

Re-evaluating your hand during the auction

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This deal from Monday 11 March is really instructive in terms of drawing inferences from the bidding as the auction develops. Let's see if you can reach the right conclusions while looking at your hand as dealer, not vulnerable against opponents who are vulnerable:

♠5
♥AJT43
♦QT86
♣T95

It's not much of a hand, is it? Unless you play 5-card weak twos (see the 11 November 2023 column in the SHBC [Newsletter Archive](#)) you really can't say anything.

So you pass, your LHO passes and partner opens 1S. Well, that didn't help a lot, did it? You have no fit and might have to respond 1NT, which is unlikely to play well.

Your RHO overcalls 2C. Now do you have anything to say? Of course you do – you need to show your heart suit. You can't bid 2H as that would promise at least 9 hcp, but you can make a negative double, which shows the other major but doesn't guarantee any more than 4 cards in hearts.

LHO raises to 3C. Now partner bids 3H. RHO passes. What are you going to do?

Suddenly, your hand has changed dramatically. You can work out quite a few things:

- i. Partner has 4 hearts, so you have a 9-card fit
- ii. Partner almost certainly has shortage in clubs, because RHO has at least 5, LHO probably has 4 to voluntarily raise to the 3-level, and you have 3 cards in the suit
- iii. Any finesse required in hearts is quite likely to work, because it was your RHO who overcalled – she therefore probably has more high card points than your LHO.

So what should you do? Believe it or not, that's actually quite easy to answer – you should raise to game! Yes, with your mere 7 high-card points, your hand is now good enough to bid game opposite an average opening bid, based on the fit and the complementary shortages in spades and clubs.

If you do bid 4H, you find that the two hands are as shown in the full deal overleaf:

BD: 9	♠5	Dlr: N
	♥AJT43	Vul: EW
	♦QT86	
	♣T95	
♠963		♠K82
♥K86		♥5
♦A		♦K7432
♣AK8632		♣QJ74
	♠AQJT74	
	♥Q972	
	♦J95	
	♣	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N
		T
N	1 5 4	7
S	1 5 4	14 9
E	3	10
W	3	

In fact partner had opened a 10 hcp hand based on good shape and excellent options for a rebid, depending on your response. That you had just 17 hcp between the two of you didn't matter in the slightest: with the heart finesse working and ♠K coming down with 2 ruffs in dummy, there were various routes to making 11 tricks without breaking a sweat ...

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠