

168. Order at the bridge table

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North
 ♠ A3
 ♥ K84
 ♦ 98653
 ♣ QJ5

South
 ♠ K6
 ♥ AQ73
 ♦ AJ107
 ♣ K72

West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT

West leads the ♠Q. Plan the play.

A little while ago, I re-read *Bridge Logic*, by Hugh Kelsey. It is an excellent book on declarer play. Today, some would bid 1NT : 2♣ with the North hand to ask for a 5-card major in case a 5-3 heart fit exists. *Bridge Logic* was published in 1976 and opening 1NT with a 5-card major was not in favour back then.

You have six winners on top. Three more are needed. An attractive plan is to win ♠A and take a diamond finesse. If it loses, win the next spade, cross to ♥K and take another diamond finesse. This play gives you a 76% chance of nine tricks. It loses only when West has both ♦K and ♦Q. Another choice is to knock out the ♣A and hope that the hearts are 3-3, but that is only a 36% chance. Clearly you would prefer to bank on the 76% line.

This problem comes from Chapter 5, *Retaining an Option*. The theme of the chapter is that you can improve your odds for success by the order in which you take your chances. If you rely on diamonds, you have no second chance. If you knock out the ♣A, you have no second chance. However, you do not need to choose your line of play at trick 2. You do not need to commit yourself to one line or the other just yet. Your first order of business should be to test how the hearts break. Win trick 1 in your hand with the ♠K and play ♥A, ♥Q and a low heart to the ♥K, in order to end in dummy. If the hearts are 3-3, you simply knock out the ♣A and you have nine tricks for sure.

If the hearts do not break 3-3, you are in dummy with the ♥K to start on the diamonds. If the first diamond finesse loses, the ♠K in dummy is your entry for the second diamond finesse. *Kelsey*: 'By playing the cards in the proper order you increase the overall chance of success to nearly 85%.' I was reminded of Kelsey's *Bridge Logic* when I saw the deal which led to yesterday's problem:

North	Dealer East North South Vulnerable			
♠ K972	West	North	East	South
♥ A972			Pass	2♦ ⁽¹⁾
♦ Q75	Pass	3♣ ⁽²⁾	Dble	3♦ ⁽³⁾
♣ 32	Pass	4♦ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	4♥
	Pass	Pass	Pass	

South

(1) 18-19 balanced
 (2) Stayman
 (3) Club stopper and at least one 4-card major
 (4) Bid your major
 (I like this 2♦ opening, but prefer 2♦ : 2♠, transfer to 2NT, first.)

West leads the ♠Q: two – king – five. East returns the ♣J: ace – four – three. Plan the play.

Board 37: Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

North		East	
♠ K972		♠ 104	
♥ A972		♥ J5	
♦ Q75		♦ K43	
♣ 32		♣ KJ10976	
West		South	
♠ Q865		♠ AJ3	
♥ 863		♥ KQ104	
♦ J1092		♦ A86	
♣ Q4		♣ A85	

This deal comes from the 56-board quarter-final match between [SPECTOR](#) (Warren Spector – Gavin Wolpert, Kevin Bathurst – John Hurd, Vincent Demuy – John Kranyak) and [HILL](#) (Joyce Hill – Kevin Dwyer – Shan Huang, Mikael Rimstedt – Ola Rimstedt) in the NAOBC.

After the auction on the previous page, Demuy (W) led the ♣Q. Kranyak (E) overtook with the ♣K. As East had not opened with a 3♣ pre-empt, South thought it was safe to duck at trick 1. East returned the ♣J: ace – four – three. Declarer played the ♦6: jack – queen – king. East returned the ♦4. South took the ♦A, ruffed the ♣8 in dummy and gave up the diamond trick, won by West.

West exited with the ♥3. Declarer drew trumps and lost a spade trick, one down, East-West +100. Double dummy, declarer could avoid a spade loser: ♥K, ♥A, ♥Q and then lead the ♠J, letting it run if West plays low. If West covers, the ♠K wins and when the ♠10 pops up on the next spade, declarer has no spade loser.

That is not the normal way to play the spades, of course. Standard is ♠3 to the ♠K and then finesse the ♠J. That just requires the ♠Q onside, a 50% chance. When declarer tackled the spades, he knew East had six clubs, two hearts and three diamonds and therefore a doubleton spade. South played ♠A, ♠K, hoping for ♠Q-x with East.

The problem was declarer tackled the suits in the wrong order. If you play for the ♦K onside or the ♠Q onside, you have a 75% chance of success. As you can see, both those vital cards are offside. You can improve your chances by tackling the spades before the diamonds. That is what happened at the other table:

West	North	East	South
		3♣	Dble ⁽¹⁾
4♣	Dble ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) For takeout

The play began the same way: ♣Q lead, overtaken by the ♣K and ducked. Club return taken by the ♣A. Bathurst then drew trumps, ♥Q, ♥K, ♥4: eight – nine – ♣6. Then came the ♠2: four – jack – queen. West switched to the ♦J: queen – king – six. East returned the ♦4, ace. South ruffed the ♣8 and played the ♠7, ten, ace, and had ten tricks for +620 and +12 Imps. South would thus make 4♥ if the ♠Q was onside or the ♦K was onside or if spades were 3-3 or the ♠10 came down singleton or doubleton, a very significant improvement over tackling the diamonds first.

[SPECTOR](#) won the match by 173 Imps to 98.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
?			

What would you do as West with:

♠ 62
♥ KQ87
♦ AQ10654
♣ 6

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

Only put off till tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone. (Pablo Picasso)

New book: <i>The Power of Pass</i> (by Harold Schogger and Ron Klinger). \$A25.00 Available from Suzie Klinger, post free until 2021: email suzie@ronklingerbridge.com or telephone 0411 229 705.
