

PUSH YOURSELF TO BID

You are the dealer. Nobody is vulnerable and you elect to pass this 10 HCP hand. Your LHO opens a preemptive 2♦ that is passed around to you.

S	South
♠	A5
♥	J762
♦	75
♣	AJ1098

Would you pass and play in 2♦? I wouldn't. West's 2♦ bid shows a hand averaging about 8 HCP. Since his partner didn't raise the preempt or suggest a suit of his own or notrump, it is likely that your partner has some points but didn't have the kind of hand that could bid directly over 2♦. You have a fairly nice 5-card club suit and even if you don't get to declare the hand, you would want your partner to start off with a club lead. I would push myself to bid 3♣ at this vulnerability. Notice that you cannot double since partner would surely bid spades.

North advanced your 3♣ overcall with 3NT, which was passed out.

East leads his partner's suit; the ♦9. Take over for North and see what you can do to make this 21 HCP game. West wins his ♦A and returns the ♠2.

N	North
♠	Q1074
♥	AQ85
♦	KQJ4
♣	7

East leads ♦9

S	South
♠	A5
♥	J762
♦	75
♣	AJ1098

You can count 6 top tricks: The aces of spades and hearts, the 3 top diamonds, and the ♠A. Two or three extra tricks can come from hearts and one or two can come from clubs.

Let's try to read the play so far. West won and switched to spades. He probably read the ♦9 lead as the top of nothing. Since he couldn't envision his partner with any of the missing diamond honors, West didn't see any value in continuing diamonds. Why did he switch to the ♠2? Usually, when a duce is led in notrumps, it is from a 4-card suit headed by an honor or two. But one shouldn't be opening with a weak-two bid while also holding a 4-card spade suit. He could have a fit with partner in this major and this would never be uncovered. Therefore, it might be from a singleton, hoping that his partner had the long spades and could develop some tricks in that suit. That also means that East holds the ♠KJ. If you are going to develop a spade trick, you want East to use up those honors early. Insert the ♠10. If the ♠2 was really a singleton, your ♠Q will always be a second stopper. East does play the ♠J, which you will win with dummy's ♠A. Now you will keep the ♠Q protected in case East gets the lead the plays the ♠K.

You should turn your attention to the heart suit. Which heart should you lead for your finesse? Don't lead the ♥J. If West holds the ♥K and covers it, you will only get two hearts. Lead the ♥2 to the ♥Q. True, you can only finesse through West once, but your chances increase for 3 or 4 tricks. If your ♥Q holds, you will play the ♥A and hope that West started with ♥Kx. This is a good possibility, given he has six diamonds. The ♥Q does hold and now you should play the ♥A from your hand. West's ♥K falls under your ♥A and the hearts have split 3-2 giving you three extra heart tricks and your contract. Time to develop the overtrick.

Play off all the diamonds and hearts. End in your hand and lead a club. When East comes up with the ♣Q, let him win. He will now be end-played. He can take his ♠K but will have to lead either a low spade to your ♠Q, or a club which will give you two club tricks; ten tricks in all.

Notice that passively letting them play in 2♦ would have produced a set of 2 tricks and a score of +100. This is so inferior to scoring a notrump game with an overtrick. It often pays to push.

This is the entire deal:

11 D	N North	W N E S
	♠ Q1074 ♥ AQ85 ♦ KQJ4 ♣ 7	2♦ P P 3♣ P 3NT P P P
W West	E East	
♠ 2 ♥ K10 ♦ A108632 ♣ 6542	♠ KJ9863 ♥ 943 ♦ 9 ♣ KQ3	
	S South	
	♠ A5 ♥ J762 ♦ 75 ♣ AJ1098	3NT N NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/yb27lajp>, 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. If you click on GIB, the software will analyze the hand and show the result for each opening lead.

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