Fine Tuning the Basics

Fine tuning the basics

Basic concepts.

All natural. All logical.

Understand why.

Everything works together.

No conventions, just a little fine tuning to polish your bidding style.

Resources

Larry Cohen Wednesday Game

- Cohen: https://www.larryco.com/newsletter

Gavin Wolpert Tuesday Game

- Wolpert: https://wolpertbridge.com/calendar

Basic Principles

- Priorities:
  - game in major
  - game in NT
  - if necessary 7 card fit major suit game or minor suit game
  - part score? stay low
- Play 1NT or 3NT, not 2NT.
- Play 2M or 4M, not 3M.
- Open the bidding aggressively.
- Invite game soundly; accept aggressively.
- **Consider the rebid.**

Agenda

- Consider the rebid
- Open aggressively; invite soundly
- 1NT opener
- 1M opener: responses
- Opener’s rebid

But first some definitions…

- Balanced
  - 4333 (also “flat”)
  - 4432
  - 5332
- Semi-balanced
  - 5422
  - 6322

Consider the rebid

Alvin Roth:

"Always plan a second bid before you choose a first."

See also BB Sept 2026, Ask Jerry, p.57

Consider the rebid

Sometimes any bid you make is a “lie” – you have to make the least worst “lie.”

A small lie on your first bid is better than a bigger lie on your rebid.

Least worst lies:

- Lie about the length of your minors
- Lie about the length of your majors
- Lie about your strength

https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/to-tell-the-truth-part-1-the-auction

Consider the rebid

- Danger! Beware the1NT rebid with a singleton in partner's suit:
  - 1D 1S 1NT
  - Partner has KQJxx, xxx, xx, xxx
  - If you have a singleton spade, partner's hand has zero tricks in NT
  - 1D 1S 1NT should promise 2 or 3 spades
  - After 1D 1S 1NT responder can bid 2S and sign off with five spades

Important distinction

- Danger! Beware 1NT with a singleton in partner’s suit.

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  - Beware the 1NT rebid by opener with a singleton in partner's suit: 1D 1S 1NT
  - 1S 1NT is different…

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- With a 5-2 fit, which is better 2S or 1NT?
  - If the spades are in the weaker hand, i.e, responder, then they may be stranded if not trump so 2S with a 5-2 fit is MUCH better:
    - 1D 1S 1NT 2S
    - 1NT 2H 2S

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  - Beware the 1NT rebid with a singleton in partner's suit
  - 1S 1NT is different: spades in the stronger hand will not be stranded.

- With a 5-2 fit, which is better 2S or 1NT?
  - If the spades are in the weaker hand, i.e, responder, then they may be stranded if not trump so 2S with a 5-2 fit is MUCH better:
    - 1D 1S 1NT 2S
    - 1NT 2H S
  - If the spades are in opener's hand, opener has plenty of other entries:
    - 1D 1S 1NT is not good with a singleton or void in spades but 1NT 2S is different.

Consider the rebid

- Danger! Beware the reverse.
    - 1D 1NT 2C
    - 1C 1NT 2D

Consider the rebid

- Danger! Beware the reverse: 17+, first suit longer than second
  - 1D 1NT 2C
  - 1C 1NT 2D

Larry Cohen: This is not an "optional" topic. Students tell me, "Oh--I don't play reverses." This is not acceptable. It is equivalent to saying: "I don't play rebids by opener."

Consider the rebid

- Danger! Beware the reverse: 17+, first suit longer than second
  - 1D 1NT 2C
  - 1C 1NT 2D

Larry Cohen: This is not an "optional" topic. Students tell me, "Oh--I don't play reverses." This is not acceptable. It is equivalent to saying: "I don't play rebids by opener."

- Don’t reverse by accident
- Don’t let your opening bid back you into a corner

You dealt. What do you bid?

1.

♠5

♥KJ2

♦KQ75

♣A8632

1C (P) 1S (P) – now what?

1.

♠5

♥KJ2

♦KQ75

♣A8632

1C (P) 1S (P) – now what?

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♠5

♥KJ2

♦KQ75

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Which is the worst lie?

a) 1♣ 1♠ 1NT

b) 1♣ 1♠ 2♣

c) 1♣ 1♠ 2♦

1C (P) 1S (P) – now what?

1.

♠5

♥KJ2

♦KQ75

♣A8632

Which is the worst lie?
Which is the least worst lie?

a) 1♣ 1♠ 1NT

b) 1♣ 1♠ 2♣

c) 1♣ 1♠ 2♦

d) 1♦ 1♠ 2♣

1C (P) 1S (P) – now what?

1.

♠5

♥KJ2

♦KQ75

♣A8632

Which is the least worst lie?

a) 1♣ 1♠ 1NT

b) 1♣ 1♠ 2♣

c) 1♣ 1♠ 2♦

d) 1♦ 1♠ 2♣

Interesting side note: if the bidding goes 1D 1S 2C, opener might have a singleton, as here. If they were balanced or semi-balanced with a minimum they'd probably rebid 1NT.

Open the bidding aggressively; invite soundly

Open the bidding aggressively; invite soundly

- Goren: open all 14s; 13 with a good rebid; “required to have 2 Quick Tricks.”*

* https://www.bridgehands.com/Conventions/Goren_System.htm

Open the bidding aggressively; invite soundly

- Goren: all 14s; 13 with a good rebid; must have 2 quick tricks.*
- Rule of 20 is good: add your high card points plus your two longest suits. If 20 or more, open.

* https://www.bridgehands.com/Conventions/Goren_System.htm

Open the bidding aggressively; invite soundly

- Goren: all 14s; 13 with a good rebid; must have 2 quick tricks.*
- Rule of 20 is good: add your high card points plus your two longest suits. If 20 or more, open.
- The modern trend is to open a bit more aggressively.

* https://www.bridgehands.com/Conventions/Goren_System.htm

Hand evaluation101…

- Are your honors in your long suits?
- Are your honors working together?
- Do you have good intermediates?
- For example:
  - ♠KQ5
  - ♥732
  - ♦75
  - ♣KQJT9



Reasoning with Robert, BB Oct 26, p52

Would you open?

2.

♠KQ5
♥732
♦J5
♣KQJ72

Which hand is better?

2.

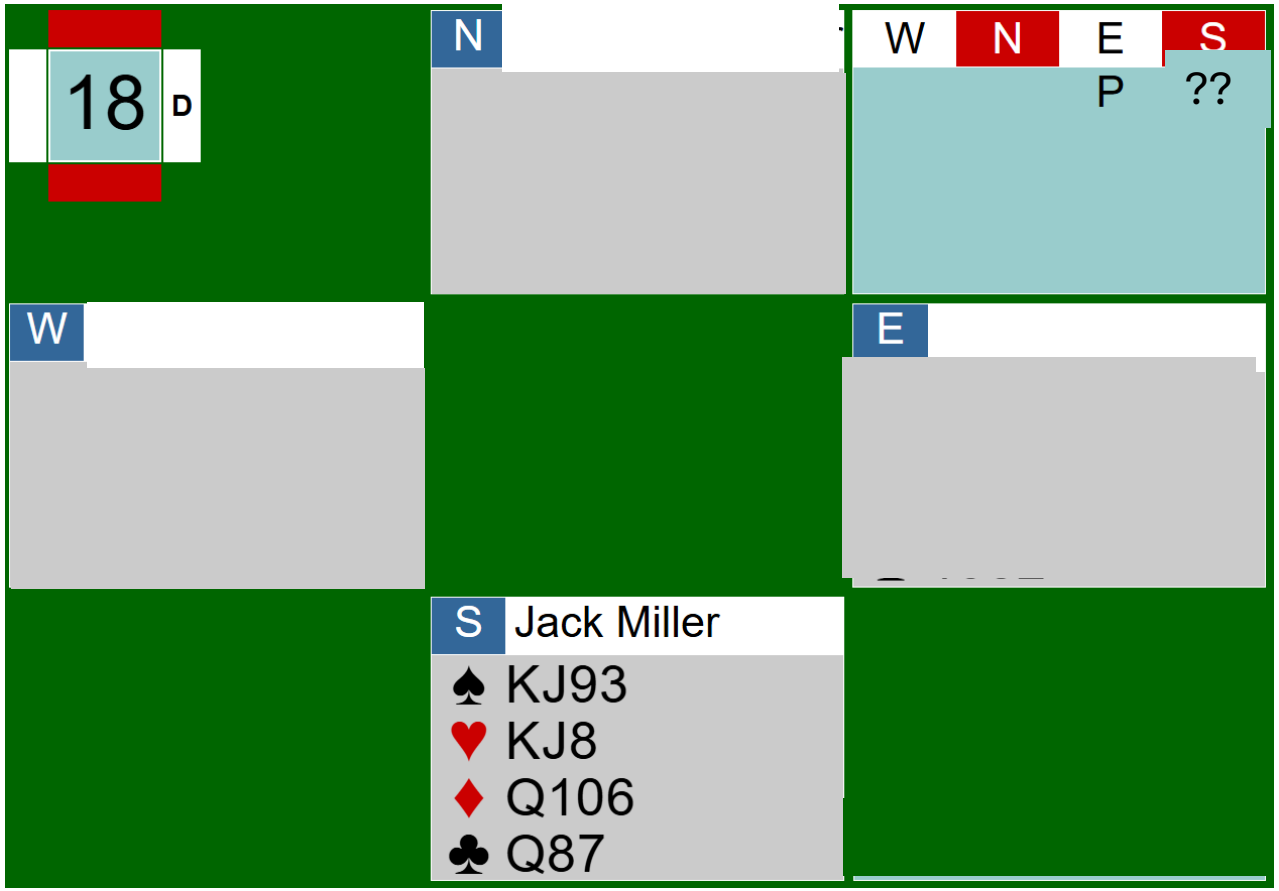
♠KQ5
♥732
♦J5
♣KQJ72

3.

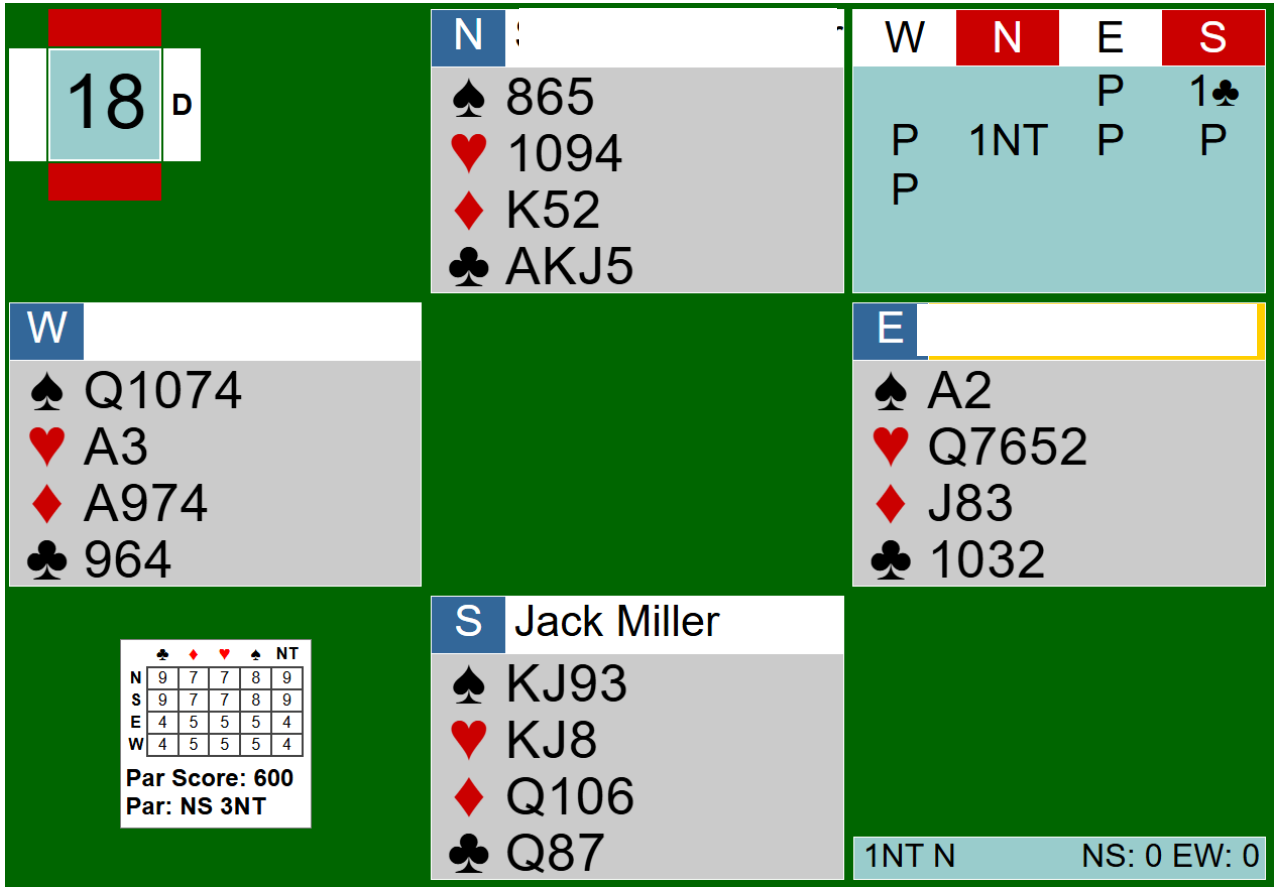
♠KQ5
♥732
♦75
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Let's look at some real hands

4. What should I do?



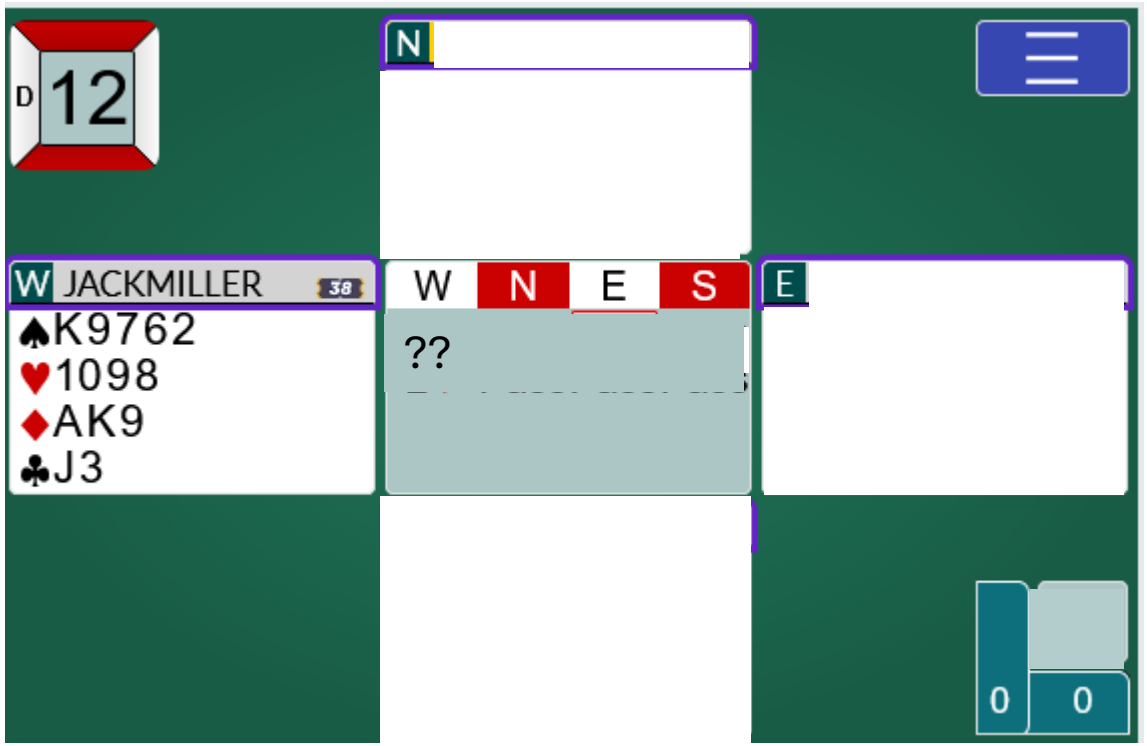
Open all 12 counts



20 /29 opened 1C

1NT+1	77%
1NT	54%
Pass out (7)	36%

5. What should I do?

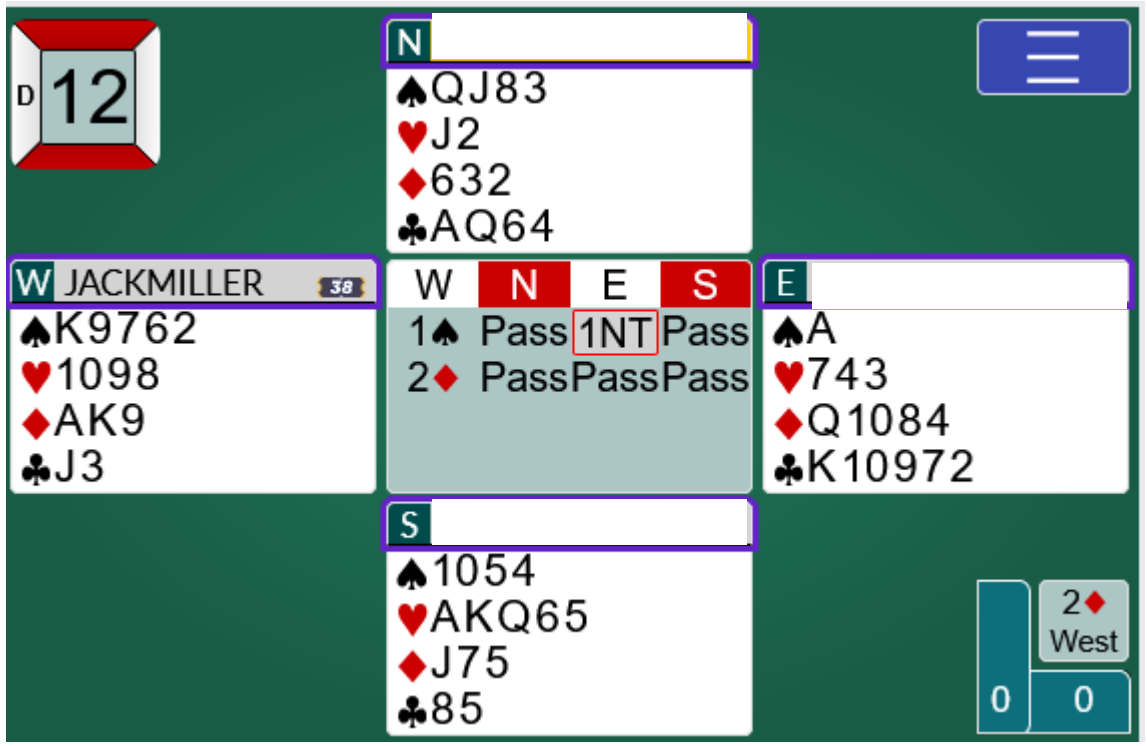


ACBL Open on BBO

Open 11 with a good five card suit

Double dummy

2C
3D
1N



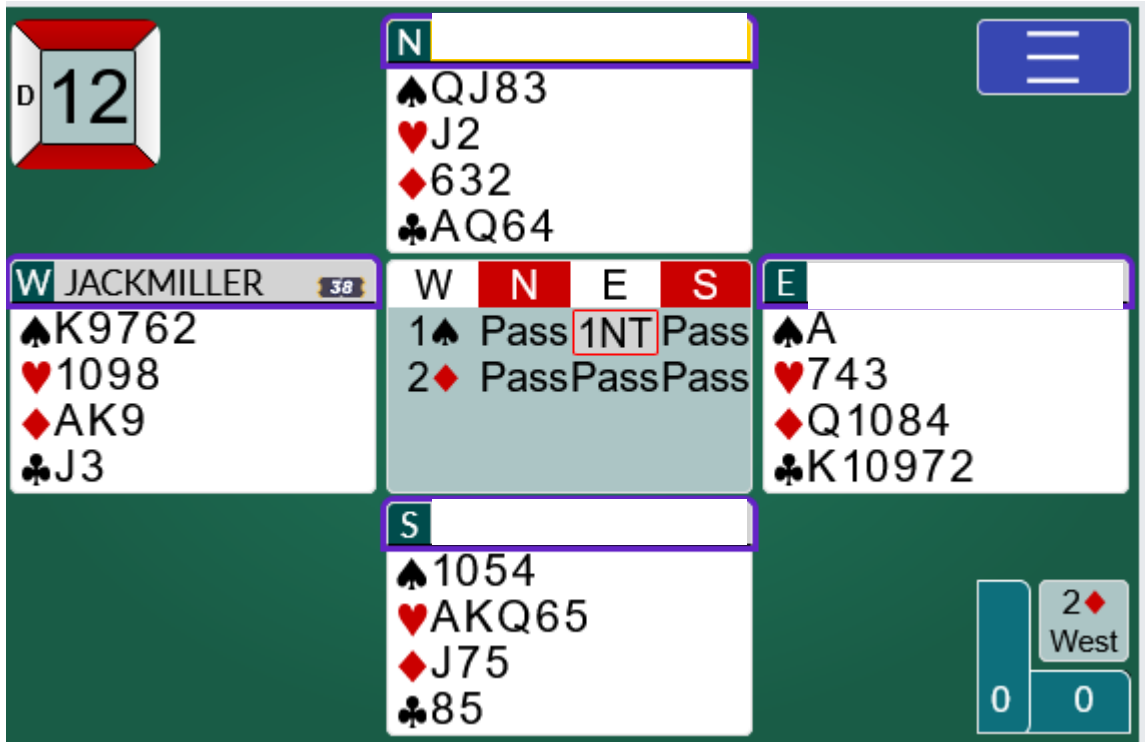
20 opened 1S
40 passed
Of those, 29 passed it out

2D+1	95%
Pass	56%

Open a bit more aggressively

Double dummy

2CE
2DE+1

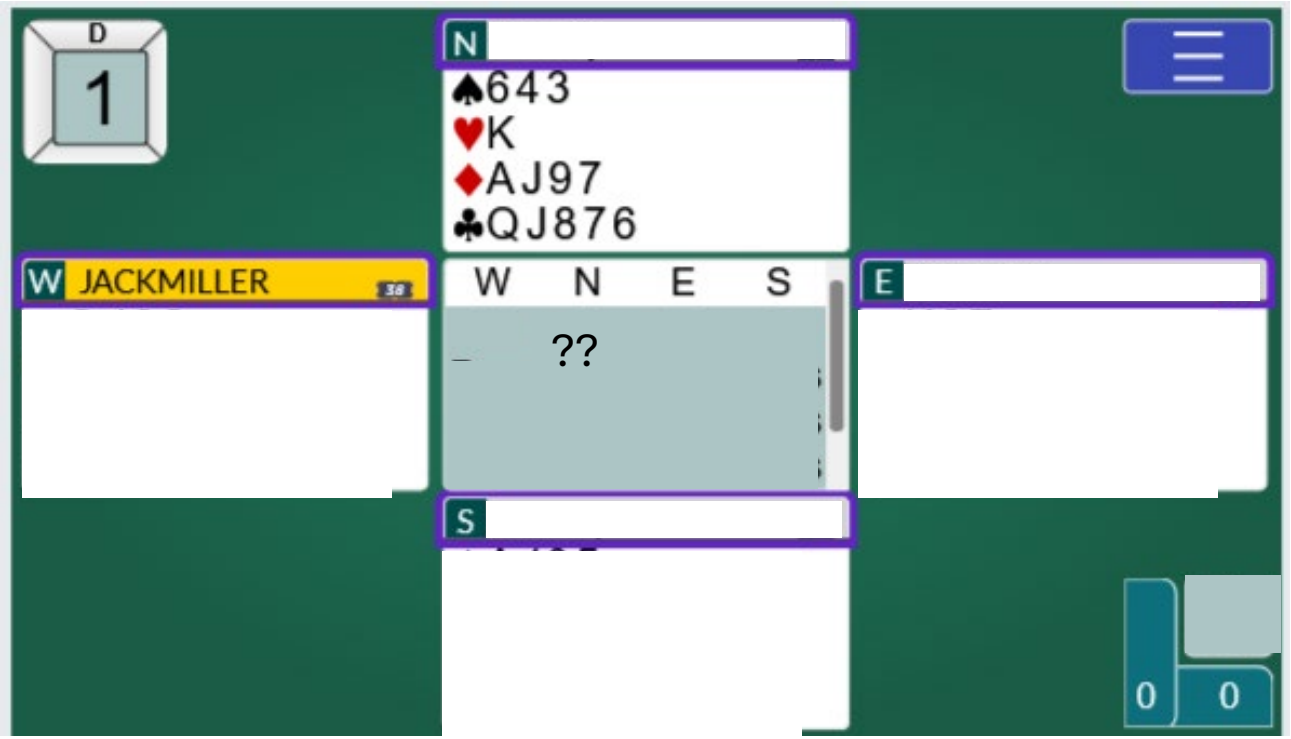


2D+1	95%
2D	81%
Pass	56%

20 opened 1S
40 passed
Of those, 29 passed it out

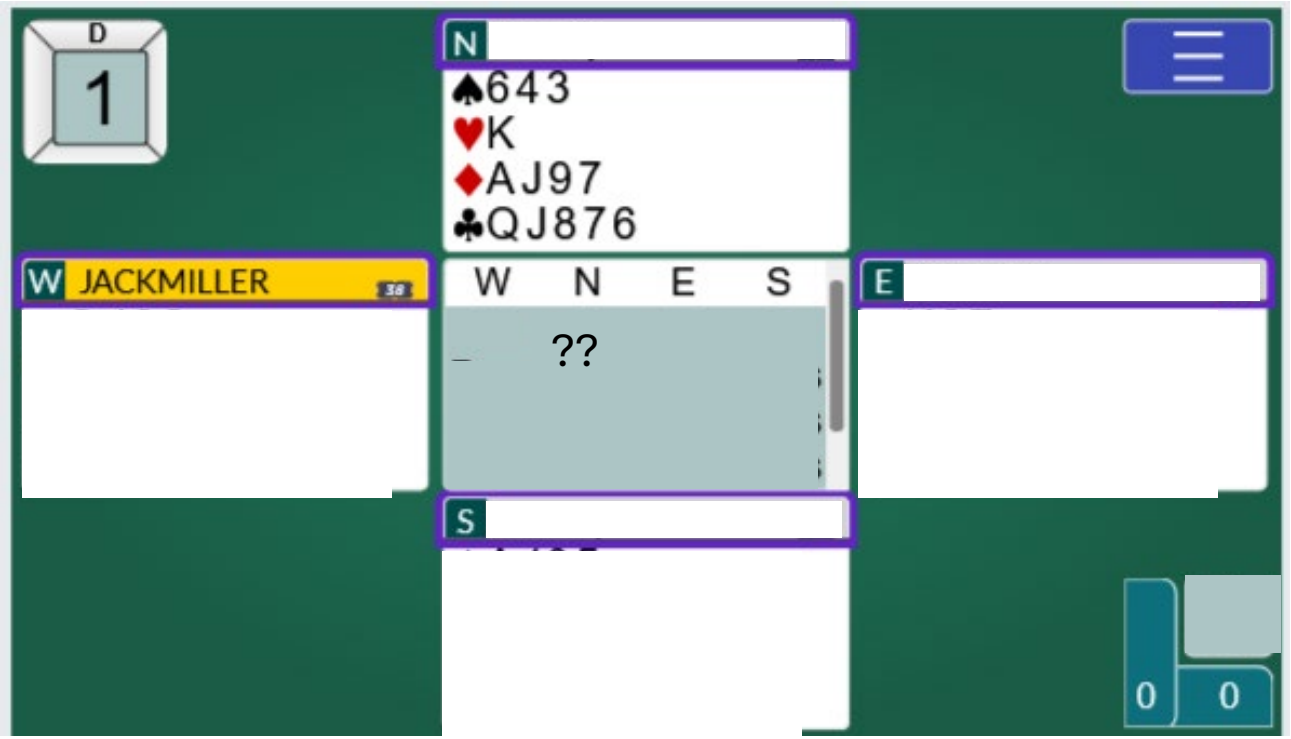
Some of the other auctions:
P (P) 1C (1H); 1S (P) 2C
P (P) 1D (1H); 1S (P) 2C (P); 2D
P (P) P (1H); 1S

Should North open?



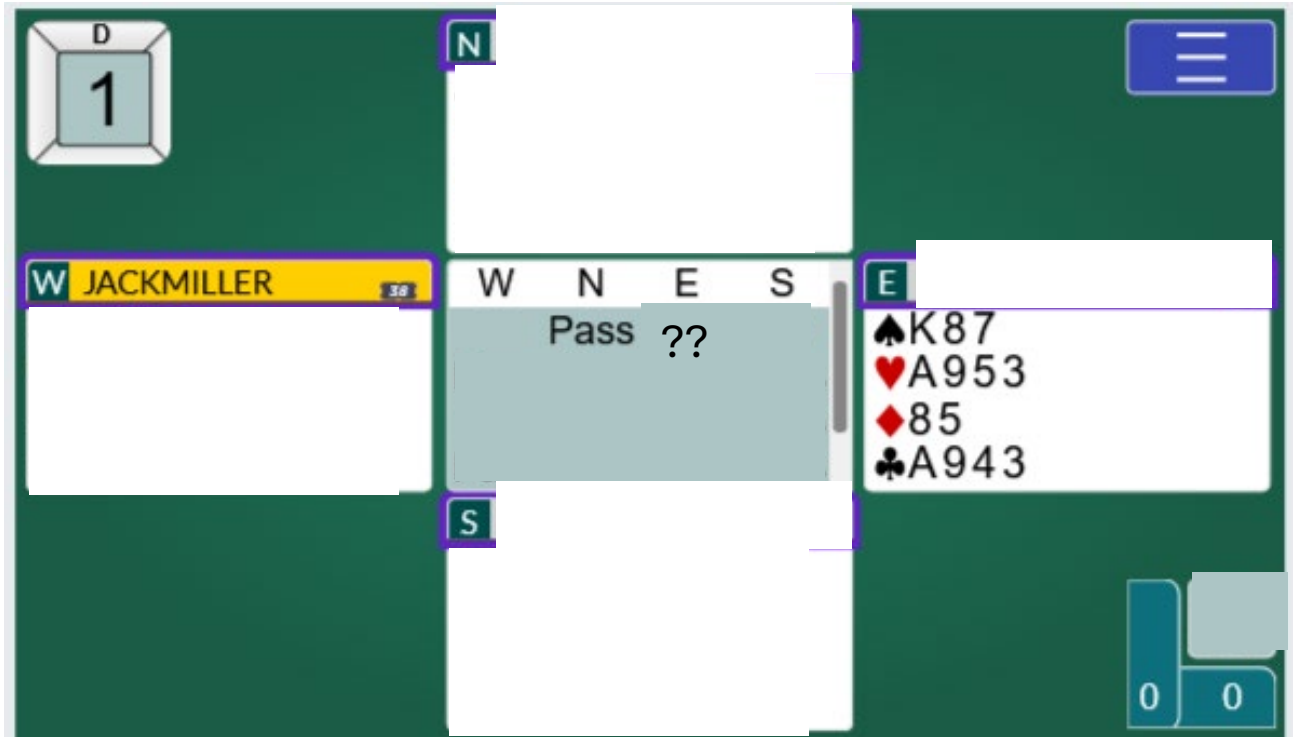
Carolina 3000 NAP

Should North open?

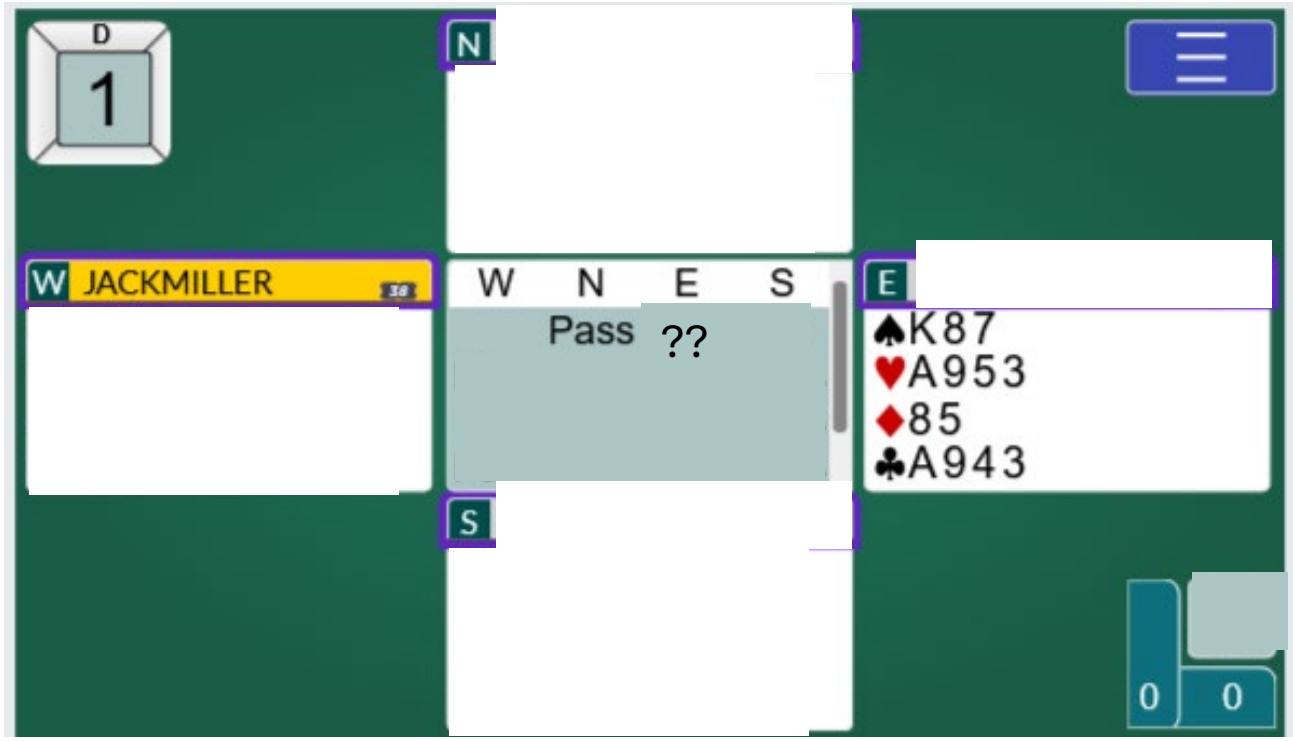


Out of 18 tables, 3 opened 1C and 1 opened 1D

Should East open?

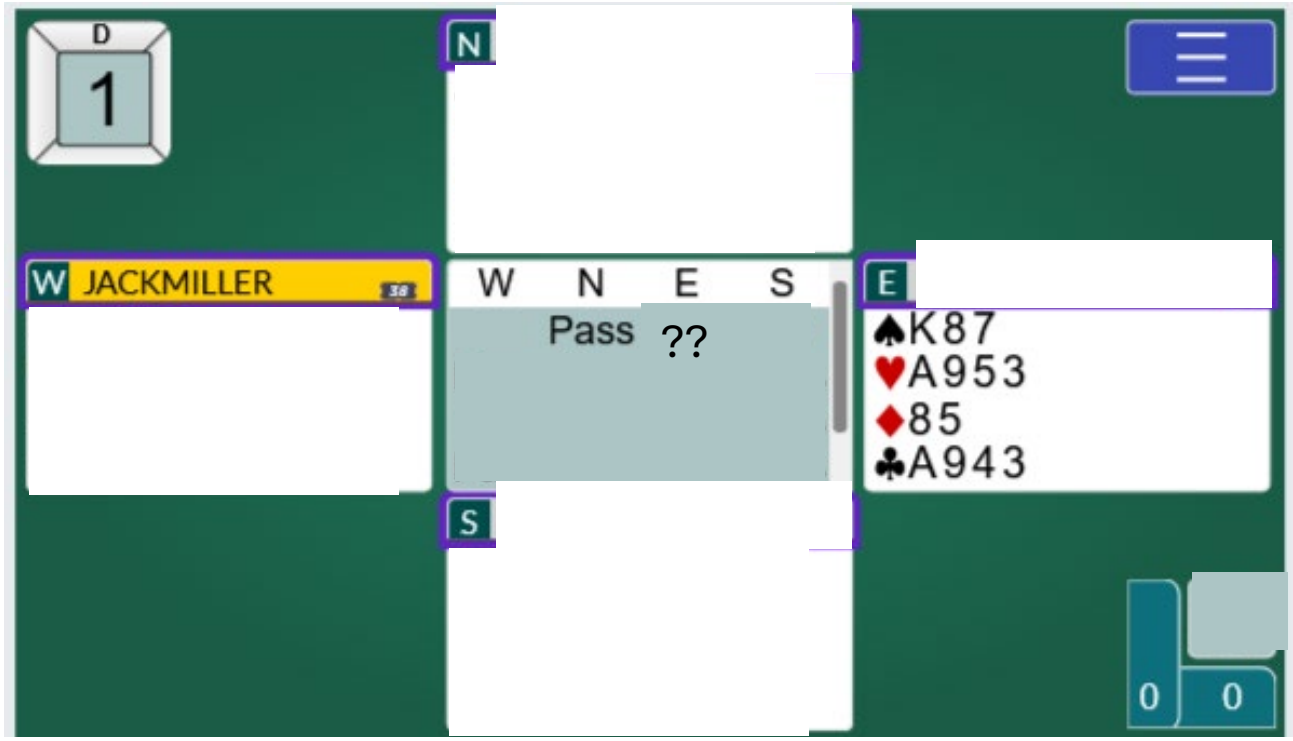


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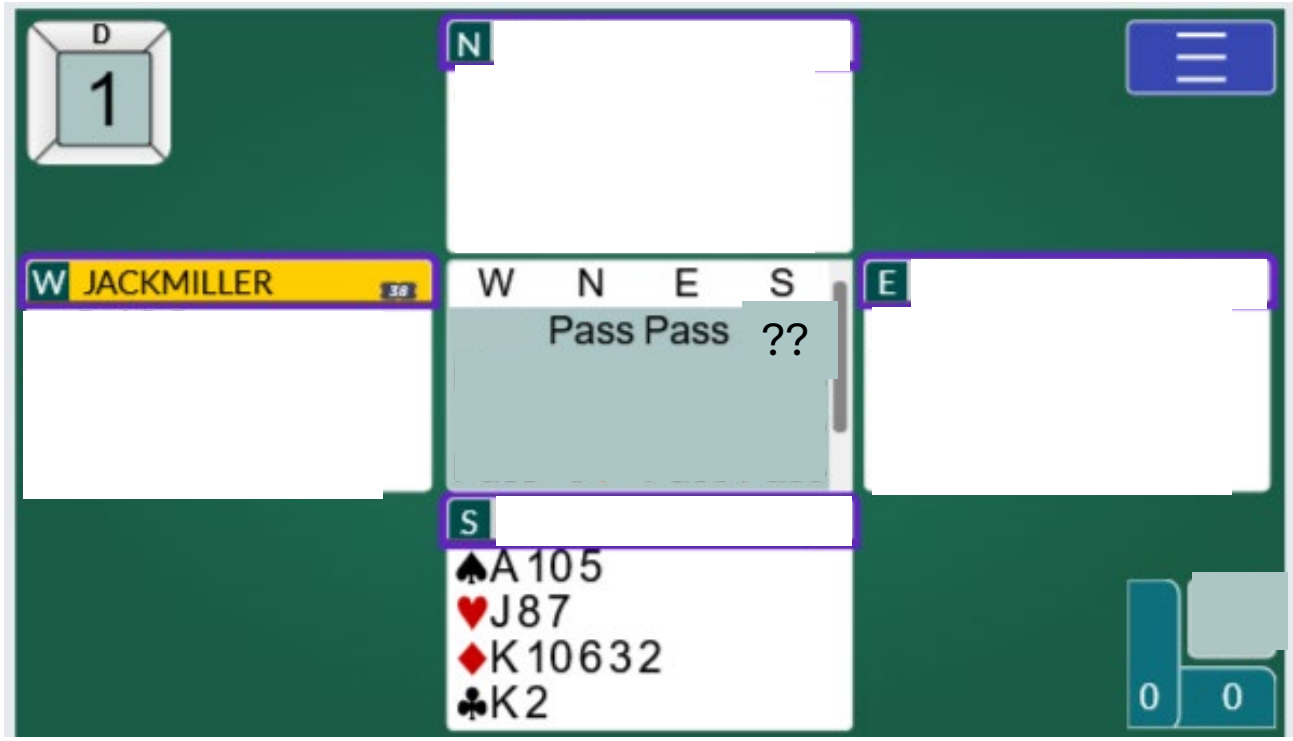
Should East open?



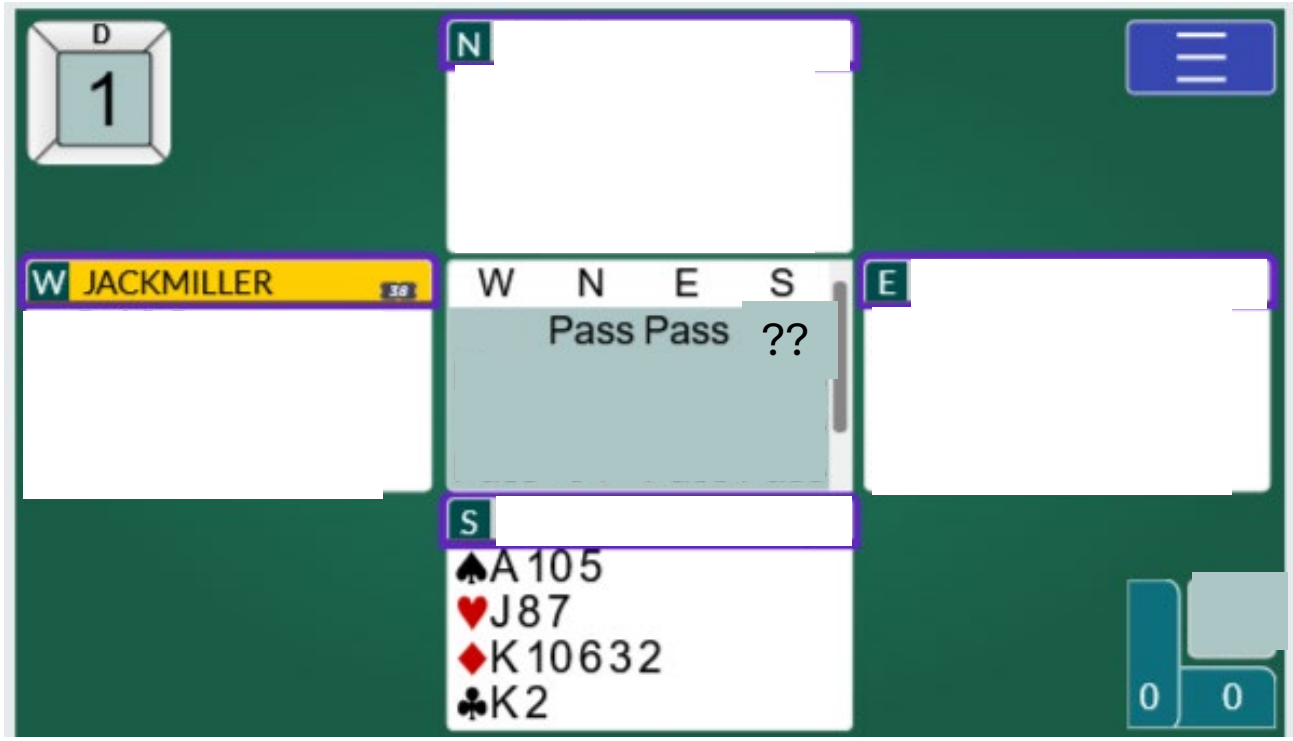


Out of 14 tables where North passed, only 2 opened 1C

Should South open?

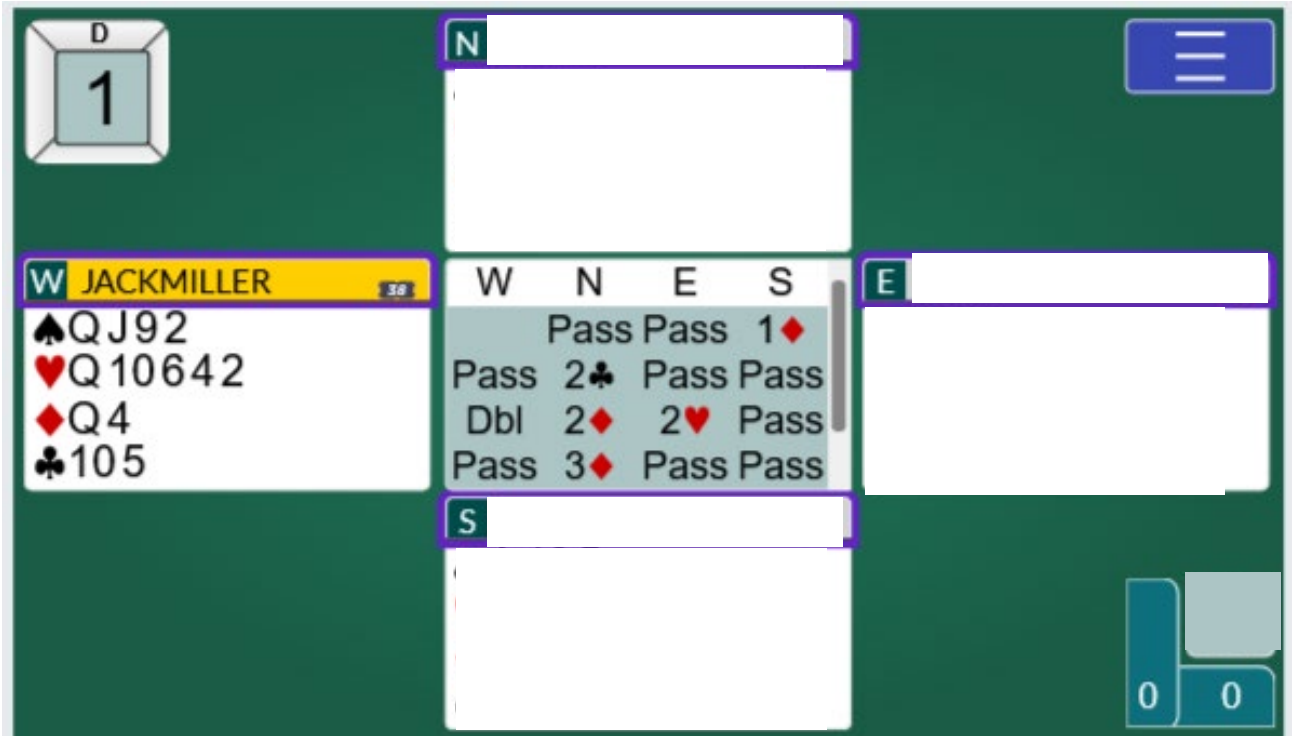


Should South open?



Out of 12 tables that went pass –pass, 10 opened 1D,
the other two tables passed it out and NS only got 44%.

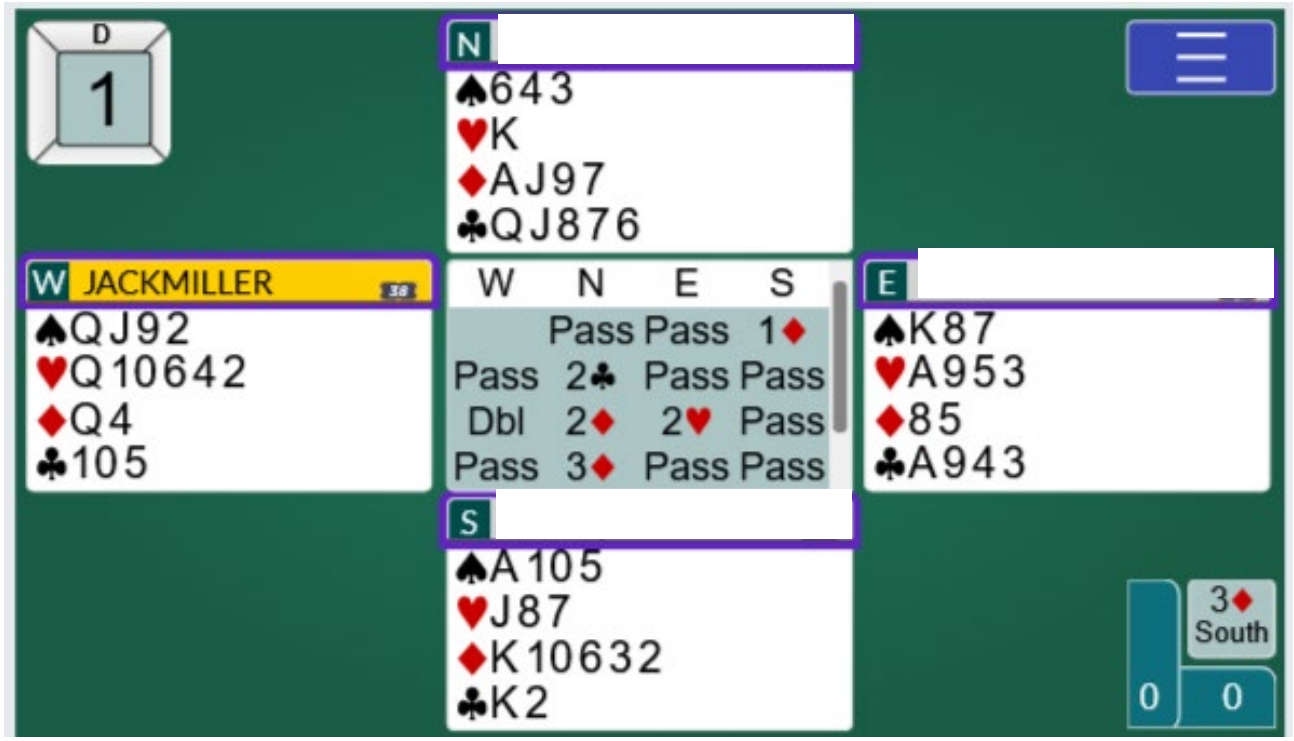
Should I bid here? Why or why not?



11 Double Dummy Makes

7 11 NS 3♦; NS 2♣;

11 EW 3♥; EW 1♠;



1

♠643 ♥K ♦AJ97 ♣QJ876

Dlr: N
Vul: None

♠QJ92 ♥QT642 ♦Q4 ♣T5

♠K87 ♥A953 ♦85 ♣A943

♠AT5 ♥J87 ♦KT632 ♣K2

11 Double Dummy Makes
7 11 NS 3♦; NS 2♣;
11 EW 3♥; EW 1♠;

Par: -100 NS 4DX-1

C

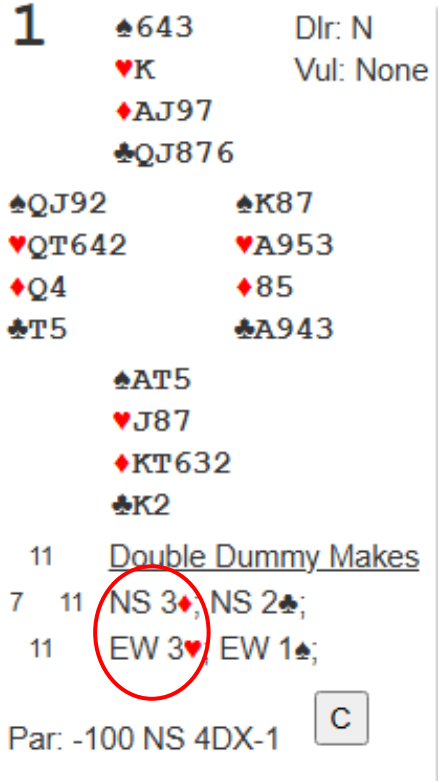
Michael Berkowitz Hand Analysis

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
	Pass	1♣	1♦
Dbl	2♣	2♥	Pass
Pass	3♦	Pass	Pass
3♥	All pass		

North has an okay 11-count. If the ♥ K were in with clubs or diamonds, I would open. As it is, I would pass. East opens 1♣ with two aces and a king. Yes, it's light, but bridge is a bidder's game. This hand is worth about 12 points. South will overcall 1♦ . West could bid hearts, but with this many points, it's more descriptive to make a Negative Double . North cuebids clubs in order to show a good diamond raise. East competes to 2♥ , even with a minimum. East knows about an 8-card fit and should show it. South passes, having shown his hand already. West passes and North balances 3♦ , knowing about a 9-card fit. East passes and South passes. West also knows about a 9-card fit, and takes the push to the 3-level.

We can see that both sides are correct that they can make 9 tricks in their respective suits. In a heart contract, declarer should be able to play hearts for no losers by leading low to the ace and back to the 10 after North plays the K.

18 tables	NS
1C 1D 2D+1	74%
1C 1D 2D 3NT-1	38%
1C 2NT 3D 3NT-6	0%
1D (X) >> (3H) 4D-1	38%
P (1C) 1D (1H) >> (3H) 4D	91%
P (1C) 1D (1H) >>(3H)	12%



Michael Berkowitz Hand Analysis

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
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Pass	3♦	Pass	Pass
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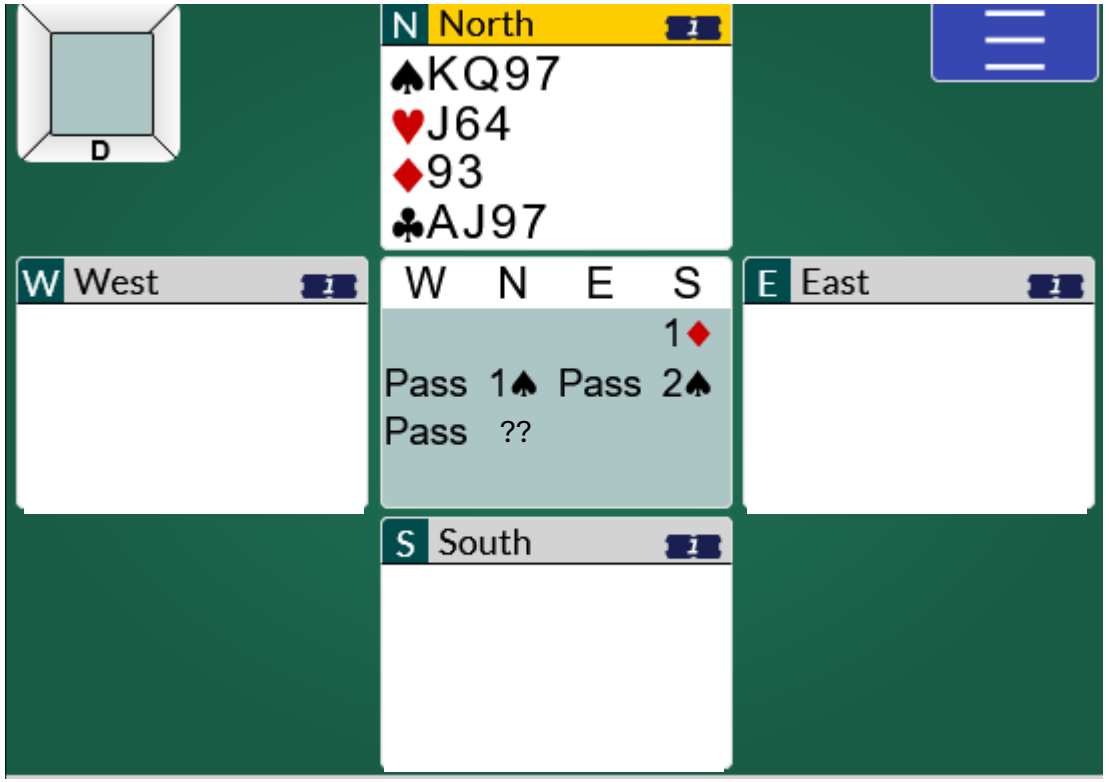
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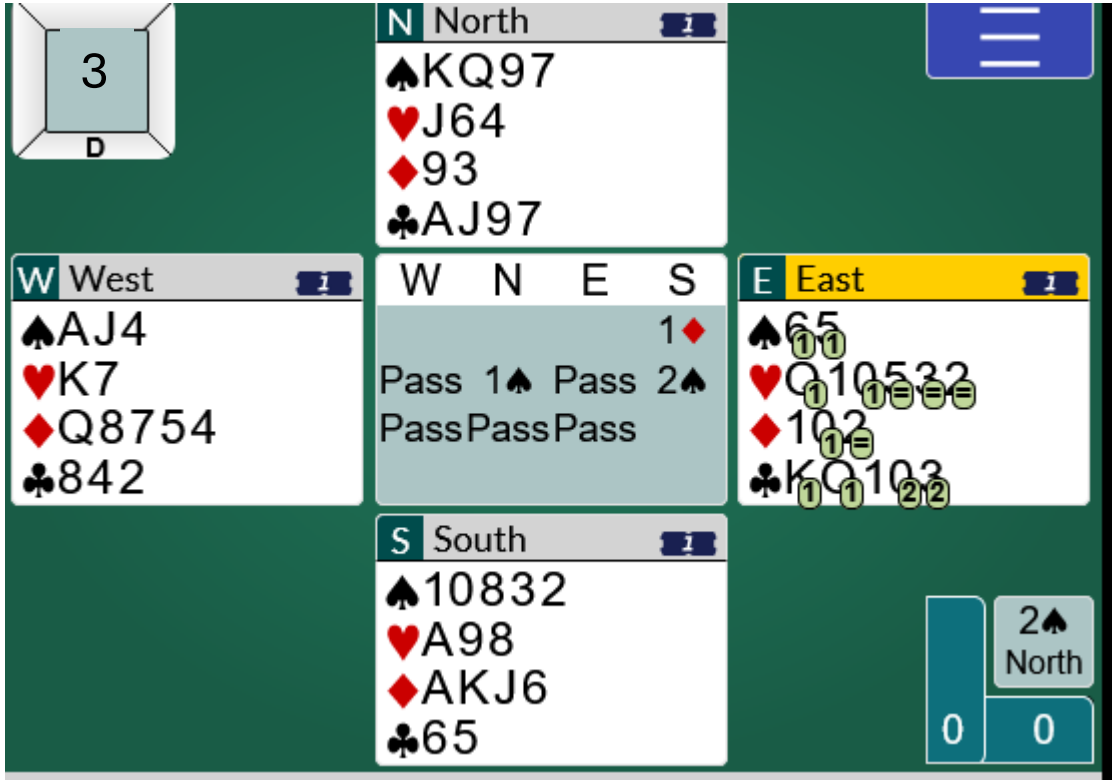
Takeaways:

- Sometimes there's no right or wrong.
- Open aggressively: It is often good to get into the bidding first.
- If you open aggressively, partner should only GF or invite soundly: 2 Souths drove to 3NT after North's 1C.
- This became a LOTT hand.

6. Should North invite game?



6. Don’t invite game with a balanced 11



Wolpert Bridge Live Sessions
11/25/25

Open aggressively, invite soundly

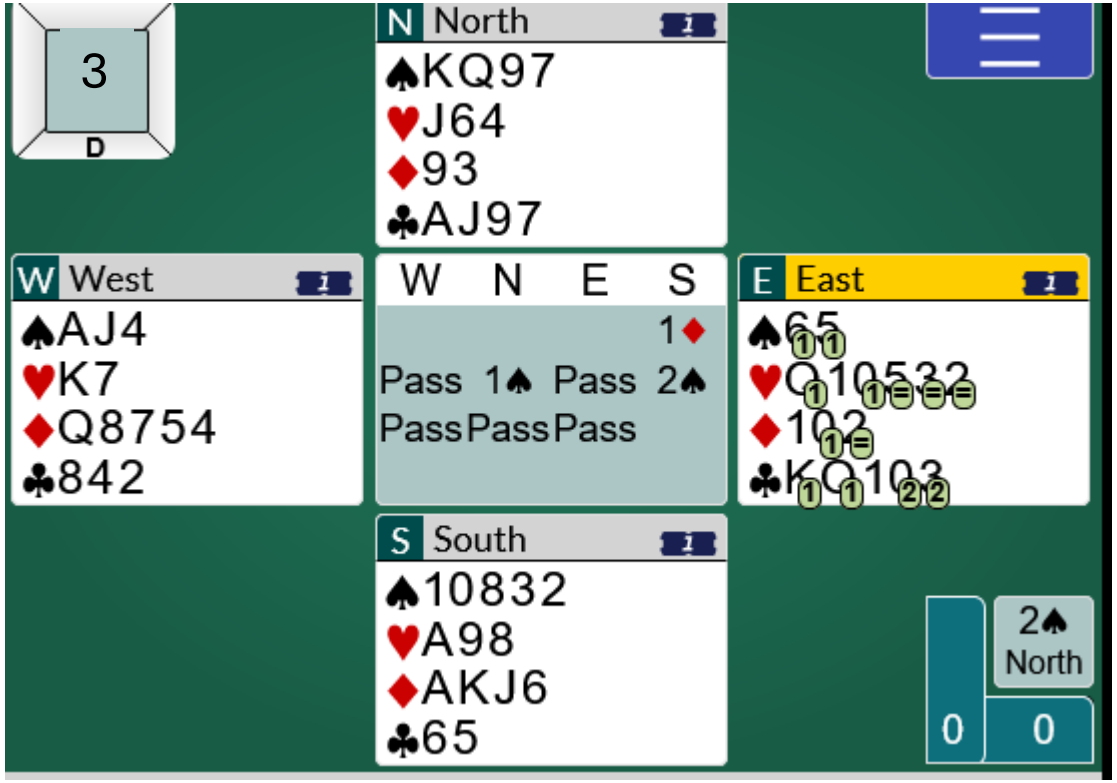


Gavin’s Rule: if the most you can have is 25 hcp and 8 trump, don’t invite.

You only win if partner accepts and you make it.

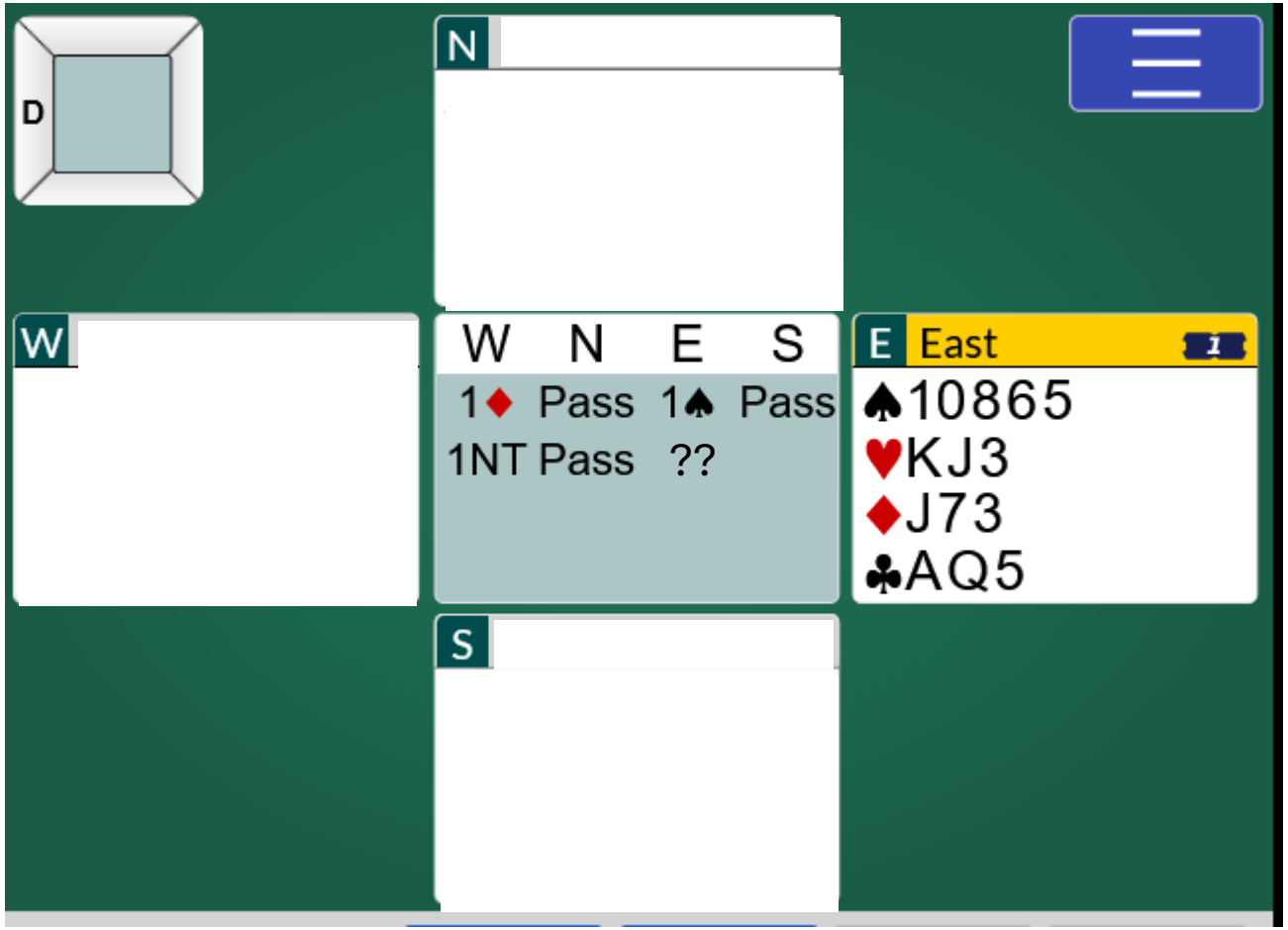
You lose if you push one level higher and go down, or bid game and go down.

6. Don’t invite game with a balanced 11



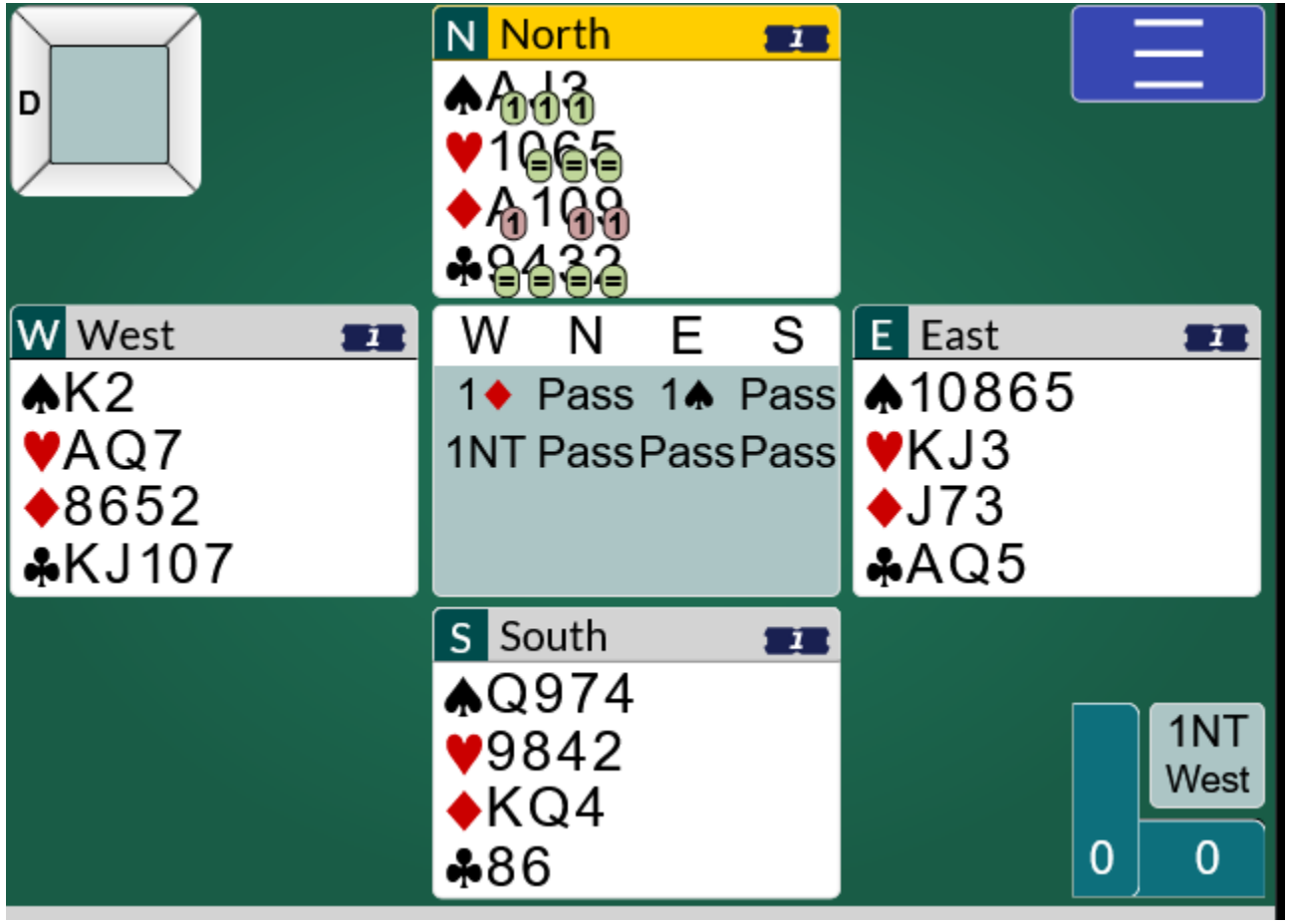
Wolpert Bridge Live Sessions
11/25/25

Should East invite game?



Wolpert lesson: 2 way NMF

Pass: do not invite with a balanced 11



Wolpert lesson: 2 way NMF

Open the bidding aggressively; invite soundly

- Goren: all 14s; 13 with a good rebid; must have 2 quick tricks.
- Rule of 20 is good: add your high card points plus your two longest suits. If 20 or more, open.
- Suggestion of 20 plus 2: Rule of 20, but with 2 quick tricks. Be careful with 10 hcp and 5/5 or 6/4 hands.
- Consider opening a bit more aggressively…
  - Open all 12 counts
  - Open all 11 counts that are worth 12

Open the bidding aggressively; invite soundly

- Goren: all 14s; 13 with a good rebid; must have 2 quick tricks.
- Rule of 20 is good: add your high card points plus your two longest suits. If 20 or more, open.
- Suggestion of 20 plus 2 is an improvement: Rule of 20, but with 2 quick tricks. Be careful with 10 hcp and 5/5 or 6/4 hands.
- And, consider opening even a bit more aggressively…
  - Open all 12 counts
  - Open 11 counts that are worth 12
- Therefore, two opening hands may not make game.

Open the bidding aggressively; invite soundly

- Goren: all 14s; 13 with a good rebid; must have 2 quick tricks.
- Rule of 20 is good: add your high card points plus your two longest suits. If 20 or more, open.
- Suggestion of 20 plus 2 is an improvement: Rule of 20, but with 2 quick tricks. Be careful with 10 hcp and 5/5 or 6/4 hands.
- And, consider opening a bit more aggressively…
  - Open all 12 counts
  - Open 11 counts that are worth 12
- Therefore, two opening hands may not make game.
- Therefore, GF soundly, invite soundly; accept aggressively.

1NT openers

Balanced or semi-balanced

15-17 high card points

Open 1NT or five card major?

♠ AJxxx

See Cohen, Bidding Basics, Oct BB, p 53

1NT openers

Balanced or semi-balanced

15-17 high card points

Open 1NT or five card major?

♠ AJxxx

- If you open 1NT, how will you show your five card major?
- If you open 1S, how will you show your 15-17?

1NT openers

Balanced or semi-balanced

15-17 high card points

Open 1NT or five card major?

♠ AJxxx

- If you open 1NT, how will you show your five card major?
- If you open 1S, how will you show your 15-17?

Consider the rebid!!

7. 1S or 1NT?

♠KQJ92

♥KQ53

♦K2

♣J5

8. 1H or 1NT?

♠KQ53

♥KQJ92

♦K2

♣J5

Let’s compare…

7.

♠KQJ92

♥KQ53

♦K2

♣J5

1S 1NT 2H

8.

♠KQ53

♥KQJ92

♦K2

♣J5

1NT

1S 1NT 2H is very open-ended: 11/12 to as much as 17/18.
Partner should strain to bid with 8+.

1NT openers

- If you are balanced, 5332, with a five card major open 1NT.
- If you are semi-balanced, 5422, with a five card major you can open 1NT, but if you can naturally show your 5-4 (i.e., without reversing), open the major.

Consider the rebid!!

See also BB Sept. 2026. Ask Jerry, p.57

1NT openers

- If you are balanced, 5332, with a five card major open 1NT.
- If you are semi-balanced, 5422, with a five card major you can still open 1NT, but if you can naturally show your 5-4 (i.e., without reversing), open the major.
- 1S 1NT 2H is open ended, promising 12-17/18.
- Partner should strain to bid with 8+.

Consider the rebid!!

What would you open?

♠KQ5

♥K32

♦75

♣KQJ109

What would you open?

♠KQ5

♥K32

♦J5

♣KQJ72

Which hand is better?

♠KQ5
♥K32
♦J5
♣KQJ72

♠KQ5
♥K32
♦75
♣KQJ109



See also BB Sept 2026, Lessons Learned, p. 52
and Bidding Basics, Oct 2026, p.53

1NT openers

- If you are balanced, 5332, with a five card major open 1NT.
- If you are semi-balanced, 5422, with a five card major you can open 1NT, but if you can naturally show your 5-4 (i.e., without reversing), open the major.
- With a balanced 14 hcp and a good five card suit, open 1NT.

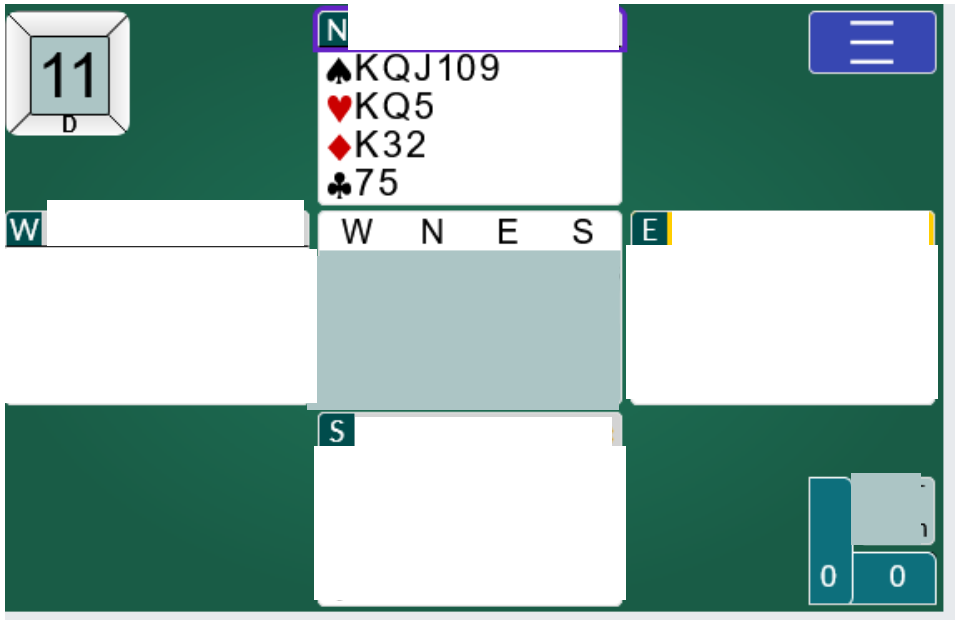
Myth busters

- Myth: don’t open 1NT with two doubletons.
- 5422, consider the rebid: can you comfortably rebid the four card suit?
- 6 card minor 6322, open 1NT if not strong enough to rebid 3 of the minor– more difficult for opps to come in, and NT scores better.

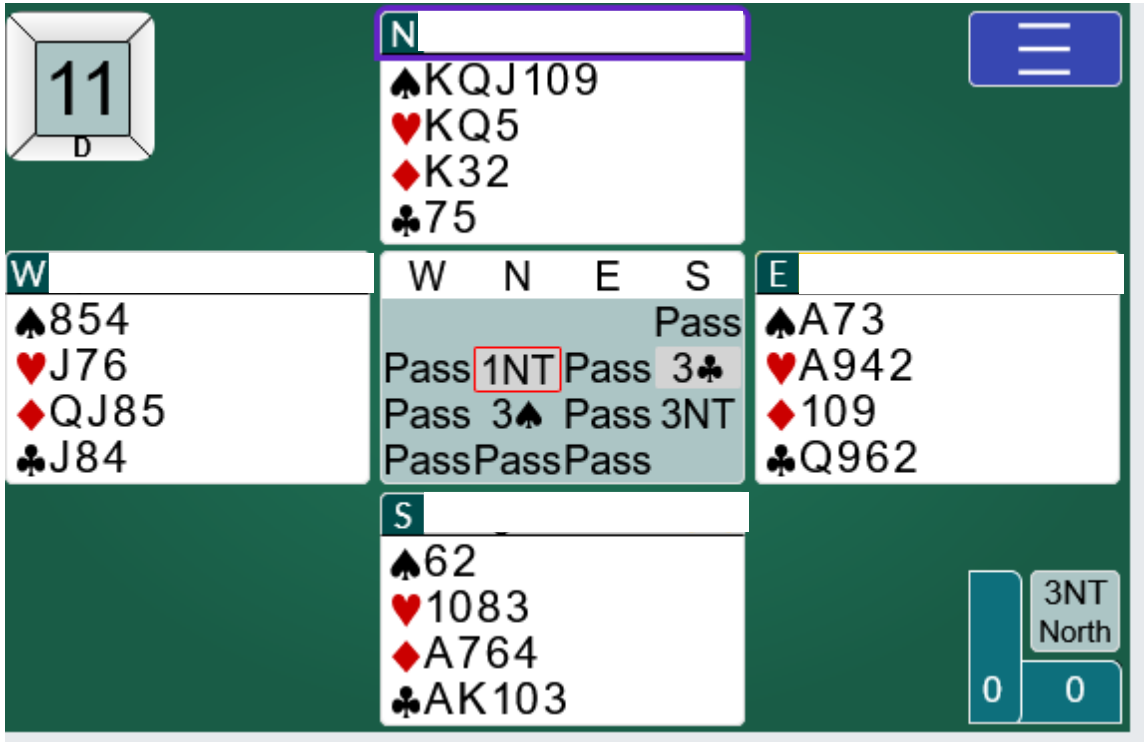
Wolpert lesson: NT Opening Response Structure

Let's look at some real hands

9. What does North bid?



What does North bid?



Two South's opened 1D (one with 19,000 MPs) – they got to 3NT.

Several tables went 1S 1N ///

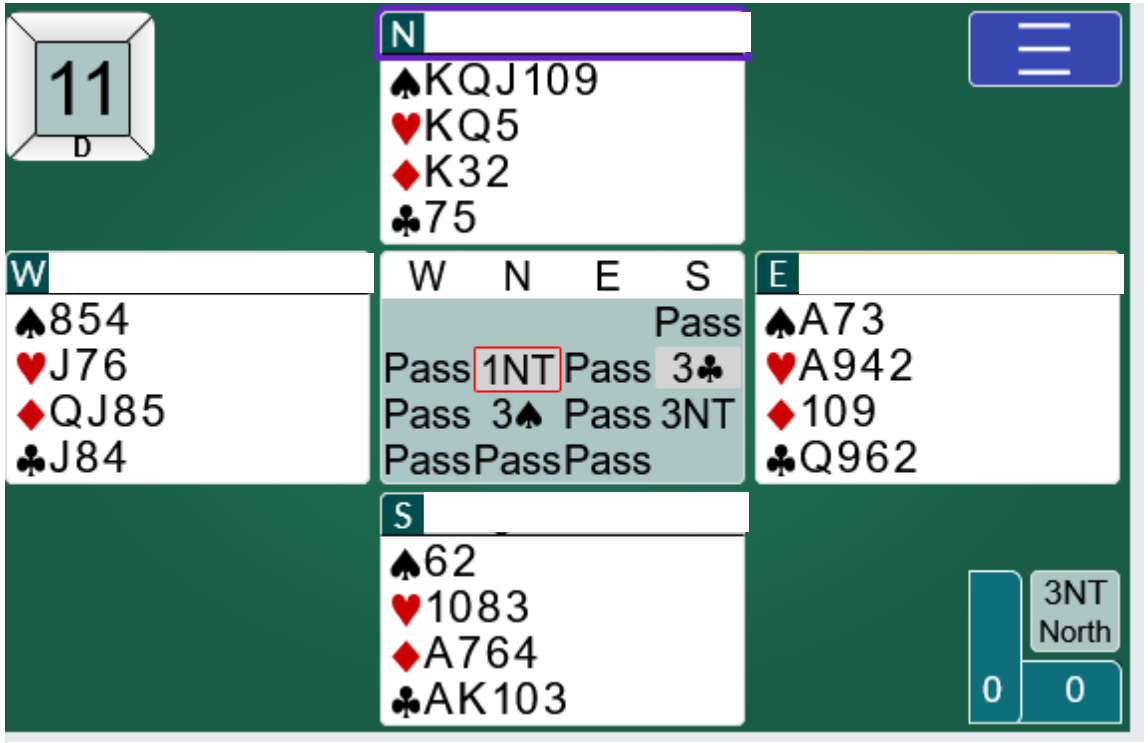
Only 1 North opened 1NT.

Only 5/11 got to 3NT including the two where South opened 1D

Newtown Open, BBO

See also BB Sept 2026 p.52

What does North bid?



Two South's opened 1D (one with 19,000 MPs) – they got to 3NT.

Several tables went 1S 1N ///

Only 1 North opened 1NT.

Only 5/11 got to 3NT including the two where South opened 1D

3N+1	90%
1N+3	50%
2S+1	20%

Newtown Open, BBO

See also BB Sept 2026 p.52

1NT openers

- If you are balanced, 5332, with a five card major open 1NT.
- If you are semi-balanced, 5422, with a five card major you can still open 1NT, but if you can naturally show your 5-4 (i.e., without reversing), open the major.
- With a balanced 14 hcp and a good five card suit, open 1NT.

Consider the rebid!!

Key takeaways

- Consider the rebid: don’t back yourself into a corner where your rebid will be a problem.
- Play 1NT or 3NT, not 2NT.
- Play 2M or 4M, not 3M.
- Consider opening more hands.
- Invite game soundly; accept aggressively.
- Understand more; memorize less.
- For continual improvement continually review your results.

Links

Larry Cohen Wednesday Game

- Cohen: https://www.larryco.com/newsletter

Gavin Wolpert Tuesday Game

- Wolpert: https://wolpertbridge.com/calendar

- https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/to-tell-the-truth-part-1-the-auction

Additional Topics

- 1M opener: responses
  - Set the GF, show a four card major, show support?
  - 1H 2C
- Opener’s rebid
  - By pass four card major to bid NT?
  - 1D 1H 1NT
- Forcing or non-forcing
- All about seven card fits
- What else would you like to see?

1.
♠5
♥KJ2
♦KQ75
♣A8632

_____

2.
♠KQ5
♥732
♦J5
♣KQJ72

_____

3.
♠KQ5
♥732
♦75
♣KQJT9

_____

4.
♠KJ93
♥KJ8
♦QT6
♣Q87

_____

5.
♠K9762
♥T98
♦AK9
♣J3

_____

6.
♠KQ97
♥J64
♦93
♣AJ97
Do you invite game after 1D 1S 2S?

_____

7.
♠KQJ92
♥KQ53
♦K2
♣J5

_____

8.
♠KQ53
♥KQJ92
♦K2
♣J5

_____

9.
♠KQJT9
♥KQ5
♦K32
♣75

_____

Key

1. Open 1D to avoid a rebid problem. If the KQ of diamonds were the KQ of clubs, you might open 1C planning to rebid 2C even though you only have five, but here the clubs are not good enough and you don't want to bury the diamonds.
2. Clearly a 1C opener. 12 hcp, Rule of 20.
3. Open 1C. Only 11 hcp, but this is a better hand than #2.
4. A flat 12 with several gaps/ tenaces. But still better to open the 12 count even though it does not meet Rule of 20.
5. Open 1S. Only an 11 count, and not Rule of 20, but that fifth spade is worth a point or even a trick. Get the spade suit out there.
6. Pass. Open aggressively, but invite soundly. See slides 50, 51.
7. Open 1S. You have a natural 2H rebid showing 12-17/18 and showing your nine cards in the majors.
8. Open 1NT. You do not have a rebid after 1H 1NT.
9. Open 1NT. Your 14 is worth 15+. The T9 of clubs are better than a random J.

Thank you!