-2.

East will overtake the  $\clubsuit K$  with the  $\clubsuit A$  and lead back a club. This action unblocks the suit. West will take the second club and East will signal for a heart lead on the third club. West leads the  $\heartsuit 10$  on the 4<sup>th</sup> trick (top of a doubleton), won by East's  $\heartsuit A$ . He will return a heart, won by dummy's  $\heartsuit K$ . Since East has already shown up with two aces, you should assume that West holds the  $\heartsuit K$ . It is better to play a diamond to the  $\heartsuit A$  and lay down the  $\heartsuit Q$ . You can win any return, pull the last trump and discard that last losing heart on the good spade in the dummy.

Was this hand a lock for 2 $\heartsuit$ ? No. It could have been defeated had East read the  $\heartsuit 10$  lead. He should have ducked the first heart. When West gets in again with the  $\heartsuit K$ , he leads his last heart to East's  $\heartsuit A$ , who now knows he can give his partner a heart ruff.

Notice that if you take the diamond finesse after you win the  $\heartsuit K$  in the dummy, West will win the  $\heartsuit K$  and switch back to a club. East will ruff high with the  $\heartsuit 10$  and you will have to take your  $\heartsuit J$ . Now West's  $\heartsuit 9$  becomes the setting trick. This maneuver is called an "uppercut". It is a forcing of the declarer to over ruff and set up a lower card in the defender's hand that otherwise could he drawn.

Finally, I should point out that West could have performed this same uppercut had he led a 4<sup>th</sup> club instead of switching to hearts on trick 4. East could have helped him see this by discarding a LOW heart on the 3<sup>rd</sup> trick- a signal that he doesn't want a heart switch.

**This hand demonstrates how complex and finely tuned some part score hands can be when the high cards are distributed rather evenly around the table.**