

♠♥♦♣ BE AN AGGRESSIVE BIDDER ♠♥♦♣

If you want to improve your performance in matchpoint play, the easiest way is to become a more aggressive bidder. If you can't win the board in the bidding, you better play or defend better than the others playing in the field. I think it's easier to work on the bidding end of the hand.

Here's a deal I played the other night on the internet. After two passes, I opened the bidding 1♥. This is a fine 14 HCP hand. It has only prime honors and has a singleton as well. The intermediates are good. Having 10's and 9's are much better than 3's and 4's; they offer potential for extra tricks.

S	South
♠	K102
♥	AK982
♦	4
♣	A982

My LHO doubled for takeout and my partner passed! The double doesn't affect his ability to respond, so his silence told me he didn't care for my hearts and didn't have enough points to suggest an alternative. My RHO advanced with a bid of 1♣, suggesting a 4+card suit and no more than 8 points. Most South's simply passed with this "minimum" hand. East was left to play in a 1♣ contract, taking an easy 9 tricks.

I took a different approach. I wanted to give my partner another chance and bid my second suit – 2♣. I was willing to play at the 2-level in whichever suit was better for partner. West raised his partner to 2♠ and my partner bid 3♣. This was passed out and became the final contract.

West led the ♦A and I saw this:

N	North
♠	64
♥	J10
♦	QJ932
♣	J543

West leads ♦A

S South
♠ K102
♥ AK982
♦ 4
♣ A982

I counted two club losers as long as the suit behaved. I also had a diamond loser and two potential spade losers. On top of that, I had three heart losers that I would have to trump in the dummy.

The key to this hand is the position of the ♠K. Sitting unprotected in my hand, I couldn't stand East getting on lead and leading a spade through. West followed up the initial ♦A lead with the ♦K, which I ruffed in my hand. I took my ♥AK and led a low heart to dummy ♣3. Being in the dummy, I led a small club, intending to cover whatever East played. He played low and my ♣8 was won by West's ♣10. He led back a club, hoping to get his partner in the lead. I won East's ♣Q with my ♣A and led another heart for a ruff, but West rose with his ♣K and led the ♠A. This solved by spade problem. I now could lead a club up to dummy's ♣J and take the two good diamonds, discarding my remaining heart.

I made the 3♣ contract. Even if I was set two tricks, I would have fared better than if I led the opponents play in 1♠, 2♠ or 3♠.

Look at the entire deal:

D 1	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ 64 ♥ J10 ♦ QJ932 ♣ J543	X	P	P	1♥ 2♣
W West		2♣	3♣	P	P
		P			
	E East				
	♠ QJ97 ♥ Q643 ♦ 765 ♣ Q6				
	S South				
	♠ K102 ♥ AK982 ♦ 4 ♣ A982				
		3♣ S			NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/y5d37deq>, 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.

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