

219. Switch on or switch off?

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

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

(1) 4+ hearts, 9-11 points

What would you lead as West from:

- ♠ A5
- ♥ Q108
- ♦ AJ862
- ♣ Q64

As you have no attractive lead, you try to find the one that is least repulsive. It is highly unlikely that you can afford to lead a heart and to start with an ace-high suit it also unattractive unless the suit is headed by the A-K. That leaves only the ♣4 lead. That is risky, too, but it figures to be less risky than the other choices.

Suppose you have come to a different view and have decided to lead the ♠A. This is what you see:

	North
	♠ KJ1083
	♥ J763
	♦ K10
	♣ J9
West	
♠ A5	
♥ Q108	
♦ AJ862	
♣ Q64	

It goes ♠A: three – two – four. What next?

Partner has played the ♠2. What do you read into that if you are playing (a) count? (b) reverse count? (c) attitude, low discouraging? (d) attitude, low-like?

Which of these do you think should apply?

(Answer later)

Today's deal comes from Session 4 of the 2017 Spingold (USA Open Teams) Round of 16 match between MITTELMAN and NICKELL.

Board 49: Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

	North		
	♠ KJ1083		
	♥ J763		
	♦ K10		
	♣ J9		
West		East	
♠ A5		♠ Q962	
♥ Q108		♥ --	
♦ AJ862		♦ Q953	
♣ Q64		♣ K10832	
	South		
	♠ 74		
	♥ AK9542		
	♦ 74		
	♣ A75		

West	North	East	South
<i>Levin</i>	<i>Hanlon</i>	<i>Weinstein</i>	<i>Amoils</i>
		Pass	1♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

West led the ♣4: jack – king – seven. South won the club return, ruffed a club in dummy, crossed to the ♥A and played the ♠7. With a sure trump trick to come, West grabbed the ♠A, cashed the ♦A and South finished one down, East-West +50.

Note West's choice of the ♣4 lead.

West	North	East	South
<i>Zatorski</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>	<i>Pachtmann</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>
		Pass	1♥
Pass	2NT ⁽¹⁾	Dble ⁽²⁾	3♣
4♦	4♥	All Pass	

(1) 4+ hearts, limit raise

(2) Takeout of hearts

West led the ♠A: three – two – four and switched to the ♦A: ten – three – four, followed by the ♣Q: nine – two – ace. South cashed the ♥A, ♥K, ♦K, ♠K and played the ♠J: nine – ♣5 – ♥Q. West went back to the ♣4. East won with the ♣K. That was also one down, East-West +50.

A point of interest: It was risky for West to cash the ♦A at trick 2. That could have been expensive if South had started with ♦Q-x-x. Now declarer could win the club switch at trick 3, cash ♦K, cross to ♥A and ditch the club loser on the ♦Q.

Back to the questions on page 1:

West leads the ♠A against South's 4♥. It goes ♠A: three – two – four. What next?

Partner has played the ♠2. What do you read into that if you are playing

(a) count? *With natural count, lowest card shows an odd number and so East is showing three or five spades.*

(b) reverse count? *With reverse count, high-low = an odd number, low-high an even number. East's ♥2 is showing two or four spades*

(c) attitude, low discouraging? *East does not like spades and is asking you to switch to some other suit.*

(d) attitude, low-like? *East likes spades and is asking you to continue spades.*

Which of these do you think should apply?

Board 49: Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ KJ1083	
	♥ J763	
	♦ K10	
	♣ J9	
West		East
♠ A5		♠ Q962
♥ Q108		♥ --
♦ AJ862		♦ Q953
♣ Q64		♣ K10832
	South	
	♠ 74	
	♥ AK9542	
	♦ 74	
	♣ A75	

This is what happened when the deal was replayed in a BBO practice game after the auction on page 1. West led ♠A: three – two – four and continued with the ♠5: king – six – seven. East-West were playing low-encouraging.

Declarer played ♥A, ♥K and the ♦4, taken by West with the ♦A. There was still time to switch to a club (where else could the defence find a fourth trick?), but West cashed the ♥Q first and then played the ♣4: nine – ten – ace.

South crossed to the ♦K and played the ♠J: nine – ♣5 – ♦6. Then came the ♠8, queen, ruffed, setting up dummy's fifth spade, low heart to the ♥J and the ♠10 on which South pitched the ♣7, ten tricks +420.

You might be wondering about South's 4♣ bid in the auction on page 1. He was on a 'frolic of his own', but that should not affect West's defence.

What was the idea behind the ♠A lead? West had a trump trick almost certainly and did not need a spade ruff.

The ♠A lead was dangerous. What if the ♠Q had been with South singleton? After the ♠A lead, what did West know? West had one spade trick, one heart trick only and one diamond trick. Where could the defence find a possible fourth trick? The only chance was clubs. If the defence did have a second spade trick, it was not going to run away. Say South had started with:

♠ 764
♥ AK9542
♦ 74
♣ AK

East would always have a spade trick. West should work on the assumption there is no second spade trick and aim for a club trick via a club switch at trick 2. It would not matter if the switch was to the ♣Q or a low club.

What about East's ♠2 at trick 1? Whether you play natural count or reverse count, East would know that West had no interest in how many clubs East held. What about attitude? As above, East would know there is no rush for a second spade from West. Any second spade trick could wait.

I suspect that West took the ♠2 as encouraging and therefore played the second spade, but if the ♠2 was not about count or about attitude, what was it? Look at it from East's point of view. Partner has led the ♠A. As leading an ace against a trump contract has little appeal, East might have thought that the ♠A was a singleton. If so, what signal would apply? If the ♠A is singleton, count or attitude are irrelevant. Suit-preference becomes the primary signal and the ♠2 should be showing values in clubs.

Suppose the full deal had been like this:

	North	
	♠ KJ1083	
	♥ J763	
	♦ K10	
	♣ J9	
West		East
♠ A		♠ Q962
♥ 985		♥ --
♦ J87642		♦ Q953
♣ A76		♣ K10832
	South	
	♠ 754	
	♥ AKQ1042	
	♦ A	
	♣ Q54	

Now ♠A, ♠2 asking for clubs, and the ♠A, followed by a club to the ♠K and a spade ruff is needed to beat 4♥.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♣ ⁽²⁾
Pass	?		

(1) 5+ hearts; 1NT, 15-17, would deny a 5-card major

(2) Natural, forcing for one round

What would you rebid as North with:

♠ KJ9
♥ AQJ92
♦ J2
♣ KJ2

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

Font humour: Papyrus, Comic Sans and Aerial walk into a bar. The bartender says, "Get out. We don't serve your type."

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.
