

## The Listening Post I

By Neil Kimelman

### Listening Post (*noun*) Definition:

1. *Military*. A post or position, as in advance of a defensive line, established for the purpose of listening to detect the enemy's movements.
2. Any foreign country or city viewed as a source of intelligence about an enemy or rival nation or one that is a potential enemy.
3. Any concealed position maintained to obtain information.

Recently a hand was forwarded to me that got me thinking...before we go there let's see what your approach would be. Playing IMPs, you hold ♠753 ♥- ♦K109543 ♣AJ74. While you are admiring your nice distributional hand, partner, with neither vulnerable, opens 1♦ and it goes double on your right. What do you bid?

I think 5♦ would be most popular choice. You expect to have a chance to make and make it difficult for the opponents to judge what to do. Other choices would be 2♠, a limit raise for diamonds, or even 3♣ jump fit, although to me, this last one seems a bit warped.

If you do bid 5♦ the bidding would continue:

West	North	East	South
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1♦	Dbl	5♦	
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5♠	Pass	Pass	?
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Now what? It seems that your strategy has misfired, and now you are the one doing the guessing. I don't know, anything could be right.

As sharp readers might glean from the title of this article, one of the contestants in this team match passed. Their logic was, 'I don't know high to bid, as I do not know much about the other three hands. Instead I will listen, and have a better sense of the best option on the next round of bidding.' The bidding continued:

West	North	East	South
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1♦	Dbl	Pass	
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2♦ 4♣ 4♠ ?

Wow did they learn a lot by passing!! E-W have a big major suit fit. Because the opponents have chosen spades, instead of a big heart fit, you know that partner is very short in spades, 0-1 for sure. At the table the bidding continued:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Dbl	Pass
2♦	4♣	4♠	5♦
5♠	Pass	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass

The full deal

North

♠-

♥102

♦AQJ876

♣KQ1062

West

♠QJ862

♥KJ98753

♦-

♣3

East

♠AK1094

♥AQ64

♦2

♣985

South

♠753

♥-

♦K109543

♣AJ74

Thirteen tricks for the taking. I suspect that South would have bid 7♦ (as would I) if the opponents competed to the six level. At the other table the bidding was uninspired:

West North East South

1♣ 1♠ 2♠

5♠ All Pass

Not sure why West didn't bid 3xH instead of 5♠. Again, West needs specific information, 'Partner do you have a heart fit?' I am equally as perplexed as to why North didn't take another call. 6♦, or even better, 6♣ would be sensible. On a diamond lead, E-W also took 13 tricks, and won 20 IMPs.

South's approach at table one is often called walking the dog...trying to disguise the playing strength of one's hand. This can work, but not often against expert opponents. They would normally 'smell a rat'. But the value of passing and gaining information is a neglected practice – everyone likes to bid. It is a great tool to have in your bidding toolbox, to be taken out when the situation and hand calls for it. Try it! A thanks to Ed Zaluski for sharing this deal.

Next issue: Listening Post II – a different application in using this effective tool.