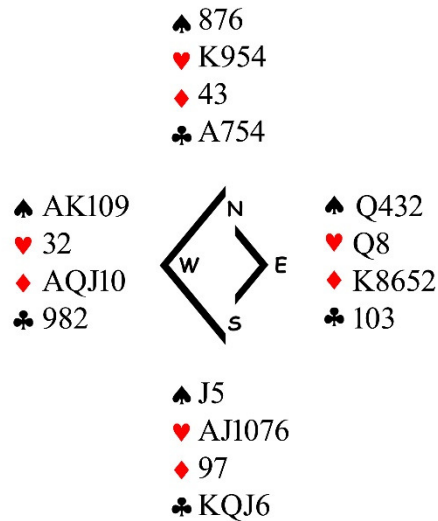


# 284. The Battleground

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E	S	W	N
P	1♥	Dbl	3♥
All Pass			

--East West Vulnerable--

Kit Woolsey, in his book, "Matchpoints," states that most matchpoints are won or lost in part-score battles. If one is willing to compete to the three-level, one should go there as soon as possible to limit the amount of necessary information the opponents can exchange.

Woolsey says that in competitive auctions, missing the occasional game is not so important compared to the fight for the three level (in matchpoints not teams).

### **The Bidding:**

South opens One Heart and West doubles. North bids to the limit of his hand with a Three Heart bid. "Is it weak?" the opponents will ask. Not zero to five, but it is a mixed raise of less than ten points. North could have bid Two Hearts, and when the opponents bid Two Spades, he would certainly compete to the three level, so it is better that he just goes there right away

Now East has a problem. If he bids Three Spades, West will certainly go to game (with his 14 HCP's and a doubleton) and that will likely be too high. If he passes, partner cannot bid on his own vulnerable. Furthermore, discounting the Queen in the opponents' suit, East only has five points. Therefore, East passes and so does West. Yes, he does. West should always bid aggressively but not foolishly.

### **Opening lead:**

West leads the Spade Ace followed by the King and a small one.

### **The play:**

Declarer ruffs the third Spade and draws trump. Does he finesse West for the Queen of trump because East may be bust? No, the rule (guideline) "eight ever, nine never" applies here because he does not see a singleton and an opponent with Heart shortness probably would have competed. When one sees a singleton, there is a 68% chance there is a second singleton somewhere.

### **The result:**

Declarer loses four tricks for +140. Three Spades is also cold if the defense grab their Heart tricks. Four Spades, with adequate defense, is down one.