

10. Trust Your Partner

This deal comes from the Life Master Open Pairs played in Las Vegas in 2001. I was sitting West, and I'm going to put you in the East seat with my partner (David Berkowitz).

The Auction

♠ 10 ♥ A 8 7 4 3 ♦ J 7 5 4 2 ♣ 10 7

As West, with North-South vulnerable, I open the bidding 1♦. We play Precision, where this could show as little as a two-card suit (because a 1♣ opener is artificial and strong). In addition, when we open one of any suit (other than clubs), we are limited to 11-15 high card points.

North doubles, and it is up to David. What should he do?



In general, over a takeout double, you make the bid you would make even without the double. If you have a good hand (ten-plus high card points) you can start with a redouble. With a normal hand like this, make the normal call: 1♥. South bids 1♠ and your partner (me) rebids 2♦. Now you know he has real diamond length; in fact, when he rebids a suit, it shows at least six cards (just as in Standard bidding).

This reminds me of one of my favorite people, Roberta Salob. A super bridge teacher (and person), she is always telling her students that rebids promise six cards. 'Who rebids five-card suits?' she asks. 'Perverts!' She has an entire lesson based on the premise that 'Only perverts rebid five-card suits'. I hope this doesn't offend anyone (Roberta tells me that every now and then she runs into a prudish student who objects to this phraseology).



Arnold & Roberta Salob, Maria & Larry Cohen

When I rebid 2♦, not only did I promise six-plus, but I must also point out that we play support doubles. So when opener fails to make a support double, he denies three (or, of course, four) hearts. You now know that West has at most two hearts and six-plus diamonds.

North jumps to 4♦. This must be a splinter bid in support of spades. It has to show quite a good hand, since it is driving to game after a non-jump (non-forcing) 1♠ bid.

West	North	East	South
1♦*	dbl	1♥	1♠
2♦	4♦*	?	

What now?



Especially at this vulnerability, you should bid 5♦. You don't necessarily expect to make 5♦, but surely it will have a chance. Furthermore, they rate to be making 4♣ (partner's high diamonds won't take too many tricks on defense). If you need one more reason, just 'Follow the LAW'. You have eleven trumps and can bid to the five-level.

Not so fast! South competes to 5♣. Too bad. You were hoping to play in 5♦. Not so fast again! Partner isn't done yet and he bids 6♦. This is getting exciting. Notice that there have been nine calls since the auction began, and none of them were passes! This is highly unusual. Now North does pass, as do you. Maybe you will buy it now? No, South isn't through yet either and continues with 6♣. Hard to believe a player who could bid only 1♠ after the takeout double is now going on, but that's what happened at the table.

It's not clear what to do now, but I think I agree with what David did.

He doubled. After all, I did open the bidding and he at least had a sure heart trick. If I had a singleton heart, maybe his double would encourage me to lead it (thinking that David must have an ace for his double and that it was likely to be in his suit or in trumps). Finally, everyone passed and it was my lead.

The Play

♠ A J 3 2
 ♥ Q J 5
 ♦ —
 ♣ A K Q 5 3 2

David

♠ 10
 ♥ A 8 7 4 3
 ♦ J 7 5 4 2
 ♣ 10 7

N
W E
S

West	North	East	South
1♦*	dbl	1♥	1♠
2♦	4♦*	5♦	5♠
6♦	pass	pass	6♣
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

Sure enough, I did lead a heart, the ♥K, and this is what David saw.

With the heart lead, the defense was off to a great start. You know from the auction that declarer isn't short in hearts, so you are surely beating this.

From North's point of view, he thought he was tabling a good dummy. If South has good trumps (like ♠KQxx or longer), this would be a great contract with a diamond lead. Declarer could presumably ruff in dummy, maybe arrange another diamond ruff in dummy, and then throw hearts on clubs. However, possibly influenced by the double, West has produced the killing heart lead.

Which heart should David play?



David overtook the ♥K with his ♥A. That's right, he overtook my ♥K. I'll explain why in a moment. Then he returned the ♥4 and gave me a heart ruff. Declarer had the rest. Without this exact defense (♥K lead overtaken for a ruff), the contract makes easily. Declarer has eleven top black tricks and can ruff a diamond in dummy for the twelfth trick (he throws away three heart losers on dummy's clubs and loses just one heart).

The Result

NS Vul.

	♠ A J 3 2										
	♥ Q J 5										
	♦ —										
	♣ A K Q 5 3 2										
Larry	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		David
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ 9 7 6		♠ 10									
♥ K		♥ A 8 7 4 3									
♦ A K Q 10 9 8 3		♦ J 7 5 4 2									
♣ 8 4		♣ 10 7									
	♠ K Q 8 5 4										
	♥ 10 9 6 2										
	♦ 6										
	♣ J 9 6										

So how did David know? He said in the post-mortem that he trusted me. ‘With ♥Kx, you would have led low,’ he said.

I would have? I silently wondered. David said that I was known to have short hearts (from my non-support double), so whatever heart I led, David would presumably win with the ace if he had it and return a heart to try to give me a ruff. So with ♥Kx, it would be right to lead low and then get my king (never mind greedily trying to beat it two by leading the ♥K then a low one to the ♥A for a ruff).

Leading the king from ♥Kx would be dangerous. According to David, he would always presume the ♥K was a singleton and would overtake (as he did in real life). The contract would make, and I don’t know if our partnership would have survived the post-mortem after that result.

On the actual deal, we got a very good board for 6♣ doubled down one, +100. East-West can make ten tricks in a diamond contract. Against best (spectacular by David, I’d say) defense, North-South can be held to eleven tricks in spades (or clubs).

If I’d actually been dealt ♥Kx, would I have figured out to lead low? We’ll never know.