

263. Q and A

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

North

♠ 32

♥ 54

♦ AJ10864

♣ AKQ

South

♠ AQJ10876

♥ Q3

♦ 3

♣ J109

West	North	East	South
1♥ ⁽¹⁾	2♦	2♥ ⁽²⁾	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 5+ hearts

(2) 3-4 hearts

West leads the ♦5: ace – two – three. You play the ♠2 and East discards the ♣3. Plan the play.

The hand looks comfortable, even with the bad trump break. You have 6 spades, 1 diamond, 3 clubs, ten tricks.

How many points does West have?

You did already count dummy's points and your own, didn't you? Dummy has 14 points, you have 10, total 24. That leaves 16 for the opponents. West opened and so West might have 11-12 points, perhaps 10 with good shape and East has 4-6 points.

What do you know about West's shape?

West has 5+ hearts and East has 3-4 hearts. West might have six hearts and East three, or five hearts with West and four with East. West has 4 spades and 5-6 hearts and so West has 3-4 cards in the minor suits.

Come on, you can do better than that. What else do you know about West's shape. What about West's diamond holding? What did West lead?

West led ♦5. Dummy played ♦4, East the ♦2 and you the ♦3. That means the ♦5 was West's lowest diamond.

When does one lead the bottom card from a suit?

It could be a singleton, of course. If not, it could be bottom from 3 to an honour or 4th highest from a suit headed by one or more honours. It would not be from a suit headed by K-Q. From that, West would lead the king against a trump contract. Here we have deduced that West has 3-4 minor cards. That means that the ♦5 lead was a singleton or bottom from K-x-5 / K-x-x-5 / Q-x-5 / Q-x-x-5.

Which of those is it?

There can be no attractive reason for West to lead from 3 or 4 cards headed by the king or queen in a suit bid by dummy. It is far more likely that the lead is a singleton.

If the ♦5 lead was a singleton, what do you now know about West's shape?

West has 4 spades, 6 hearts, 1 diamond, 2 clubs or 4 spades, 5 hearts, 1 diamond, 3 clubs.

You have played the ♠2 from dummy and East has discarded the ♣3. *What do you play from hand?*

Suppose the full deal is like this:

	North	
	♠ 32	
	♥ 54	
	♦ AJ10864	
	♣ AKQ	
West		East
♠ K954		♠ --
♥ AK8762		♥ J109
♦ 5		♦ KQ972
♣ 42		♣ 87653
	South	
	♠ AQJ10876	
	♥ Q3	
	♦ 3	
	♣ J109	

After ♦5, ace, and ♠2: ♣3, you can play ♠A or ♠Q, ♠J, ♠10.

Which do you choose and what must you not do next?

If the deal is as above, you can play the ♠A, but you must not play a spade honour next. If you play the ♠Q, ♠J or ♠10 and West ducks, you must not play the ♠A and another spade honour next.

Suppose you did play the ♠A and the ♠Q. West could take the ♠K and defeat you by cashing the ♥A or ♥K (East plays the ♥J to deny the ♥Q) and the other top heart to leave this position:

	North	
	♠	
	♥	
	♦ J10864	
	♣ AKQ	
West		East
♠ 95		♠ --
♥ 8762		♥ 10
♦		♦ KQ97
♣ 42		♣ 876
	South	
	♠ J10876	
	♥	
	♦	
	♣ J109	

If West now switches to a club, you are doomed. If you play three rounds of clubs, West ruffs. If you play a diamond and ruff low, West over-ruffs. If you play a diamond and ruff high, West discards and West's ♠9 becomes a winner.

If the deal was above, you can succeed by playing the ♠A at trick 2, cashing two clubs and then playing another spade to the queen, jack or ten. If West ducks, you continue with another top spade. When West takes the ♠K, West will have only spades or hearts left. Whichever West plays, you win and draw West's remaining trumps, making ten tricks.

However, playing the ♠A at trick 2 is not your best play. It is better to play the ♠Q, ♠J or ♠10 from your hand.

Can you see why?

The full deal might be like this:

	North	
	♠ 32	
	♥ 54	
	♦ AJ10864	
	♣ AKQ	
West		East
♠ K954		♠ --
♥ AK876		♥ J1092
♦ 5		♦ KQ972
♣ 542		♣ 8763
	South	
	♠ AQJ10876	
	♥ Q3	
	♦ 3	
	♣ J109	

This is less likely since East might well bid 4♥ over 2♦, but who can tell for sure what an opponent might or might not do?

Here, after ♦5 to ♦A and ♠2: ♣3 – ♠A – ♠4, if you play ♣A, ♣K and then a spade, West wins and can cash ♥A, ♥K and continue with the third club to stick you in dummy. Now you play a diamond and West's ♠9 becomes a winner, whether you ruff high or low.

In the layout above, it works to play ♠A and three rounds of clubs, followed by the ♠3 to a spade honour, but if West began with 6 hearts and 2 clubs, as on the previous page, West will ruff the third club and you are one off.

After ♦5 to ♦A, the play that works for the layout above and the one on the previous page is the ♠2 to, say, the ♠Q. If West takes the ♠K, cashes ♥A, ♥K or not, you can win the next heart or club or spade and draw trumps for an easy ten tricks.

Suppose West ducks the ♠Q. Now you play ♣A, ♣K (to cater for West being 4-6-1-2) and then play the ♠A, followed by the ♠J or ♠10. On the third spade, you discard dummy's last club. Now you cannot be stuck in dummy. Whatever West returns, you can win and draw West's last trump.

What this deal illustrates is the importance of counting out West's possible shapes before committing to a line of play. After ♦A and ♠2, ♠3 from East, you needed to take your time to work out the best line of play.

Problem for Tomorrow:

North dealer : Nil vulnerable

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

(1) 15-17 points

(2) Transfer to spades

What would you do as South with:

♠ J76
♥ AK6
♦ Q87
♣ AK52

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

Some things are better left unsaid . . . which I usually realize a few moments after I have said them.

A great gift: *The Power of Pass* (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.