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This concludes our four-month tour through Gatlinburg, ACBL's largest regional. Again, try your skill on this important deal. Why is it important? It is a battle in the everyday trenches of bridge. As South, you hold:

♠ A 10 ♥ A Q 6 4 ♦ Q 10 9 6 3 ♣ Q 10.

With neither side vulnerable, left-hand opponent opens 1♠ and RHO raises to 2♠. And you?

I am a big believer in "getting in" — especially when the opponents bid and raise a major. My worst nightmare is that I pass and everyone passes and we defend 2♠. (You must think I have a pretty good life if this is my worst dream.) What should I bid? I suppose 3♦ is possible, but I think double is more flexible.

What if partner takes out to clubs? One, don't play with such partners. Two, if he does bid clubs, he should have five or more. How is this? Because you should play the "scrambling 2NT." Any time they bid and raise a major, you should never use 2NT as natural in response to a takeout double. It's unlikely that 2NT will be the right contract. A 2NT response says, "Partner, I have no five-card suit to bid; let's scramble and try to find a 4-4 fit. Please pull to your cheapest four-card suit and let's go from there." On a bad day, it is possible there are only 4-3 fits to be reached.

So, let's say you double. Indeed, partner scrambles with 2NT (had he chosen clubs, you'd have passed and played a 5-2 fit; had he chosen a red suit, you'd be content). You try 3♦ and everyone passes.

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

♠ A 10  
♥ A Q 6 4  
♦ Q 10 9 6 3  
♣ Q 10

Notice how convenient it was for partner to scramble with 2NT instead of guessing which minor to choose. West leads the ♠K and I ask you for a plan. You have to lose one spade and two clubs for sure. Barring a miracle (like singleton ♦K with West) in trumps, you can expect a trump loser. To make your contract you will need East to have the ♥K. Does that help with your plan?

You will have to decide how to play the trump suit for only one loser. If West has ♦K J x, you have to lead a high one from hand for a finesse. If East has ♦K J x, you need to play low to dummy's ace and a low one back.

Assuming East has the ♥K, how do you place the cards? You should also assign East a top club honor. Why? Because West would have preferred a club lead from A-K instead of a spade from K-Q-empty. With East expected to have a high club and the ♥K, he won't also hold the ♦K.

Accordingly, you should win the first trick and play the trump queen. West covers with the king and East follows low as you win dummy's ace. The rest is easy.

You can afford to draw more

trumps. Even if they are 3-1, you have enough tricks. But, be careful to use your dummy entry for a heart finesse. After the ♦A, play a heart to the queen (it wins). Then another trump is taken by West's Jack (East shows out). West can play another trump (or cash the three black defensive tricks), but you are home free. Eventually, you play the ♠10 to set up the ♠J in dummy. On the ♠J you throw a heart, and the other heart gets ruffed in dummy. This was the full deal:

♠ 7 4	♥ K C	♠ J 5 2	♠ 9 4	♣ A 6 5
		♥ J 2		
		♦ A 8 4 2		
		♣ 8 4 3 2		
			♠ 9 7 6	
♠ K Q 8 4 3			♥ K 10 9 5 3	
♥ 8 7			♦ 5	
♦ K J 7			♣ A 9 7 5	
♣ K J 6				
		♠ A 10		
		♥ A Q 6 4		
		♦ Q 10 9 6 3		
		♣ Q 10		

Notice that playing the ♦A and another diamond would have led to down one. Once you realized you needed the ♥K right, the rest of the play worked itself out. For plus 110 you win 7 IMPs. Why so many? The other table started with the same auction, but North didn't know whether his partnership used the scrambling 2NT. He took out the double to 3♣ and South passed. This was not pretty. 3♣ was down four tricks. □

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