

♠AQ75  
♥J10643  
♦AQ8  
♣6

As this puzzle will demonstrate, hand evaluation must be done in the context of the information you have available at the time you make your bid. Although high card points and distribution give you a good first cut at figuring out how good your hand is, you must constantly raise or lower the value of your hand as the auction proceeds.

Assume your right hand opponent is the dealer, and you hold the hand shown above. What call do you make, assuming each of the following opening calls by the dealer:

- a) Pass
- b) 1 club
- c) 1 diamond
- d) 1 heart
- e) 1 spade
- f) 1NT

For each of your answers, provide a brief explanation of why you decided on your chosen call.

(Some of the answers may seem obvious to you, and indeed they may be. However, by making you write down your reasoning, I am hoping to stimulate some critical bridge thinking on your part.)

Send your answers to me: [billpuzzles@bridgesights.com](mailto:billpuzzles@bridgesights.com)

## The Answer

- a) Over a pass, this is a standard 1 heart opener. Note, however, that this is not a strong enough hand to reverse. So, if partner responds 1N, I would pass (if playing SAYC) or bid 2D (if playing 1NT forcing). I would not bid 2S. Similarly, over a 2C response I would bid 2N, and over 2D I would bid 3D.
- b) Over 1 club, this is a good takeout double. On a hand with better hearts and worse spades (for example, Jxxx of spades and AQxxx of hearts), I might overcall a heart instead, but on this hand that would not be appropriate.
- c) Over 1 diamond, the bid is not clear. I would bid 1H, realizing that I will have to apologize to partner if the opponents buy the contract and a heart lead turns out to be a bad lead. However, generally speaking, I think it is better to compete if possible, particularly at the one level.

Pass is my 2<sup>nd</sup> choice, and I would not fault it if my partner chose to do so.

Some would make a takeout double. I think this is flawed, because if partner bids clubs, you have some "splaining" to do (for those of you who remember I Love Lucy). If you pull clubs to hearts, you are making a "double and correct", which shows 16+ points and a very good long heart suit. And if you pass and partner is playing in a 4-1 fit, you may have to find a new partner!

- d) Over 1 heart, pass is pretty clear. This hand is likely a misfit, and it is best letting the opponents get into trouble. If partner enters the bidding (very possibly in clubs), you will probably end up playing NT.
- e) Over 1 spade, I would also pass. Although you have the points to compete with 2 hearts, I feel the combination of weak hearts and spade length and strength are minuses. Generally speaking, you should not give full value to high cards in suits that the opponents have bid, because partner is much less likely to have additional honors that fit with yours. (Similarly, you should place extra value on high cards in suits that partner has bid, because high card combinations are more powerful than isolated high cards.) Granted, in this case, your spade Q is likely to be well placed, but this also means that it is more likely that your right hand opponent has high cards in some of your suits.
- f) In modern bridge, it is desirable to compete over 1N. Therefore, I suggest you play one of the conventions designed to do so. My favorite, and the one I recommend if asked, is DONT, in which case I would bid 2H, showing hearts and spades. For those of you who play Cappelletti, 2D would be the bid, showing the majors. Those are probably the most popular conventions, although any convention which allows you to show both single suited and double suited hands would be fine.