

136. Options with spades

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	3♣
3NT	4♣	?	

(1) Weak two, 6 hearts, 6-10 points

What would you do as East with:

♠ --
♥ J105432
♦ 7643
♣ AQ10

This deal arose in a Knockout Teams event in a match between an Australian Team and a USA Team in June.

	North	
	♠ J763	
	♥ KQ86	
	♦ A109	
	♣ 95	
West		East
♠ A10		♠ --
♥ A9		♥ J105432
♦ KQJ85		♦ 7643
♣ K862		♣ AQ10
	South	
	♠ KQ98542	
	♥ 7	
	♦ 2	
	♣ J743	

West's 3NT is expected to be a balanced hand of 15+ points with at least one stopper in spades. It could be a very strong hand. East could bid 5♥ – an 8-card heart fit is all but guaranteed – but one is usually reluctant to bid 5-over-4 if your side has the balance of power. It is unfortunate to be one off in 5♥ when you could have collected penalties from 4♣ doubled. Jodi Tutty (E) doubled, primarily for takeout, but accepting that partner might choose to pass for penalties with a suitable hand.

Dave Beauchamp (W) took the double out to 5♦, all pass. North led the ♥K. West took the ace and shifted to the ♦J, winning, followed by the ♦Q. North took the ♦A. North shifted to the ♣9. West won, drew the last trump and claimed 11 tricks, +600.

This was yesterday's first problem:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	?

(1) Weak two, 6 hearts, 6-10 points

What would you do as South with:

♠ KQ98542
♥ 7
♦ 2
♣ J743

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	North	
	♠ J763	
	♥ KQ86	
	♦ A109	
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West		East
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	♠ KQ98542	
	♥ 7	
	♦ 2	
	♣ J743	

After East opens with a weak 2♥ – no thing of beauty with a jack-high suit – you would dearly love to bid a number of spades with the South hand. If East had passed, a 4♠ opening would be suitable, given the vulnerability and your shape. The trouble after 2♥ by East is that any number of spades by South shows a strong hand. Weak jump-overcalls or pre-empts are used only after an opening 1-bid or a strong bid by an opponent.

At the other table it went:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	4♠!
5♥	Dble	All Pass	

Having passed over 2♥, South's 4♠ shows great length in spades, but not a strong hand, and was due to go one down. Matt Mullamphy (S) led the ♦2, king, ace. Ian Thomson (N) returned the ♦9. South ruffed and switched to the ♠K. West took the ♠A, cashed the ♥A and continued with the ♥9. North made two trump tricks to give the defence four tricks in all, +500 and +15 Imps.

Note South's lead of the ♦2 despite holding only one trump. 'Side-suit singleton are excellent leads and should nearly always be chosen.' (*Winning Suit Contract Leads*, by David Bird and Taf Anthias at page 62.)

This was yesterday's second problem:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♥
?			

What would you do as West with:

♠ AKJ2
 ♥ 10
 ♦ QJ54
 ♣ 9853

You are slightly underweight for a takeout double, but it is a reasonable choice, given the textbook shape. If you are not prepared to double, would you pass? Is there another choice?

This deal arose later in the same match:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

	North		
	♠ Q54		
	♥ A62		
	♦ 10973		
	♣ KQ7		
West		East	
♠ AKJ2		♠ 10763	
♥ 10		♥ Q97	
♦ QJ54		♦ K62	
♣ 9853		♣ 642	
	South		
	♠ 98		
	♥ KJ8543		
	♦ A8		
	♣ AJ10		

	West	North	East	South
		<i>Thomson</i>		<i>Mullamphy</i>
				1♥
Dble	2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass		2♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass	4♥ ⁽³⁾	All Pass		

(1) Artificial, 10-13 points

(2) Non-minimum opening, game-force, not 4 spades, no 5-minor

(3) Weaker than 3♥

West led the ♠A: four – three – eight and switched to the ♦Q: three – six – ace. South had 13 HCP and dummy 11, total 24. That gave the opponents 16 points. As the ♦Q denied the ♦K, where was West's takeout double? South played the ♥3: ten – ace – seven. South thought that West was more likely to have doubled with a singleton heart and 11 HCP than with ♥Q-10 doubleton and 13 points. South returned the ♥2: nine – jack – ♠2 and had ten tricks, +620.

At the other table, Dave Beauchamp eschewed the takeout double:

	West	North	East	South
	<i>Beauchamp</i>		<i>Kanetkar</i>	
				1♥
1♠	2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass		3♣ ⁽²⁾
Pass	4♥	All Pass		

(1) Heart support, game-invitation or stronger

(2) Seeking help in clubs

West led the ♠A: four – three (discouraging) – eight and switched to the ♦4: ten – king – ace. With the 1♠ overcall showing only 8+ points, South had less information to gauge the heart position. South played the ♥3 to the ♥A and the ♥2 to the ♥K. South had a heart, a spade and a diamond to lose, one down, East-West +100 and +12 Imps.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
2♣	2♥	3♣	1♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	4♥

What would you lead as West from:

♠ 3
♥ AK87
♦ J74
♣ AQJ93

2. Dealer East : Both vulnerable

North
♠ AK
♥ AQJ84
♦ 98
♣ 10932

East
♠ 108
♥ K9632
♦ 1064
♣ J86

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	2♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	3NT

West leads the ♦2 (fourth-highest): eight – ten – king. South plays the ♥5: ten – queen – king. What do you do now as East?

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

Commiseration with Seniors #10: Growing old should have taken longer.