

DISTRIBUTIONAL MINOR SUIT RAISES

Dealer: E
Vul: Nil

	♠ K843		
	♥ J64		
	♦ 74		
	♣ K752		
♠ 10		♠ 765	
♥ 109		♥ AKQ7	
♦ J983		♦ AQ1052	
♣ AQ10964		♣ J	
	♠ AQJ92		
	♥ 8532		
	♦ K6		
	♣ 83		

E	S	W	N
1D	1S	2C?	3S
?	P	P	P

On this hand in the Queensland Open, only 6 out of 28 pairs found the safe 5D game. Most didn't get to game and some played in a disastrous 3NT.

I think some of the problem might have been West replying 2C, leaving partner with a difficult bid after 3S interference. Given you can tell looking at the West hand that NS have a spade fit, I would show the diamond support as fast as possible. You might be a little concerned if you are playing better minor that East might have only 3 diamonds (in better minor, you open 1D with 4 spades, 4 hearts, 3 diamonds and 2 clubs). However, the possibility of this hand is reduced by the spade overall (making it less likely partner holds 4 spades).

However, supporting diamonds brings another problem. When East opens 1D, West's hand upgrades to 7HCPs + 3 for the singleton spade + 1 for the doubleton heart = 11 points or an invite hand.

But if West invites with 3D, East could attempt a 3NT in which West's distribution is useless and the side does not have enough points. Shortage in NTs is not a help – it's a liability.

However, if we bid 2D, this is an underbid and we might miss a game.

This hand is a **DISTRIBUTIONAL INVITE** hand – it is only of invitational strength if we play in trumps. How can we show it?

1. If the opposition have overcalled at the one level, the cue of their suit shows this distributional invite eg

1D (1S) 2S = 11-12 points if diamonds are trumps

2. If the opposition haven't overcalled, the jump in the opposite minor shows the distributional invite eg

1D 3C = 11-12 points if diamonds are trumps

1C 2D = 11-12 points if clubs are trumps

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E	S	W	N
1D	1S	2S!	3S
5D!	P	P	P

Note North's 3S bid. In competitive situations if you have a 9 card fit it is usually safe and effective to compete to the 3 level. There is no danger South will mistake the 3S bid for an invite to game so long as you are playing the unassuming cuebid. With a genuine invite, North will cue the opposition suit with 3D.

What should East do?

Opposite an invite hand, the point count (16 HCPs – 1 for the singleton jack + 3 for the singleton = 18) says there is enough for game in 5D (18 + 11 = 29).

The loser count (24 – (East's 5 loser + West's 8 loser) = 11) also suggests we should bid 5D.

However, some Easts might have been concerned about there being too many spade losers in 5D. They shouldn't have been – if NS are competing with 9 spades between them, by deduction that only leaves one spade in partner's hand.

Always remember you are entitled to know what opponent's bids mean (if they have an agreement). I was the North hand. If my opponents had asked my partner what my 3S bid meant, they would have been told "0-7 with 4+ spades". And thus know there wasn't more than 1 spade loser in 5D.