

96. On second thoughts

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North

♠ K73

♥ J106

♦ AQ964

♣ 62

East

♠ 10

♥ K75432

♦ 82

♣ AQ98

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

West leads the ♣J: two . . . Plan your defence.

Today's problems come from a book I re-read during quarantine. This was the deal and the proposed solution:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North

♠ K73

♥ J106

♦ AQ964

♣ 62

West

♠ Q842

♥ A98

♦ 73

♣ J1073

East

♠ 10

♥ K75432

♦ 82

♣ AQ98

South

♠ AJ965

♥ Q

♦ KJ105

♣ K54

'The only factor that could hurt declarer is the bad trump split and a forcing game is called for. Thus hearts must be attacked and the best card, after winning the club trick, is the king. That will leave partner's (hoped-for) ace behind the shortage if South has the queen and declarer can be forced twice, losing control.'

'Note that, if you play a low heart, declarer prevails. With the king, however, only the double-dummy line of running the ♠J will give him a chance. When this hand turned up . . . East . . . was very proud of his defence, but West could only turn up with ♠J-x-x-x! Now declarer ruffed the second heart, played the king and another club for a ruff and followed with three rounds of trumps before playing on diamonds to cruelly turn the forcing game on us. Virtue is its own reward, they say!'

The solution irritated me, because I did switch to a low heart at trick 2. Why should South have a singleton heart rather than a doubleton? Switching to a low heart worked for the layout that I was contemplating:

	North	
	♠ K73	
	♥ J106	
	♦ AQ964	
	♣ 62	
West		East
♠ J542		♠ 10
♥ A9		♥ K75432
♦ 73		♦ 82
♣ J10753		♣ AQ98
	South	
	♠ AQ986	
	♥ Q8	
	♦ KJ105	
	♣ K4	

Here, the defence does not need spades better than West's J-x-x-x. After ♣A, ♥2 to ♥A and ♥9 to ♥K, the third heart does South in. If South ruffs low, the ♠J over-ruffs. If South ruffs high, the ♠J will become a trick. Of course, switching to a low heart is not nearly as flash as switching to the ♥K.

Next problem:

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

North
 ♠ AQ82
 ♥ 5
 ♦ 864
 ♣ AK863

South
 ♠ K974
 ♥ AQ876
 ♦ AKQ
 ♣ Q

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♥
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♦ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	5♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	6♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Cue-bid

The 4♦ cue would not have been my choice over 3♠ (4NT seems a good idea), but the auction is as reported. West leads the ♦J. Plan the play.

When the problem was presented in the book, this was added:

All follow to the ♠K; how do you continue?

This was the book's solution:

'The first point to realise is that, if the trumps break, you cannot be denied five trump tricks, three clubs, a heart and three diamonds to total twelve so you must assume that someone will show out on the next round. In that case you should try to combine the chances of setting up a long club or the heart finesse. Cash the ♣Q now and cross to the ♠A. Ruff a club in hand and cash the other two top diamonds before playing a third round of trumps. Now start cashing the clubs from the top. If they break, there is no problem; if not, whoever ruffs will either have to lead a heart, allowing you a (possibly free) finesse, or the last diamond, which enables you to ruff in dummy and take the heart finesse yourself.'

The full deal:

	North	
	♠ AQ82	
	♥ 5	
	♦ 864	
	♣ AK863	
West		East
♠ 5		♠ J1063
♥ J42		♥ K1093
♦ J1092		♦ 753
♣ J10954		♣ 72
	South	
	♠ K974	
	♥ AQ876	
	♦ AKQ	
	♣ Q	

When I did the problem, I rejected the author's premise of the ♠K at trick 2. Why is that necessary or even suitable. Unless there are horrific breaks, this looked like a straightforward line: win ♦A, play ♥A, heart ruff, ♠A, ♠Q, ♣Q, heart ruff, ♣A, ♣K, pitching hearts. This works as long as clubs are not 6-1 and it does not need the heart finesse. After you have pitched your last heart on the ♣K you can claim whether East has ruffed or not.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. You are the dealer at favourable vulnerability. What would you open with:

♠ AKQ10953
♥ A102
♦ 3
♣ A7

Suppose you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT. What next?

2. Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ 43
♥ AKQ972
♦ 103
♣ A73

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

A lot of people are taking up old activities while being stuck at home. I heard that former US vice-president Al Gore has tried playing the piano again but, apparently, has forgotten his algorithm.