371. Value call

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♦	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ 2
♥ A105
♦ AQJ73
♣ J983

This should be routine. Partner has opened the bidding. You have an opening hand. Opening hand + opening hand = game. Partner has shown length in spades, your short suit. You have stoppers in the unbid suits. The natural continuation is 3NT. If you did something else, I suspect you thought it was a trick question.

In a game on BBO, where the auction began as above, every South but one bid 3NT. That South passed 3♦, made 9 tricks, +110 and lost 3.9 Imps.

This was yesterday's puzzle:

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ AKJ96
♥ 86
♦ K654
♣ 104

Again, I thought this would have been a routine 1♠ opening, but several Norths thought otherwise. Yes, North does have only 11 HCP, but High Card Points are not the sole consideration for a 1-opening. Shape, defensive potential and the location of the high cards should also be taken into account. When your high cards are in your long suits, the hand is usually more valuable than when your high cards are in your short suits.

The Marty Bergen Rule of 20 for opening in first or second seat goes like this: Add your high card points to the number of cards in your two long suits. If the total is 20 or more, you have an opening bid. Applying that to the hand above you have a 1♠ opening.

An upgraded rule which takes defensive potential into account is the Rule of 22: Add high cards points to the number of cards in your two long suits and the number of quick tricks you have (Quick tricks: A-K = 2, A = 1, K-Q = 1, A-Q = 1½, K = ½ as long as the king is not singleton. Applying this to the hand above, add HCP (11) to the number of cards in your two long suits (9) and the quick tricks (2½) and your total is 22½, more than enough for a 1♠ opening.

Some use the Rule of 22 in general, but shade it to 21½ at favourable vulnerability. A more aggressive approach is to adopt the Rule 21½ in general and shade it to 21 at favourable vulnerability.

The full deal:

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

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                    North
                    ♠ AKJ96
                    ♥ 86
                    ♦ K654
                    ♣ 104
        West                    East
        ♠ Q10843                ♠ 75
        ♥ KJ92                  ♥ Q743
        ♦ 2                     ♦ 1098
        ♣ A76                   ♣ KQ52
                    South
                    ♠ 2
                    ♥ A105
                    ♦ AQJ73
                    ♣ J983
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Where North passed initially, South opened 1♦, West overcalled 1♠ and North-South ended in 3♦, making 10 tricks (+130, –3.3 Imps) or 9 tricks (+110, –3.9 Imps). At one table, the deal was passed in (–6.2 Imps). The majority were in 3NT. Finessing the ♠J or the ♠9 produces 9 tricks easily. Two Souths made 10 tricks (+630, +7.3 Imps). The others made 9 tricks (+600, +6.3 Imps).

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♥(1)	Dble(2)	Pass	?

(1) Six hearts, 6-10 points
(2) For takeout

What would you do as South with:

♠ AJ84
♥ 64
♦ Q972
♣ K83

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

I have secure employment. No one is his right mind would want my job.