

AN "UNUSUAL" RESULT

You're the dealer with this hand:

S	South
♠	83
♥	9
♦	AKQ65
♣	109872

You pass and your LHO opens 1♣. Your partner overcalls with 2NT. For those who are familiar with this bid, it is not a 20-21 point notrump overcall. The probability that anyone would have a such a strong hand over a full opening bid is so small, this bid has developed a special meaning in competitive bridge. It shows a 2-suited hand. It is called the **Unusual Notrump Convention**. It is aptly named because it **is** unusual. By its nature it wakes his partner up and he is to expect 5-5 in the two lowest ranking unbid suits. In this case the suits are diamonds and hearts. There are two strength ranges that this bid is used with. The first is a weak range of about 5-11 points. The second range is 16+. In the majority of cases, it will be of the weak type and the overcaller will pass any bid made by his partner. If the overcaller bids again, the 2NT bid must have been the strong variety.

Here, East responds 3♥ to his partner's 1♣ opening, and it's back to you. What do you bid?

Notice a couple of things. The Unusual Notrump bid is very pre-emptive. It requires the responder to make his first bid at the 3-level. Of course it also pushes the advancer up as well. You obviously will prefer the diamond suit, which will require you to bid them at the 4-level. But should you? You can pass and see what develops.

In today's competitive bidding atmosphere, you should go out of your way to make it hard for your opponents. Since neither you nor your partner have many spades (he has 10 cards in the red suits), the opponents will certainly find their fit in spades if they are given the space. With your known 10-card diamond fit, I would jump to 5♦. In addition to it being preemptive, it is relatively safe. You have only 1 heart and at most, 2 spade losers. Your partner will be short in clubs which will give you a way of disposing of most of the clubs. The vulnerability also is in your favor.

Your 5♦ bid is passed around to East who doubles.

West leads the ♠A you partner tables this hand:

N	North
♠	AJ2
♥	QJ1052
♦	97432
♣	

West leads ♣A

S	South
♠	83
♥	9
♦	AKQ65
♣	109872

Partner has but 8 HCP and does not have the expected five diamonds and hearts. At first glance, it appears that this is a cross ruffing hand. Ruff a club, ruff a diamond, ruff a club, etc. But you should notice the solid heart suit in the dummy – queen to the ten, with the 9 in your hand. This offers a safer route to 11 tricks.

Ruff the club lead in the dummy and lead a small heart to your hand. East, who holds both the heart ace and king, will have to come up with the ♥K or else your ♥9 will win the trick! Say East leads another club. Win in dummy and pull 2 rounds of trump getting the expected 2-1 split. Ruff another club and lead the ♥Q. East will have to play his ♥A which you will ruff in your hand. Now you go to the dummy with your ♠A and discard a spade and a club on the ♥J10. You can trump the dummy's last heart and you give up a club at the end, making your doubled 5♦ contract.

This is the entire deal:

11 D	N North	W N E S
	♠ AJ2	1♣ 2NT 3♦ 5♠
	♥ QJ1052	P P X P
	♦ 97432	P P
♣		
W West	E East	
♠ Q1095	♠ K764	
♥ 84	♥ AK763	
♦ J10	♦ 8	
♣ AKQJ6	♣ 543	
	S South	
	♠ 83	
	♥ 9	
	♦ AKQ65	
	♣ 109872	
		5♦ S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/ya6weu3w> , 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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