

# 285. Partner shows the way

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

North  
♠ 87  
♥ 96  
♦ KJ108  
♣ KJ1043

West  
♠ J9643  
♥ A  
♦ 9654  
♣ 972

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♠	4♥
4♠	Pass	Pass	5♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. West leads the ♠4: seven – ace – ♥2.
2. South plays the ♥K: ace – six – five.

What do you play next as West?

Your side has no spade tricks and almost certainly only one heart trick. If partner has both minor-suit aces, you figure to take two tricks there, but what if partner has two tricks (A-Q) in one minor? Which one will you play?

*Have you noticed anything unusual so far?*

Yes, partner's play in the spade suit.

*What did partner play at trick 1?*

The ♠A.

*What did partner have in spades?*

AKQ1052

*Why is the ♠A unusual?*

When playing third-hand-high, a defender wins with or plays the cheapest of equally-high cards. Partner's normal card, after ♠4 lead and ♠7 from dummy, would have been the ♠Q.

*Why did partner choose the ♠A instead?*

As a suit-preference signal.

*Asking for what?*

High card = asking for the high suit. Diamonds high, clubs low here. You should therefore switch to a diamond.

Here is the full deal (*see next page*):

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	North	
	♠ 87	
	♥ 96	
	♦ KJ108	
	♣ KJ1043	
West		East
♠ J9643		♠ AKQ1052
♥ A		♥ 85
♦ 9654		♦ AQ2
♣ 972		♣ 85
	South	
	♠ --	
	♥ KQJ107432	
	♦ 73	
	♣ AQ6	

A pre-emptive bidder does not usually bid twice, but that does not apply to a pre-emptive bidder in third or fourth seat who might have pre-empted with a strong hand. That accounts for South's 4♥ and later 5♥.

You can see what will happen if West continues with a spade or switches to a club after taking the ♥A. South will win, draw trumps and run the clubs, discarding the diamond losers. That gives South 12 tricks. If West switches to a diamond at trick 3, East can take two diamonds and defeat 5♥ by one trick.

It is also important that East does not play the ♠Q trick 1 as 'an automatic' cheapest high card when playing third-hand-high. Playing equally-high cards in abnormal order is commonly used as a suit-preference signal. When you do something like that, you just hope partner is paying attention.

## Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	2♠ <sup>(1)</sup>
Pass	3♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥ <sup>(2)</sup>	Pass	6♠
Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass

(1) 5+ spades, strong hand

(2) Two key cards, no ♠Q

What do you lead as West from:

♠ 76  
♥ 94  
♦ J10952  
♣ AK42

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

*In filling out an application, where it says, 'In case of an emergency, notify . . . you should write 'a doctor'.*