

Birthright -- Problem

Board 5

East Deals

E-W Vul



♠ 10 6 4
♥ K 5
♦ K 10 3
♣ 10 8 6 4 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦ ¹
Pass	2 ♥ ²	Pass	2 ♠ ³
Pass	3 ♣ ⁴	Pass	4 ♣ ⁵
Pass	4 ♠ ⁶	Pass	?

1. Waiting.
2. Puppet to 2 ♠: either hearts or a balanced game force.
3. Expected relay.
4. Forcing with clubs and hearts.
5. Forcing (no second negative), clubs are trump.
6. Spade control, only 1 of top 3 hearts, slam interest.

Join us for this deal at a club game, with the auction above. What is your call?

Want some help?

Eric Kokish published this 2 ♥ bid as the birthright convention, but it's often called Kokish relay. With little cost, it allows opener to bid 2-forcing-NT, with "systems on." (We also play that responder's 2 NT bid over 2 ♥ shows a spade suit of at least six cards and any strength: opener's 3 ♠ is forcing; all other bids promise hearts.)

Any new suit by opener is forcing. 3 ♣ effectively forces to game, since if responder prefers clubs, that must be done at the four level. Furthermore, 3 ♣ is a real suit, not a contrived bid. Opener could have jumped to 3 ♥ over 2 ♦ to set hearts trump and start cue-bidding. Opener shows at most three losers, preferably two, anticipating the possibility of a 5 ♣ contract. Always open a 4-loser 2-suiter at the one level!

If we were broke, we would have bid 3 ♦ over 3 ♣, as a second negative, planning to pick clubs later. (Over opener's 3 ♦ instead of 3 ♣, 3 NT would be the second negative! We are not playing 3 NT when we are broke, on opener's unbalanced hand. This plan for the second negative to skip over majors is called cheaper minor.)

We cue-bid first- and second-round controls up the line, with one exception: a cue-bid of a suit previously bid naturally by the cue-bidder promises two of the top three honors in that suit, one control being assumed.

Our partnership plays that, when a minor suit is trump, four of the other minor asks for keycards. For some reason, opener did not want to do that. Skipping 4 ♦, our "crosswood" bid, thus says nothing about diamonds.

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Birthright -- Solution

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

NS 6♣; NS 5♥; NS 3N; NS 2♠; EW 2♦; Par +920: NS 6♣=

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	4 ♣
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	4 NT ⁷
Pass	6 ♣ ⁸	All pass	

7. RKB 1430 (4 ♦ has sailed).

8. Odd number of keycards with a useful void.

6 ♣ by North

We promised some values with 4 ♣, which is forcing. So, opener has a strong 2-suiter with at most three losers. Partner did not want to ask for keycards, which suggests a void somewhere (or the unlikely possibility of no diamond control). Partner has skipped over hearts, denying two of the top three honors. Logically, opener would have opened at the one level, lacking both top hearts, so partner has the ♥ A. Partner has shown a spade control.

We have five trumps and ♥ K-x, a combination that we know erases *two* of opener's losers. We must drive to slam. We could jump to 6 ♣, but we could miss a grand slam: replace opener's ♠ Q with the ♠ A, above.

This has been a complex auction with chances to go wrong. If there is any chance that opener will read 4 NT as natural, it's safest to jump to 6 ♣. Otherwise, proceed with 4 NT, as above.

Opener has an absolute minimum hand with three losers. Ordinarily, North should probably open this hand 1 ♥, naming a suit before the preempting starts. In fourth seat at favorable vulnerability, everybody already had a chance to preempt, and 1 ♥ might be passed out.

Playing 2 ♥ negative over 2 ♣ could work well: 2 ♣ - 2 ♦; 2 ♥ - 2 NT; 3 ♣ - 4 ♣; 4 ♠ - 4 NT; 6 ♣.

However, if we were broke, after {2 ♣ - 2 ♥}, opener's "new suit" 3 ♥ would be forcing, but chews up lots of space. 3 ♣, also forcing, would allow responder to mark time with 3 ♦ -- but this plan would have opener bidding 4 ♥ if we show a bunch of spades. 2 ♥ negative gains when it is not used, but often creates issues when it is used. Opening 1 ♥ appears attractive when playing 2 ♥ negative, but that's when we might play 1 ♥.

Parrish 2 ♠ over 2 ♥ would be of no assistance in this situation. Extensions to cover 6-4 hands, for example, are possible.