

304. An odd occasion

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Dble	Rdbl ⁽¹⁾
Pass	Pass	1NT	Dble
2♥	Pass	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 10+ points

What would you lead as West from:

♠ J1043
♥ 7643
♦ KQ9
♣ 97

If you have chosen a heart lead, which heart do you lead? (*Answer later*)

Today's deal comes from the [LAVAZZA](#) vs [ROSENTHAL](#) quarter-final match in the 2017 Spingold (USA Knockout Open Teams):

Board 55: Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

North			
♠ KQ976			
♥ 10			
♦ 102			
♣ A8632			
West		East	
♠ J1043		♠ A	
♥ 7643		♥ AJ92	
♦ KQ9		♦ 87543	
♣ 97		♣ K105	
South			
♠ 852			
♥ KQ85			
♦ AJ6			
♣ QJ4			

This was yesterday's question:

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♥	Pass
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ KQ976
♥ 10
♦ 102
♣ A8632

There is a useful maxim, 'Defend on odd occasions'. In particular, this refers to the undesirability of bidding three-over-three or five-over-five. By bidding above the opponents at these levels, you give up the chance of defeating their contract. It is true that if the opponents can make 3♥, 3♠ will probably not be expensive when you are not vulnerable. However, that 'if' is a big 'IF'. Here, 3♥ can be defeated routinely. South has three trump tricks and the defence have two outside aces. Indeed, declarer is lucky that both minor-suit aces are onside, else 3♥ could be two off or three off. Quick answer: North should pass 3♥, but in fact North bid 3♠, all pass. South bid only 2♠ as North was a passed hand, but if South were weaker, all the more reason to pass 3♥.

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West	East
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♥ 7643	♥ AJ92
♦ KQ9	♦ 87543
♣ 97	♣ K105
South	
♠ 852	
♥ KQ85	
♦ AJ6	
♣ QJ4	

Against North's 3♠, East led the ♦4: six – queen – two. West switched to the ♣9, ace. Declarer played the ♦10: eight – jack – king. (Note the benefit of West's winning with the cheaper card in defence: Partner knows the position, but declarer does not.) West reverted to the ♣7. East won and returned the ♣10. West ruffed and played the ♠4, king, ace. The defenders took 2 diamonds, a club, a club ruff, 2 spades and the ♥A for three down, East-West +150.

At the other table, South was in 3NT after the auction at the top of page 1. West led the ♥6: ten – ace – five. A diamond switch at this point and another diamond when in with the ♠A or ♣K will give the defenders a spade, a heart, 2 diamonds and a club. In practice, East returned the ♥J at trick 2: queen – three – ♠6. Declarer played the ♣J to the ♣K. Back came the ♥2. Reading the layout better than East, South inserted the ♥8 winning. South cashed the ♣Q, ♥K and set up a spade trick. South made a spade, 3 hearts, a diamond and 4 clubs, +400 and 11 Imps to [ROSENTHAL](#).

Any lead can beat 3NT as long as East switches to diamonds at first opportunity and plays another diamond when in next. On the auction, a heart lead is best. The problem for East stemmed from the ♥6 lead. A common practice when leading from a worthless holding when partner has supported the suit is to lead top-of-nothing, in this case the ♥7. If one were playing fourth-highest, the ♥7 as fourth highest could only be from K-Q-8-7. In that case, West figured to lead the king, as East had raised the suit, and South would be unlikely to bid 3NT with no stopper in hearts.

In general, East-West were leading thirds and fifths against no-trumps. The ♥6 therefore could have been from K-8-6-x or K-7-6-x or Q-8-6-x or Q-7-6-x or, quite unlikely, K-Q-7-x. Had West led the ♥7, that could have been from K-8-7-x or Q-8-7-x, still ambiguous but less so.

There was an entirely different scenario when the deal was replayed in a game on BBO:

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Dble	Rdbl ⁽¹⁾
2♥	Pass	Pass	Dble ⁽²⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	
(1) 10+ points			
(2) Penalties			

Even at favourable vulnerability, opening 1♠ with the North cards is not mandatory with most partnerships. One wonders whether it might be better for North to remove the double to 3♣ to indicate the sub-minimum opening. With adequate values, partner can still bid 3NT and you can apologize if the penalty from 2♥ doubled would have exceeded the result after removing the double.

South's trumps are adequate for a penalty double, but there is another feature at play here. It is usually not a good idea to play for low-level penalties when you have support for the suit partner has bid. The danger is that declarer or dummy may be short in that suit and potential winners in that suit do not eventuate. So it proved.

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♠ J1043	♠ A
♥ 7643	♥ AJ92
♦ KQ9	♦ 87543
♣ 97	♣ K105
South	
♠ 852	
♥ KQ85	
♦ AJ6	
♣ QJ4	

Against West's 2♥ doubled, North led the ♠K, ace. The lead was not material as declarer is destined to lose only 3 hearts, a diamond and a club as the cards lie.

At trick 2, Avi Kanetkar (W) played the ♦3: six – queen – two, followed by the ♥3: ten – jack – queen. South returned the ♠5: jack – queen – ♥2. Next came the ♦4. South took the ♦A and continued with the ♠2: ten – six – ♣5. West cashed the ♦K and played the ♣7. North won with the ♣A and returned a club to the king. West played a diamond from dummy. South ruffed with the ♥8. West had taken six tricks, the ♠A, a spade ruff, the ♠10, 2 diamonds and a club and dummy's ♥A-9 was bound to produce two more tricks, no matter what South did at trick 11. East-West +670.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Dble
4♠	Pass	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ --
 ♥ KJ109
 ♦ K1075
 ♣ K9653

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

A bad attitude is like a flat tyre. You can't get anywhere until you change it.