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The Hand Records Speak: Giorgio Duboin

Bridge Winners 13 hours ago

With only your side vulnerable, you deal. You hold:

(1)

South	
♠	73
♥	AQ98532
♦	1072
♣	7

(2)

South	
♠	9864
♥	KQ98652
♦	9
♣	4

What call would you make with each hand?

The answers depend on personal style. An aggressive preemptor would likely open 3♥ with both hands. A conservative preemptor might preempt at the 2-level with both. Or perhaps these hands would divide a player—he would open at the 2-level with one hand and the 3-level with the other. If so, it looks clear to preempt more aggressively with hand (2) than hand (1): hand (2) has better distribution, a better offense-to-defense ratio—the aceless heart suit is an asset as declarer but of dubious value on defense—and more playing strength.

[Giorgio Duboin](#) held both of these hands in recent online tournaments. Mr. Duboin is one of the most accomplished players in the world, having won 6 world championships and 15 NABC+ events. He is also a prominent public figure in bridge: he serves on five WBF committees—the Executive Council, the High Level Players Commission, the Management Committee, the Masterpoint Committee, and the Rules and Regulations Committee—and he was named ACBL Sportsman of the Year in 2008.

With hand (1), Mr. Duboin opened 3♥. This was the complete deal:

<div> <div>15</div> <div>D</div> </div>	Fulldire ♠ K1098 ♥ 7 ♦ Q3 ♣ AQ10954	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div> <div> P P P </div> <div>3♥</div>
Master Dj ♠ A64 ♥ ♦ AJ865 ♣ KJ832		Jdache ♠ QJ52 ♥ KJ1064 ♦ K94 ♣ 6
	Giorginod ♠ 73 ♥ AQ98532 ♦ 1072 ♣ 7	<div>3♥ South</div> <div>NS: 0 EW: 0</div>

Mr. Duboin's mildly aggressive preempt encountered an unfriendly lie of the cards—an unsuitable dummy and a 5-0 trump split. The opponents should have collected 500, but they let Mr. Duboin off the hook and he escaped for -100.

On hand (2), Mr. Duboin chose a more conservative course, preferring a Multi 2♦ opening bid, showing a weak-2 in either major. This was the full deal:

<div> <div>D</div> <div>5</div> </div>	Giorginod	W	N	E	S
	♠ 9864 ♥ KQ98652 ♦ 9 ♣ 4	2♦	P	2♥	
Mayors		X	P	P	P
♠ AK103 ♥ 10 ♦ AQJ3 ♣ AJ62					
	Mutton				
	♠ Q2 ♥ AJ743 ♦ 8542 ♣ 95				
	Gioffi				
	♠ J75 ♥ ♦ K1076 ♣ KQ10873				
					2♥X South NS: 0 EW: 0

Again, the layout was unfriendly, and this time he was doubled. Fortunately for Mr. Duboin, his conservative 2♦ opening bid meant his partner was declaring at the 2-level, and although the doubled contract was set 4 tricks, −1100, this was a 7-imp gain. At the other table, North opened 3♥, was doubled, and went down five: −1400.

Why, in the same seat and at the same vulnerability, would Mr. Duboin open at the 3-level with hand (1) but the 2-level with hand (2)?

These deals were played on Bridge Base Online (BBO) in two different matches. The match containing deal (1) barred players from kibitzing—that is, from watching the table's play in real time. The match containing deal (2) allowed kibitzing, so anyone could log on to BBO and see all four players' hands while the deal was being played—including a player at the table.

A team of expert investigators led by [Sjoert Brink](#), [Michal Nowosadzki](#), and [Steve Weinstein](#) analyzed 708 deals played by Mr. Duboin in May and June 2020. Their analysis was supplemented by statistical data from [Jonathan Cooke](#) and [Nicolas Hammond](#) and subjected to peer review by [Bob Hamman](#) and [Geir Helgemo](#). A full 189-page report of their analysis, written by a team led by [Oren Kriegel](#), is available [here](#) with additional appendices [here](#). Its conclusion is that **Mr. Duboin obtained and used unauthorized information (UI), very likely from self-kibitzing.**

What follows is a high-level summary of the report, highlighting statistical data and several particularly egregious deals. Of course a few deals cherry-picked from over 700 could cast suspicion upon even the most ethical of players. These deals are reproduced here to reinforce the overall analysis and the statistical data that follows on the next two pages: to "put a face" on the numbers and ratings.

Statistical Analysis of Duboin's Online Play

The 708 hands Mr. Duboin played during this period were analyzed by multiple experts and given a rating based on whether the hand suggested use of UI. The rating system includes the following (see the full report for the complete description):

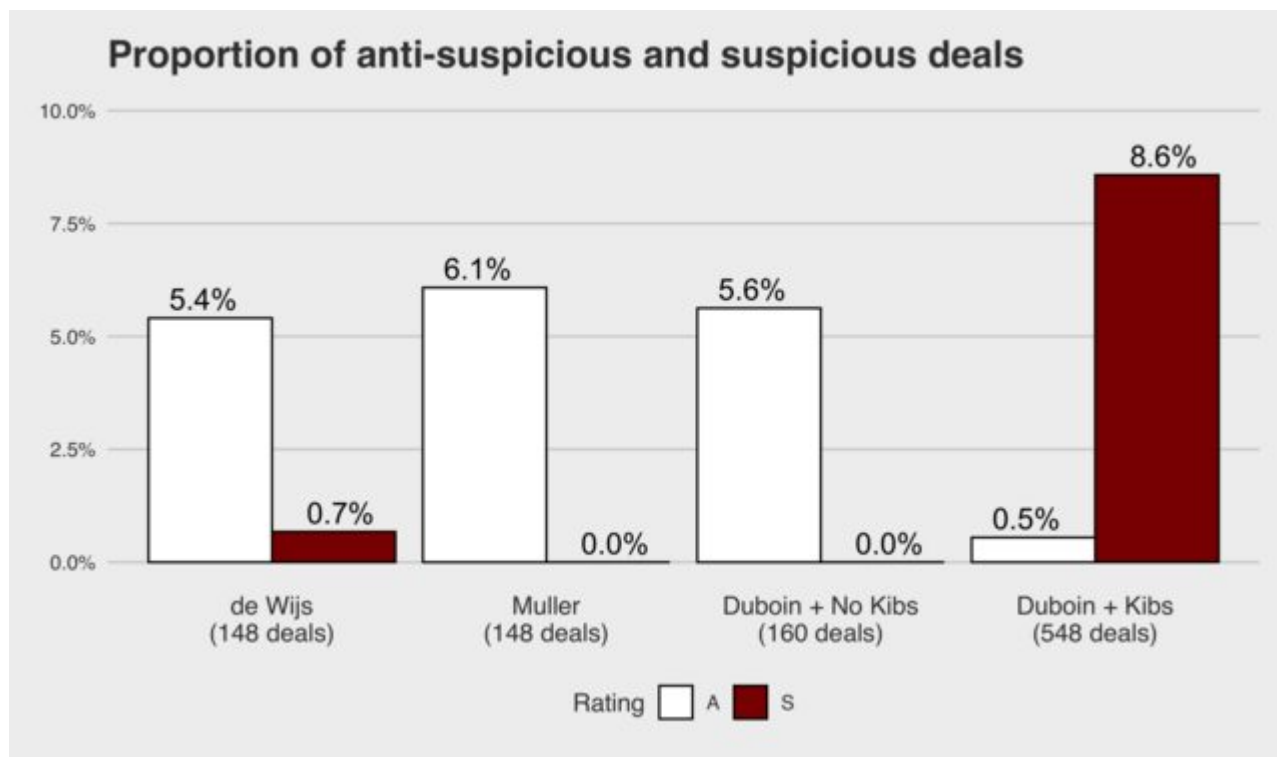
- **N: Normal.** The N designation indicates that Mr. Duboin took normal actions or actions that were indicated by bridge logic for a world-class player.
- **G: Good Decision.** A deal marked G means that Mr. Duboin took a successful action in a position where he had to choose between at least two reasonable actions.
- **B: Bad Decision.** The converse of a G, a deal rated B means that Mr. Duboin faced a decision with at least two reasonable options and he selected a losing action.
- **S: Suspicious.** A deal rated S means that Mr. Duboin took a successful action that should have appeared inferior or anti-percentage to a world-class player.
- **A: Anti-Suspicious.** A deal marked A suggests that Mr. Duboin did not obtain—or at least did not use—UI on that deal because he took an action that cost when one would have expected a player of his level to take the winning action.
- **L: Lazy (but successful).** L-rated deals are essentially deals where Mr. Duboin would have been expected to make a Normal expert play (such as a safety play), but he failed to—and got away with his carelessness.
- **W: Weird.** Hands that didn't fit into any of the other categories.

On 47 deals (representing 6.64% of the total deals, or approximately 1 in 15 deals), Mr. Duboin took an action classified as Suspicious, while on only 12 deals (1.69%) did Mr. Duboin take an action classified as Anti-Suspicious—that is, indicative that Mr. Duboin was not using UI. A nearly 4:1 ratio of Suspicious to Anti-Suspicious actions is significantly higher than one would expect to see from a world-class player who is playing honestly. All 47 Suspicious deals occurred in matches that allowed kibitzing; only 3 out of the 12 Anti-Suspicious deals occurred when kibitzers were allowed. By contrast, when kibitzers were not allowed, Mr. Duboin took no actions considered Suspicious, but he took 9 actions considered Anti-Suspicious.

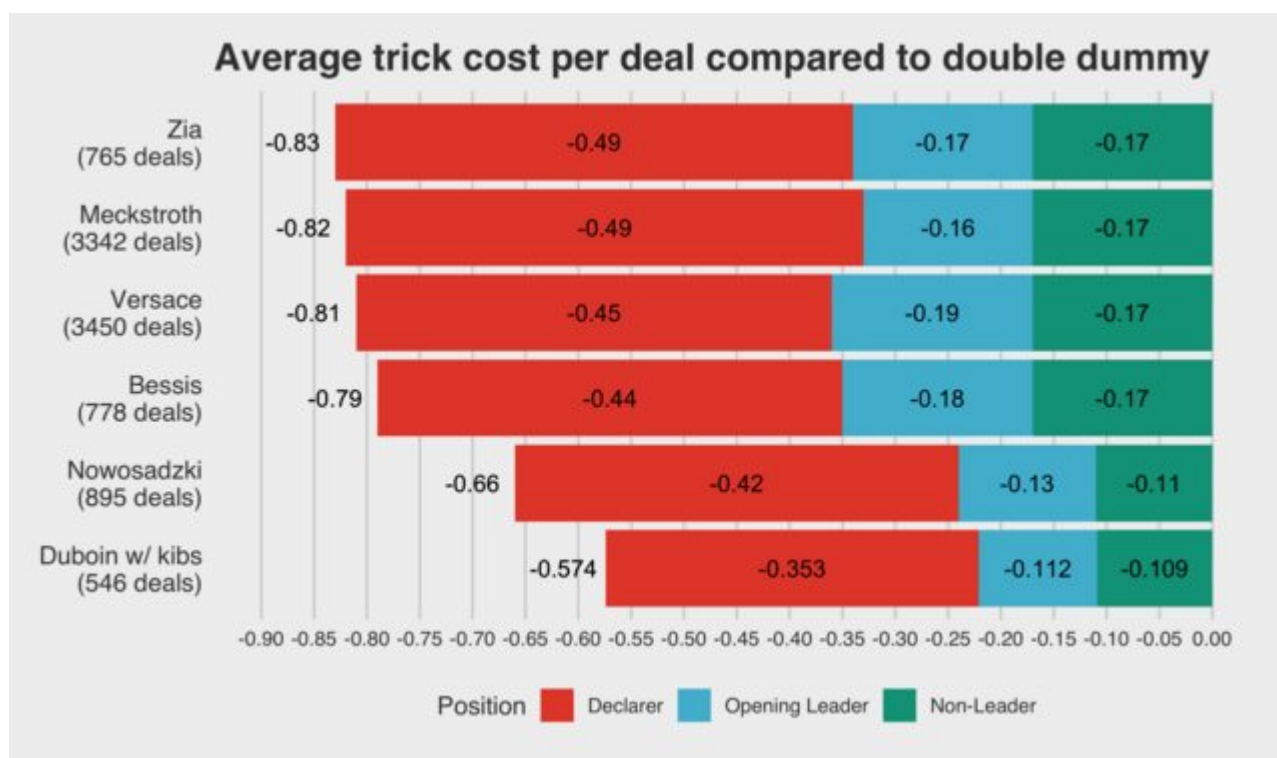
Table 3: Giorgio Duboin—Kibitzers and No Kibitzers

Rating	Kibitzers Allowed		Kibitzers Disallowed	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
N	406	74.09%	122	76.25%
G	53	9.67%	12	7.50%
B	14	2.55%	12	7.50%
S	47	8.58%	0	0.00%
A	3	0.55%	9	5.63%
L	15	2.74%	2	1.25%
W	9	1.64%	3	1.88%
Excl.	1	0.18%	0	0.00%
Total	548	100.00%	160	100.00%

For context, similar analysis was performed on 148 hands played by a world-class pair where their performance was strong (winning the event with a high Butler) and who are not suspected of cheating: [Simon de Wijs](#) and [Bauke Muller](#). The comparison of their deals rated Anti-Suspicious (A) vs Suspicious (S):



Analysts' ratings of hands are inherently subjective. To provide an objective baseline, the investigators asked Jonathan Cooke, a consultant in other online cheating investigations, to generate a statistical profile of Mr. Duboin's performance, along with other top players not under suspicion and one who has confessed to self-kibitzing. Mr. Cooke's profiling is based purely on cardplay: it computes the tricks lost per deal to a perfect double-dummy player holding the same cards. So if a double-dummy declarer would have made 11 tricks in 4♠ (perhaps by dropping a singleton king offside) and you declared and made only 10, your performance on the deal would be -1 trick. The results:



(Opening Leader is for performance by opening leader compared to double-dummy after seeing the dummy; opening leads themselves are analyzed separately in the full report.)

Even by objective metrics, Mr. Duboin, with kibitzers allowed, is performing at a super-human level. These numbers were not the basis for investigation, but they do provide support for the hypothesis that Mr. Duboin's online performance is too good to be true.



Nicolas Hammond calculated statistics on declarer play, opening leads, and defensive play after the opening lead on the 708 deals that were analyzed. There was not enough data on opening leads for a meaningful analysis. Mr. Hammond made no conclusions, he only supplied statistical data in comparison with other players. He made several relevant findings. They were:

Defensive play: Mr. Hammond found that Mr. Duboin had a defensive weighted error rate of 0.73% when playing online in events that allowed kibitzers. Mr. Duboin's weighted error rate was 1.66% in matches that disallowed kibitzers.

If, in face-to-face bridge, Mr. Duboin achieved a weighted error rate of 0.73%, he would rank second among all players Mr. Hammond has data on. Only Lotan Fisher, who was expelled from the ACBL for cheating, has a lower defensive weighted error rate, which is 0.72%. Mr. Duboin's own defensive error rate in face-to-face bridge is 1.18%.

Declarer Play: Mr. Hammond found that Mr. Duboin is a more effective declarer playing online than playing face-to-face. In matches that allowed kibitzers, Mr. Duboin's weighted error rate was 1.28%. If Mr. Duboin had achieved this error rate in face-to-face bridge, it would be the lowest error rate among all players Mr. Hammond has data on. Mr. Duboin's weighted error rate in face-to-face bridge is 1.70%. When playing online in matches with kibitzers disallowed, Mr. Duboin's weighted error rate was 1.39%.

Mr. Hammond's full report, labeled Appendix D, can be found [here](#).



We now present selected hands that illustrate what it takes to get a Suspicious (S) rating from our analysts. This is followed by our conclusions and rationale for publishing this report on page 21.


Both vulnerable, IMPs:

North				
♠	J98			
♥	J3			
♦	J632			
♣	Q852			
W	N	E	S	
			1♦	
P	?			

Playing standard minor raises, what call would you make?

Example 1:

The full deal:

	Giorginod	W N E S
	♠ J98 ♥ J3 ♦ J632 ♣ Q852	1♦ P 2♦ P 2♠ P 3♦ P 4♦ P 5♦ P P
Hultahult		Rerack
♠ A63 ♥ 108764 ♦ Q7 ♣ 1093		♠ 754 ♥ K95 ♦ 98 ♣ AKJ64
	Berny75	
	♠ KQ102 ♥ AQ2 ♦ AK1054 ♣ 7	5♦ South NS: 0 EW: 0

Mr. Duboin's bidding was extremely aggressive: first a marginal 2♦ raise and then an inexplicable 5♦ bid.


At this vulnerability, there is less upside in stealing a contract, and Mr. Duboin's scattered honors indicate that East-West probably lack enough strength to make game on power. Bidding 2♦ also risks going minus when partner has a sound hand, because partner is likely to expect a more useful hand.

The 5♦ call is even more aggressive than the initial raise. 4♦ is non-forcing; South had many other forcing options available if he wanted to explore, such as 3♥, and on South's actual hand he might have forced to game. Having already stretched to bid 2♦, now raising to game with no singleton, only four trumps, and no ace or king—or even the ♦Q—would not be on an expert's radar.

Even opposite South's super-maximum hand (the analysts would have game-forced after 2♦), 5♦ is a poor contract, requiring the ♦Q to drop, the opponents not to take a spade ruff, and, depending on the defense, perhaps the heart finesse to win. However, 5♦ made.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

N/S vulnerable, IMPs:

W	N	E	S	North
	P	1♣	1♥	♠ A974
X	P	1♠	P	♥ Q6
4♠	P	P	P	♦ 95
				♣ 109765
Dummy				
♠ K863				
♥ J72				
♦ AKQ84				
♣ J				

You are North. Partner leads the ace and king of hearts, crashing your queen. Declarer follows with the ♥8 and ♥9. Partner now leads the ♥5. What card do you play at trick 3?

Example 2:

<div> <div>D</div> <div>21</div> </div>	Giorginod	W	N	E	S
	♠ A974 ♥ Q6 ♦ 95 ♣ 109765		P	1♣	1♥
		X	P	1♠	P
		4♠	P	P	P
Hultahult		Rerack			
♠ K863 ♥ J72 ♦ AKQ84 ♣ J		♠ J102 ♥ 1098 ♦ 32 ♣ AKQ82			
	Berny75				
	♠ Q5 ♥ AK543 ♦ J1076 ♣ 43				
		4♠ East NS: 0 EW: 0			

Mr. Duboin pitched the ♦5. In the analysts' opinion, failing to ruff the third round of hearts is inconceivable, without knowledge of the deal or some other irregularity. A heart ruff is often necessary to defeat 4♠: declarer could have ♠QJ10x ♥xxx ♦Jx ♣AKxx, or ♠QJ10 ♥xxx ♦xxx ♣AKQx, etc.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

E/W vulnerable, IMPs:

North			
♠	74		
♥	AJ10		
♦	AJ2		
♣	QJ975		
W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♣	1♠	X
2♥	?		

2♥ is artificial, showing a good raise in spades. What call would you make?

Example 3:

<div> <div>3</div> <div>D</div> </div>	Giorginod	W	N	E	S
	♠ 74 ♥ AJ10 ♦ AJ2 ♣ QJ975				P
		P	1♣	1♠	X
		2♥	3♣	P	3NT
		P	P	P	
Malorencs		Maijalat			
♠ 862 ♥ 842 ♦ Q74 ♣ AK43		♠ KQJ109 ♥ Q75 ♦ 10986 ♣ 8			
	Eledub1				
	♠ A53 ♥ K963 ♦ K53 ♣ 1062				
		3NT South NS: 0 EW: 0			

Mr. Duboin's choice of 3♣ over 2♥ is extremely unusual. First, a Negative Double does not imply any support for clubs; it simply shows hearts. South could easily have held a singleton club in a distribution such as 3=4=5=1. South would have no reason to remove 3♣ to a 5-card red suit, which would result in reaching a 6-card fit rather than an 8-card fit. Second, West's artificial raise guaranteed Mr. Duboin another chance to compete for a partscore if the auction was going to die in 2♠. (Compare this auction to a 2♠ raise by West, where North might not have another chance to bid.) Third, delayed action might have allowed Mr. Duboin to better describe his hand. For example, he could plan to double 2♠ for takeout, suggesting support for the unbid suits.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

South				
♠ J43				
♥ Q4				
♦ KQ86				
♣ K865				
W	N	E	S	
				P
P	1♠	P	2♣	
P	2♠	P	?	

Example 4:


10/26

Mr. Duboin showed his hand with the Drury call. Mr. Duboin's hand—balanced with only three spades and no aces, tens, or nines—is nowhere near what most experts would classify as a hand worth bidding again in the face of partner's signoff.

This overbidding led to a poor 3NT contract. However, with K10x of spades onside it was a success on this layout.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

E/W vulnerable, IMPs:

W	N	E	S	Dummy
				♠ 872
1NT				♥ J1093
X	P	P	P	♦ 72
				♣ A863
West				
♠ 106				
♥ AK764				
♦ A83				
♣ KQ9				

You lead a top heart and see this dummy. Partner plays the ♥8 (discouraging) and declarer the ♥Q. What card do you play at trick 2?

Example 5:

Did you find the spade ten?

<div><div></div><div></div><div>3</div><div>D</div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div>Sroch</div> <div><div>♠</div>872</div> <div><div>♥</div>J1093</div> <div><div>♦</div>72</div> <div><div>♣</div>A863</div>	<div><div>W</div><div>N</div><div>E</div><div>S</div></div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div>1NT</div></div> <div><div>X</div><div>P</div><div>P</div><div>P</div></div>
<div>Giorginod</div> <div><div>♠</div>106</div> <div><div>♥</div>AK764</div> <div><div>♦</div>A83</div> <div><div>♣</div>KQ9</div>		<div>Berny75</div> <div><div>♠</div>KJ954</div> <div><div>♥</div>82</div> <div><div>♦</div>KJ9</div> <div><div>♣</div>1074</div>
	<div>Amiri</div> <div><div>♠</div>AQ3</div> <div><div>♥</div>Q5</div> <div><div>♦</div>Q10654</div> <div><div>♣</div>J52</div>	<div>1NTX South</div> <div>NS: 0 EW: 0</div>

Mr. Duboin's ♥A lead was reasonable, although many experts would have led a low heart. Playing the ♠10 at trick two defied logic; it was clear to shift to a club honor to kill dummy's entry to the long hearts. Mr. Duboin's ♠10 shift was extremely risky in two ways: first, declarer might hold four spades and shifting to spades might expose partner's holding, particularly given dummy's lack of entries. Second, if declarer wins the spade shift, he can establish dummy's hearts while the ♣A remains intact.

On the actual layout, however, the ♠10 worked just as well as a high club would have, garnering down two. When Mr. Duboin's ♠10 shift was allowed to win trick two, he duly switched to the king of clubs (winning) and queen of clubs, the standout defense before the spade shift, but with a spade trick already in the bag.


♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Both vulnerable, IMPs:

East				
♠	K865			
♥	K964			
♦	AK			
♣	KQ5			
W N E S				
				P
1NT	P	?		

What call would you make?

Example 6:

	Poetka	W N E S			
	♠ Q109 ♥ Q872 ♦ Q843 ♣ J6				P
Eledub1		1NT	P	6NT	P
		P	P		
		Giorginod			
		♠ K865 ♥ K964 ♦ AK ♣ KQ5			
	Pierced				
	♠ 42 ♥ 5 ♦ 109765 ♣ 109842				
		6NT West NS: 0 EW: 0			

Mr. Duboin's failure to look for a major-suit fit is incredibly Suspicious. His hand is quite suitable for play in a suit contract, especially if a 5-4 fit exists: a ruff might be the twelfth trick or allow declarer to set up a side suit, and a grand slam is very possible with third-round control in one major and five cards in the other. Consider ♠AQxxx ♥Ax ♦xxx ♣Axx, only a 14-count, or other permutations. On the actual layout, however, Mr. Duboin's failure to use Stayman was a winner because, though a fit existed in both majors, the distribution was a perfect mirror, making 6NT the best slam. For example, playing in 6NT declarer could have chosen to test other suits before committing to a play in hearts, but this would not have been a safe option if hearts were trump.

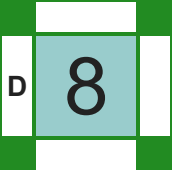
♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Neither vulnerable, IMPs:

North				
♠	A64			
♥	5			
♦	AK1052			
♣	QJ92			
W	N	E	S	
2♠	3♦	P	3♥	
P	?			

What call would you make?

Example 7:

	Giorginod	W	N	E	S
	♠ A64 ♥ 5 ♦ AK1052 ♣ QJ92	2♠	3♦	P	3♥
Maqeda		P	4♣	P	4♠
♠ KQ10953 ♥ QJ9 ♦ 93 ♣ 84		P	4NT	P	6♣
		P	P	P	
	Eledub1	Halko			
	♠ 2 ♥ AK1064 ♦ J86 ♣ AK73	♠	J87		
		♥	8732		
		♦	Q74		
		♣	1065		
		6♣ North			
		NS: 0 EW: 0			

Mr. Duboin's 4♣ call is very Suspicious; the expert analysts consider it inconceivable not to bid 3♠ or 3NT with Mr. Duboin's hand. For a 3♦ overcall, Mr. Duboin's hand is minimum with relatively poor distribution—no sixth diamond or fifth club. There is no guarantee of a fit in any suit. In fact, the deal looks more like a misfit facing 2=6 or 3=6 in the majors. Bypassing what will very often be the best contract, 3NT, with no extra strength or distribution and no indication of a fit is a highly aggressive view.

One might argue that rebidding 3NT with only one stopper in spades is a poor choice, but that line of thinking does not indicate 4♣ is the correct call. First, Mr. Duboin's stopper is ♠Axx, which gives him the flexibility to hold up in spades; compare to a holding like ♠QJx which appears more notrump-oriented but might enable the defenders to duck an early round of the suit to maintain an entry to the West hand. Second, even if Mr. Duboin did not want to rebid 3NT, he could have stalled with 3♠. A cuebid on this auction carries no specific message—it simply tells partner he has no clear direction. This would have catered to partner bidding 3NT if she also had spade values, which Mr. Duboin should have been happy to pass. From his point of view, without the UI that partner had a club fit, he should not have been willing to forgo 3NT as a contract.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Both vulnerable, IMPs:

East				
♠	K9863			
♥	A			
♦	K1086			
♣	KQ5			
W	N	E	S	
			1♣	
P	1♥	1♠	3♥	
3♠	4♥	?		

What call would you make?

Example 8:

	Icebaldi	W N E S
	♠ 5 ♥ J653 ♦ AQJ74 ♣ 1083	1♣ P 1♥ 1♠ 3♥ 3♠ 4♥ P P P
Berny75		Giorginod
♠ J742 ♥ Q1074 ♦ 932 ♣ 76		♠ K9863 ♥ A ♦ K1086 ♣ KQ5
	Dagur	
	♠ AQ10 ♥ K982 ♦ 5 ♣ AJ942	4♥ North NS: 0 EW: 0

The analysts consider bidding 4♠ "automatic," making Mr. Duboin's pass over 4♥ Suspicious. His vulnerable partner raised at the 3-level, which is not a preemptive call and thus carried no connotation of weakness. Mr. Duboin's conservative choice not to bid 4♠ was a success: 4♠ could have been beaten three tricks (and likely would have been doubled), while the opponents' 4♥ contract failed.

4♥ could have made as the cards lay, and if Mr. Duboin doubled (perhaps showing an offensively-oriented hand in his bidding style) declarer might have deduced the layout and made the contract. This makes Mr. Duboin's passing despite holding substantial extra values for the 1♠ overall look even more successful.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

E/W vulnerable, IMPs:

East
♠ J8753
♥ 1043
♦ 9
♣ J1052
W N E S
P
1♦ 1NT P 3NT
P P P

What is your opening lead?

Example 9:

<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div>3</div><div>D</div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div>Lot</div> <div><div>♠</div>Q106</div> <div><div>♥</div>AK65</div> <div><div>♦</div>KJ6</div> <div><div>♣</div>A63</div>	<div><div>W</div><div>N</div><div>E</div><div>S</div></div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div>P</div></div> <div><div>1♦</div><div>1NT</div><div>P</div><div>3NT</div></div> <div><div>P</div><div>P</div><div>P</div><div></div></div>
<div>Eledub1</div> <div><div>♠</div>A94</div> <div><div>♥</div>Q92</div> <div><div>♦</div>A1085</div> <div><div>♣</div>K97</div>		<div>Giorginod</div> <div><div>♠</div>J8753</div> <div><div>♥</div>1043</div> <div><div>♦</div>9</div> <div><div>♣</div>J1052</div>
	<div>Unonero</div> <div><div>♠</div>K2</div> <div><div>♥</div>J87</div> <div><div>♦</div>Q7432</div> <div><div>♣</div>Q84</div>	<div>3NT North</div> <div>NS: 0 EW: 0</div>

A spade lead would be the consensus choice among experts, preferring not to lead a singleton in partner's suit and selecting the suit with the best chance to establish tricks if partner is found with length and/or strength. Mr. Duboin's choice of a club lead is highly unusual and very Suspicious. A spade lead would have allowed declarer to make the contract at double-dummy by picking up the spade suit on the first trick, while Mr. Duboin's club lead would produce down one at double-dummy (as would a diamond or low-heart lead). In practice, declarer went down two.

There is no inference from this auction that West holds more club than spade length—if anything, the auction makes the spade lead more attractive, because at least some of the time when South held four spades he would have searched for a fit there. On this auction, South was likely to hold length in one or both minor suits, and a club lead would often give away the suit to declarer.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

E/W vulnerable, IMPs:

East			
♠ A75			
♥ 974			
♦ J1095			
♣ J87			
W	N	E	S
	2♦	P	2♥
2♠	P	P	3♦
P	P	?	

2♦ is Multi (weak two in one major), 2♥ is pass or correct, every other bid is natural.

What call would you make?

Example 10:

<div> <div>D</div> <div>9</div> </div>	Lot	W	N	E	S
	♠ 4		2♦	P	2♥
	♥ 1086532	2♠	P	P	3♦
	♦ K63	P	P	3♠	P
	♣ AK10	P	P		
Eledub1		Giorginod			
♠ K10862		♠ A75			
♥ AKQJ		♥ 974			
♦		♦ J1095			
♣ Q543		♣ J87			
	Unonero				
	♠ QJ93				
	♥				
	♦ AQ8742				
	♣ 962				
		3♠ West			
		NS: 0 EW: 0			

2♦ was Multi, and 2♥ was pass or correct. Mr. Duboin's choice to compete to 3♠ over 3♦ is scarcely believable. Numerous factors pointed toward defending:

1. The opponents were not known to be in a fit; North had shown no diamond length.
2. Mr. Duboin's side was vulnerable, making 3♠ a higher-risk and lower-reward proposition.
3. Mr. Duboin held a sure trump trick that was unlikely to be useful on offense.
4. Mr. Duboin held no ruffing power.
5. Mr. Duboin had no expectation of his partner being able to make 3♠ on power.

6. The ♠A would be useful on defense as well as offense.

Despite the many reasons that make passing 3♦ clear, Mr. Duboin's 3♠ was the winner because both 3♦ and 3♠ were making. (3♠ can be beaten double-dummy on a heart lead but that was not going to happen with two attractive minor-suit alternatives.)

Although the previous deal would have been Suspicious standing alone, it becomes even more Suspicious when compared with this deal (which is rated Normal):

<div><div>D</div><div>1</div></div>	<div>Silver11</div> <div><div>♠ K75</div><div>♥ AQ953</div><div>♦ A1095</div><div>♣ 6</div></div>	<div><div>W</div><div>N</div><div>E</div><div>S</div></div> <div><div>1♥</div><div>P</div><div>2♥</div><div></div></div> <div><div>2♠</div><div>3♥</div><div>P</div><div>P</div></div> <div><div>P</div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
<div>Eledub1</div> <div><div>♠ QJ1096</div><div>♥ K4</div><div>♦ K43</div><div>♣ QJ4</div></div>		<div>Giorginod</div> <div><div>♠ 432</div><div>♥ 1086</div><div>♦ Q82</div><div>♣ A872</div></div>
	<div>Monkey1</div> <div><div>♠ A8</div><div>♥ J72</div><div>♦ J76</div><div>♣ K10953</div></div>	<div>3♥ North</div> <div>NS: 0 EW: 0</div>

Again, Mr. Duboin was faced with a decision whether to compete “three over three” with a 4-3-3-3 6-count. Here, he passed, and although his decision seems clear, it was far more attractive for him to compete on this deal than the previous one:

1. The opponents were *known to be in a fit*, making competing more attractive.
2. *Neither side was vulnerable*, making competing lower-risk, higher-reward.
3. Mr. Duboin held *no likely trump trick* or *wasted heart values*, better for competing.
4. *As above*, Mr. Duboin held no ruffing power.
5. *As above*, Mr. Duboin had no expectation of his partner being able to make 3♠ on power.
6. *As above*, Mr. Duboin's ace would be useful on offense and defense.

Inconsistent with his judgment on the previous deal, Mr. Duboin chose to pass. This was the winning decision: his opponents made 3♥, but 3♠ would likely have been down three. This deal makes the previous deal even more Suspicious.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

E/W vulnerable, IMPs:

North			
♠	A8532		
♥	AQ95		
♦	3		
♣	762		
W	N	E	S
	P	1♣	P
1♠	P	1NT	P
P	?		

You are not playing anything special here. What call would you make?

Example 11:

<div> <div>D</div> <div>9</div> </div>	Giorginod	W	N	E	S
	♠ A8532 ♥ AQ95 ♦ 3 ♣ 762	P	1♣	P	
Pikolo		1♠	P	1NT	P
♠ KJ76 ♥ 8 ♦ Q742 ♣ K543		P	X	P	2♥
		P	P	P	
	Gioffi				
	♠ 109 ♥ K10763 ♦ J965 ♣ QJ				
					2♥ South NS: 0 EW: 0

A takeout double with a singleton in one of the two unbid suits is extremely risky. The normal bridge action is to pass it out. The double hits paydirt when partner has 5 hearts and both 1NT and 2♥ make.

The analysis did not find hands where hyper-aggression like this double did not work out. It also found these types of anti-percentage actions did not occur in the events where kibitzing was not allowed.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

N/S vulnerable, IMPs:

North			
♠	A9862		
♥	KQ6		
♦	9		
♣	Q1062		
W	N	E	S
		1♣	1♦
2♣	?		

What call would you make?

Example 12:

<div> <div>2</div> <div>D</div> </div>	Giorginod	W	N	E	S
	♠ A9862 ♥ KQ6 ♦ 9 ♣ Q1062			1♣ 1♦	
Przedpelk		2♣	X	P	2♥
		P	P	3♣	P
		P	P		
	Konrad80				
	♠ 10743 ♥ A104 ♦ AQJ ♣ J43				
	Berny75				
	♠ KJ ♥ J7532 ♦ K10742 ♣ 9				
		3♣ East NS: 0 EW: 0			

Mr. Duboin's choice to make a Responsive (takeout) Double with a two-card disparity in the major suits is odd, but his follow-up sequence of passing 2♥ is Suspicious—he never showed his long spade suit, perhaps missing an 8-card fit (facing 3=4=5=1) and maybe even playing in a 6-card fit along the way (facing 3=3=5=2). After South's odd decision to overcall 1♦, Mr. Duboin's Responsive Double and subsequent pass was the only way to get his side to their 8-card heart fit.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Neither vulnerable, IMPs:

West				
♠	QJ8			
♥	Q93			
♦	AJ5			
♣	J962			
W	N	E	S	
				1♥
P	1NT	2♥	3♥	
3♠	4♥	P	P	
P				

2♥ is Michaels, showing spades and an unknown minor.

What is your opening lead?

Example 13:

<div> <div>11</div> <div>D</div> </div>	Lallo79	W N E S
	♠ A1094 ♥ 104 ♦ KQ10942 ♣ 4	1♥ P 1NT 2♥ 3♥ 3♠ 4♥ P P P
Giorginod		Lucadm
♠ QJ8 ♥ Q93 ♦ AJ5 ♣ J962		♠ K7532 ♥ 87 ♦ 3 ♣ AQ1053
	Fede00	
	♠ 6 ♥ AKJ652 ♦ 876 ♣ K87	4♥ South NS: 0 EW: 0

In the bidding, Mr. Duboin did very well not to bid 4♠, which would have been a phantom sacrifice on the actual layout, but could have been a successful sacrifice or—even on the actual East-West hands, from a single-dummy perspective—a makeable game.

Mr. Duboin led a club, which is highly Suspicious. The normal opening lead in Mr. Duboin's position is the spade queen, the only suit East is known to hold. (East alerted 2♥ as "spero bic," which translates from Italian as "I hope bicolor [two-suited]" seemingly showing spades and a minor.) A club lead could have cost the setting trick or a critical tempo, while the ♠Q lead would have been

quite safe and might have been necessary to establish a winner or cash any spade tricks the defense were entitled to before they went away, perhaps on club winners.

The simplest defense would be to lead the ♦A and give partner a ruff, but that is even less justifiable than the club lead. The club lead ensured partner would switch to their singleton diamond and the defense would get its diamond ruff "legitimately."

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

Neither vulnerable, IMPs:

East				
♠	AJ9			
♥	832			
♦	Q8			
♣	AKJ98			
W	N	E	S	
			1♥	
P	1♠	?		

What call would you make?

Example 14:

<div> <div>11</div> <div>D</div> </div>	Mno83 ♠ KQ1085 ♥ K65 ♦ 942 ♣ Q2	W N E S 1♥ P 1♠ P 1NT P 3♥ P 4♥ P P P
	Eledub1 ♠ 763 ♥ J7 ♦ J10763 ♣ 754	Giorginod ♠ AJ9 ♥ 832 ♦ Q8 ♣ AKJ98
	Arkuri ♠ 42 ♥ AQ1094 ♦ AK5 ♣ 1063	4♥ South NS: 0 EW: 0

Mr. Duboin's choice not to overcall 2♣ is unusual and very conservative, given the vulnerability and quality of the club suit and the overall strength of his hand. However, pass worked well when partner had only two jacks. North-South reached an aggressive game and went down two after good defense (down one was declarer's best double-dummy result). If Mr. Duboin had overcalled 2♣, South would have passed and North would have had the opportunity to downgrade his hand based on the suspect ♣Q and bid 2♥. This would likely have resulted in a minus score for East-West on defense against 2♥.

The analysis repeatedly showed Mr. Duboin bidding aggressively when the cards were lying favorably for him and conservatively when they were not.

♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

N/S vulnerable, IMPs:

North			
♠	QJ9762		
♥	Q42		
♦	J82		
♣	3		
W	N	E	S
?			

2♦ would be Multi. What call would you make?

Example 15:

North			
♠	QJ9762		
♥	Q42		
♦	J82		
♣	3		
W	N	E	S
	2♦	X	3♥
5♦	P	P	P

Mr. Duboin's preempting style is inconsistent but extremely successful. Here, Mr. Duboin opens an extremely aggressive Multi 2♦. Compare this to one of the [hands at the beginning of this article](#), where he opened Multi 2♦ on ♠9864 ♥KQ98652 ♦9 ♣4, also in first seat at unfavorable vulnerability. Mr. Duboin tends to preempt aggressively or conservatively as the layout suggests.



Question 2: What do you lead against 5♦?

<div><div>D</div><div>5</div></div>	<div>Giorginod</div> <div><div>♠</div> QJ9762</div> <div><div>♥</div> Q42</div> <div><div>♦</div> J82</div> <div><div>♣</div> 3</div>	<div><div>W</div><div>N</div><div>E</div><div>S</div></div> <div><div></div><div>2♦</div><div>X</div><div>3♥</div></div> <div><div>5♦</div><div>P</div><div>P</div><div>P</div></div>
<div>Malorencs</div> <div><div>♠</div> 4</div> <div><div>♥</div> 98</div> <div><div>♦</div> AQ10965</div> <div><div>♣</div> Q1062</div>		<div>Maijalat</div> <div><div>♠</div> K10</div> <div><div>♥</div> AJ1075</div> <div><div>♦</div> 3</div> <div><div>♣</div> AKJ85</div>
	<div>Eledub1</div> <div><div>♠</div> A853</div> <div><div>♥</div> K63</div> <div><div>♦</div> K74</div> <div><div>♣</div> 974</div>	<div>5♦ West</div> <div>NS: 0 EW: 0</div>

Mr. Duboin chose to lead the ♠Q rather than his singleton club, another Suspicious action. It was the killing lead on this deal, leading through dummy's ♠K to partner's ♠A. After a club lead, declarer can finesse the ♦Q and play three rounds of trumps before the ♥A is driven out. On the ♠Q lead—covered by the ♠K and ♠A—South was able to make an excellent shift to hearts into dummy's tenace, establishing the setting trick.

The 2♦ opening on this deal was highly successful, robbing East-West of valuable room that propelled them into the wrong game. If Mr. Duboin had passed as dealer, East-West would likely have conducted an uncontested auction (or if the auction became contested, East would have been able to show his distribution accurately) ending in 5♣, which would have made in comfort. After the 2♦ opening, West hoped for more diamond length in East's hand and chose 5♦.

These hands raise significant suspicions, but on their own are not conclusive proof of guilt. It is the detailed analysis of all the hands played and the patterns that arise that lead to an unambiguous conclusion of cheating. Most notable are both the inconsistent style that invariably fits partner's hand and the inexplicable bridge actions such as unusual opening leads that always work out. The supplemental statistical analyses corroborate these findings. You are invited to read the [full report](#), and to see the [analysis](#) of each of the 708 hands reviewed.

The analysts and Bridge Winners take no pleasure in making this unscrupulous behavior public. Bridge Winners has always preferred to see cheating allegations handled through the proper channels of the relevant administrative bodies charged with policing bridge. The events in question—ALT, Online Contract Bridge League (OCBL), and Bridge House tournaments—were not sanctioned by any official governing body. Although the WBF might have been able to exercise

jurisdiction over Mr. Duboin, it has a very poor track record for prosecuting cheating cases by high-level players and we were skeptical it would take meaningful action.

In the end, Mr. Duboin is a prominent public figure in bridge given his stature as a world champion and a member of several WBF committees and this report is newsworthy. Many bridge players would be very interested in news that such an important bridge player has intentionally obtained and used UI while playing in competitive matches online.

It is essential that everyone know that bridge players who cheat will be held to account. If the authorities who should be meting out punishment refuse to do so, cheaters' misdeeds will be aired in public. Public shaming is not the ideal solution, but we felt it was the last resort.

To those out there with legitimate concerns about an unofficial group taking justice into their own hands, know that this is a last resort taken only because of the inaction of the bridge world's governing authorities. And have no fear about a "witch hunt" coming after you or another clean player. With enough evidence to examine, experienced analysts can tell if someone is cheating and if they are not. There are simply tells. They get close decisions right too often, their style is inconsistent and always corresponds to partner's holding, they make lazy plays that never cost. Look at the analysis of Mr. Duboin in the events where he could not self-kibitz: 9 Anti-Suspicious and 0 Suspicious deals.

Bridge Winners urges bridge organizations to take action to clean up the game. A quiet disinvitation to a private tournament is not nearly enough; there must be consequences to defacing our game.

To those who have cheated: come forward. If you don't, your hands will be analyzed, you will be found out. You will be much better off if you come clean now.

We hope this report shows that there are enough players who truly love the game and will do whatever is needed to keep it clean.

LINKS

The folder with the report and appendices: <https://tinyurl.com/thrsgd>

The main report: <https://tinyurl.com/thrsgd-mainreport>

Appendix A (A full record of all deals played by Duboin): <https://tinyurl.com/thrsgd-duboinrecords>

Appendix B (A spreadsheet with all analysis of deals played by Duboin):
<https://tinyurl.com/thrsgd-duboin-analysis>

Appendix C (A spreadsheet with all analysis of deals played by de Wijs and Muller):
<https://tinyurl.com/thrsgd-dutchdealanalysis>

Appendix D (Hammond's report): <https://tinyurl.com/thrsgd-hammondreport>