

2. MPs, E-W Vul., DEALER NORTH

♠-1032 ♥-Q865 ♦-A10 ♣-AKJ4

South	West	North	East
--	--	Pass	1♥
Pass			

South	West	North	East
--	--	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥*	Pass	Pass
??			

* - CONSTRUCTIVE 3-CARD RAISE

2a: Do you approve of South's pass?
If 'no', what do you prefer?

2b: What call do you make?

CALL	PANEL	BW.com	AWARD
Yes	14	85%	5
1NT	1	10%	3
2♣	0	3%	1
Double	0	2%	1

CALL	PANEL	BW.com	AWARD
Pass	10	74%	20
Double	3	19%	14
3♣	2	6%	12
2NT	0	1%	5

There's one in every crowd:

ROBINSON: No. I would bid 1NT so I don't get into the situation shown in part B. Partner can now compete if possible, and I have only two HCP wasted in hearts.

Hardly an unreasonable call at matchpoints, where early aggression can pay handsomely. Browne passes but "wouldn't quibble" about 1NT. Everyone else passes quickly and contently.

MARKS: Yes. No alternative.

BETHE: Yes. I can't conceive of another sensible action. Perhaps 1♠ as anti-lead-directional?

GRECO: Yes. Anything else would be strange opposite a passed partner.

Even on BridgeWinners.com, where poll respondents occasionally display some serious bravado, pass was the overwhelming favorite. At the 'virtual' table, I passed without a second thought. To be honest, Part A of this problem was included only to allow anyone who wanted to vent about the bidding in Part B an opportunity to do so. The real nightmare comes on the second round of the auction:

We're taught from the bridge cradle never, ever, to allow the opponents to play in two hearts at matchpoints with a sure eight-card fit. If you do, locusts will descend, rivers will run with blood, and a wormhole will open up in space and swallow the galaxy. Plus, Larry Cohen will be really ticked off at you, which might be the worst consequence of all. Thus, we must balance here, with... um, with.....?

WACHSMAN: 3♣. This is matchpoints after all. LOL!

HARRIS: 3♣. Partner should have about 5 to 8 high card points. Since I did not overcall directly, I have to hold a good hand with hearts.

Browne also placed North with 5-8 points, and others implied as much. No one commented on the "constructive" aspect of West's raise, presumably showing a good 7 to 10 HCP. This doesn't really affect the range of combined points the opponents might hold (and, by inference, the range of points left over for partner.) It does, however, suggest that East-West are more likely to be on the higher end of their range, thus partner on the lower end of his. You won't often catch more than six points in North's hand.

GOLDBERG: Double. I think this is okay, since partner has a stiff heart. He will likely have four spades if he bids them.

MARKS: Double. With the anticipation that East-West will go to 3♥, which will probably go down. If not, we will probably make whatever contract partner bids. He has one heart at best, so we're bound to have at least a seven-card fit, and we won't be doubled.

WHITE: Double. What's the problem? *I dunno. None of that is making me eager to reach for anything except a green card. But, we have to balance! Larry Cohen says so! Right?*

RASKIN: Pass. Too many ways to go minus by bidding, and it looks like we might be headed for a plus just by sitting here.

PASSER: Pass. Why convert their minus into our minus?

ROBINSON: Pass. If I didn't bid 1NT earlier, I guess I have to pass now.

FILANDRO: Pass. Partner, known to have zero or one heart, was unable to double or bid at his second turn. He does not hold the points and shape I need to make eight or nine tricks.

DYE: Pass. Partner failed to pre-balance despite being short in hearts. Bidding at the three-level on my own risks exchanging a plus for a minus when we have the balance of strength, and invites minus 300 when we don't.

Hoo-boy. Larry Cohen is calling his travel agent now and canceling his vacation plans to Philadelphia and upstate New York. It's matchpoints, people. We do not allow the opponents to play two hearts in an eight-card fit. Capeesh?

BROWNE: Pass. Assuming that 2NT would be for the minors, there's not much one can do but pass.

GRECO: Pass. Very close to double, but maybe we'll beat them 200 on some days.

BETHE: Pass. I can easily see how not passing might be the winning action. On the other hand, there is no guarantee that we have an eight-card fit, or that partner has more than a three-count with a stiff heart. I am generally a pessimist.

Really? Two-thirds of our district, and three-quarters of the BridgeWinners crew, would just go quietly here? At matchpoints?? Even experts like Eric, Henry, Craig, and Pete? Well, yes they would. At the table, I passed too (but to be fair, it was IMPs.) And look who else is going quietly....

LARRY COHEN: Pass. As much as I love to keep the opponents from playing on the two-level with an eight-card fit, I reluctantly give in here. At these colors, I have a good chance to collect 200. Also, there is no good balancing action. Double likely begets 2♠, which will play poorly with ruffs in the long hand. Quite possible both 2♠ and 2♥ go down due to maybe only 15 total trumps and "minor honors" with my ♥Q. I could guess to bid 3♣, but then I might hit 4=1=5=3 shape. This is tough. If I knew we would find an 8-card fit, I'd balance.

Yup. I emailed Mr. LAW himself. Larry is one of the nicest and most approachable experts around, and even the man who made competitive bidding into an art form is with the passers. So there you have it. Once in a while, you can let the opponents play two hearts at matchpoints with an eight-card fit. Oops, I gotta run; a swarm of locusts is attacking my pepper plants....