

THINKING BRIDGE - - By Eddie Kantar
 (From - NABC -FALL 2011 Seattle (1-12-2011)

Dir: South Vul: E-W	NORTH ♠ 9 7 6 ♥ 10 9 8 6 2 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A K 3		West	North	East	South
			--	--	--	1 Diamond
			Pass	1 Heart	Pass	2 Club
			Pass	Pass	2 Spade	3 Club
			All Pass			
WEST ♠ K Q 4 ♥ K 7 4 ♦ J 8 7 3 ♣ Q 10 8		EAST ♠ 10 8 5 3 2 ♥ A Q J 5 ♦ Q 10 ♣ 6 5	Opening Lead = ♠K			
	SOUTH ♠ A J ♥ 3 ♦ A K 9 4 2 ♣ J 9 7 4 2					

Bidding commentary: As East, you aren't strong enough to overcall 1♠, but you are strong enough to bid 2♠ later! Why? When the opponents die out at the two level after having found a likely eight-card fit, keep these things in mind: (1) the high-card points are usually rather evenly divided between the two partnerships; (2) if they have an eight-card fit, your side almost always has one as well; (3) if they have a nine-card fit, it is 100% that your side has at least an eight-card fit. Now your 2♠ bid should make more sense.

It is important to try to push opponents who have found a fit and conked out at the two level to the three level. If the opponents are happy to play at the two level, how thrilled can they be to play at the three level? Balancing at tournament bridge is a huge part of the game. One major caution: If the opponents don't have a fit, (each bidding and rebidding a different suit), your side is likely not to have an eight-card fit. Balance against fits, not misfits!

Bidding commentary #2: As West, when partner balances with 2♠, partner is playing you for some 9-12 HCP and hoping for three-card support. Partner needs that much to have any chance to make a two-level contract. Partner is bidding your hand! Here, you have normal expectancy, but 3 of your HCP (♦J, ♠Q) are not working points. Secondary honors in suits the opponents have bid are better suited for defense. Even the ♥K, may not be working if the ♥A is to your left.

Final thought: When partner balances at the two level, the idea is to push the opponents to the three level, not to go there yourself! In order to compete to the three level after partner balances, you should have four-card support plus a side-suit singleton, or two side-suit doubletons.

Bidding commentary #3: As South, take the push and bid 3♣. You have a distributional hand facing a partner who figures to have three or four clubs. Distributional hands, point count notwithstanding, tend to take the push whereas balanced hands usually do not.

Play commentary: As South, after winning the ♠A, cash the ♣A-K and the ♦A-K, ruff a diamond in dummy and exit dummy with a spade. West wins, cashes the ♣Q (a smart defensive play when partner has no more trump) and gets out with a spade which you ruff. You concede a diamond, and wind up losing one trick in each suit. Against good defense, East-West cannot make even two spades!