

IMP Pairs, March 20, 2012 -- Singleton Ace

Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

♠ 8 7 6 5 2

♥ A

♦ K 10 9

♣ Q 9 8 2



West	North	East	South
<i>Rishabh</i>		<i>Pete</i>	
Pass	Pass	1 NT	2 ♥
?			

In standard bidding, after North's 2♥ overcall, East has these choices:

Pass -- all the weak hands

2♠ -- non-forcing (competitive)

2NT -- invitational

3♣/3♦/3♠ -- natural, and forcing

3♥ -- Stayman

3NT -- to play

None of these actions says anything about hearts - a heart stopper is assumed, a defect in standard methods. However, we were playing Lebensohl, where a direct 3♥ or 3NT denies a heart stopper, and:

2NT -- requires opener to bid 3♣, whereupon...

Pass/3♦ -- to play (competitive)

3♥ -- Stayman, holding a heart stopper

3♠ -- natural, invitational

3NT -- to play, holding a heart stopper

What would you bid?

At IMPs, you should try to bid vulnerable games at 40% or better. The one action I was not going to take was to bid 2NT and then invite game at 3♠. Why risk going down at the 3-level in a bad suit, without being in game?

I hate a singleton ace. Unless a huge trump fit is disclosed, I generally find a singleton ace to be worth about three points, including any shortness value. Nevertheless, I decided to drive to game, but not show the fifth spade: 2NT followed by 3♥, Stayman with a stopper. I counted on Rishabh to bring the game home, if it could be done.

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Both Vul

♠ K		♠ J 9 4
♥ Q 7 4 3 2		♥ K
♦ J 8 6 5 4		♦ A Q 7 3 2
♣ 10 5		♣ A J 7 3
♠ 8 7 6 5 2	□	
♥ A		
♦ K 10 9		
♣ Q 9 8 2		
♠ A Q 10 3		
♥ J 10 9 8 6 5		
♦ —		
♣ K 6 4		

NS 5♥; EW 2♠; EW 2♦; EW 1♣

West	North	East	South
<i>Pete</i>		<i>Rishabh</i>	
Pass	Pass	1 NT	2♥
2 NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	3 NT	All pass

2♠ was our last chance for a positive score. I forgot that Rishabh is one of the more aggressive bidders at the club, and should have taken the low road with my flawed hand.

While I would have opened Rishabh's hand 1♦, with a fine 2♣ rebid in reserve, I never worry about partner's judgement calls. Change the ♠J to the ♠Q, and I would likely have tried 1NT myself. A singleton king often has more value at no trump than in a suit contract.

Our combined aggressive actions landed us in a poor game. Rishabh could have cashed out for down two. However, he took the play to make, hoping for a doubleton ♣K in the North hand, finessing the ♣J at trick two (swap the ♣K and ♣10, and he makes). South proceeded to cash five hearts, and after dummy parted with those junky spades, four spades. When the carnage ended, we were -600, down six!

The opponents had their own vulnerable game to bid, 4♥ making five, -650. That happened at two tables. At another, our side was doubled for -1400. There were also two -200s and a -100. Cashing out would have been a big win for us. Would you have done that? As it was, rather than being a disaster, we only lost a little on the board.