

311. The long and the short of it

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		1♦	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ 9
♥ AQJ9752
♦ J6
♣ 972

You have 7 losers and so 6 playing tricks. You have an excellent long suit and your hand is below 10 HCP. All of these characteristics point to a pre-empt of 3♥. Adding 3 to your 6 playing tricks takes you to 9 tricks or the 3-level and hence 3♥. Suppose you had:

♠ 9
♥ AQJ975
♦ J63
♣ 972

That would be suitable for a weak jump-overcall of 2♥ (although I am no fan of WJOs). If you had this hand:

♠ 9
♥ AQJ97
♦ J63
♣ 9742

You would have enough – but only just enough – for a 1♥ overcall.

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		1♦	3♥
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ AJ642
♥ K108
♦ 84
♣ A53

Partner is short of 3♥ by 3 tricks.

How many tricks do you bring for partner?

Three, the ♠A, the ♣A and the ♥K. You can count one trick for the king or queen in partner's long suit.

Anything extra?

You have 3 trumps and a doubleton in diamonds. If partner has three or more diamonds, partner might be able to score a diamond ruff in dummy. You also have the ♠J. If partner has ♠Q-x or ♠10-9-x, partner might be able to collect an extra trick in spades. Your length in spades might also be helpful for partner. After partner pre-empts with 3♥ or 3♣, if you have enough tricks to cover the number by which partner is short of the contract and you also have potential for an extra trick, raise partner to 4♥ / 4♣. This hand is worth 4♥.

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West	North	East	South
		1♦	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

West leads the ♦2.

What is the first thing to do when dummy appears?

Count dummy's HCP (12) and add your own (8), total 20. That means the opponents also hold 20 HCP. That is not relevant for this deal, but doing this hand after hand can be very useful on many deals.

What is the second thing to do in a trump contract?

Count your losers.

What losers do you have?

Your ♠9 is a loser, but dummy's ♠A takes care of that. You have a loser in hearts, but dummy's ♥K solidifies the heart suit. You have two diamond losers in your hand and in dummy. You have 3 club losers, but dummy takes care of one of them. So, you have two diamond losers and two club losers. That would leave you with nine tricks. You must aim to do something about your losers.

When you have a long, good suit, I find it helpful also to count my winners.

How many winners do you have?

One spade, seven hearts and one club, total 9 tricks. You are one trick short. You have to create an extra trick.

Meanwhile, the opponents are waiting patiently (or in some cases, impatiently). You play the ♦4, East the ♦Q and you the ♦6.

What do you make of the play so far?

West led the ♦2, bottom card. That indicates a singleton or promises an honour (if your partnership plays MUD when holding three or four rag cards). East won trick 1 with the ♦Q. That places East with ♦A-K-Q. East would play the ace if holding ♦A-Q and West would not lead the ♦2 from A-x-2 against a trump contract (lead the ace or lead some other suit). East's diamonds figure to be headed by ♦A-K-Q and West has ♦10-x-2 or ♦10-x-x-2.

East continues with the ♦K: jack – seven – eight and switches to the ♣Q.

What would you do make of that?

East's clubs are headed by the Q-J and West has the ♣K.

What do you play on that?

You could play low, but there is no benefit to that. You should play the ♣A. Maybe you can avoid losing a club!

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ AJ642
♥ K108
♦ 84
♣ A53

South
♠ 9
♥ AQJ9752
♦ J6
♣ 972

South is in 4♥. East has won ♦Q, ♦K and switched to the ♣Q at trick 3. You have taken the ♣A.

We saw on the previous page that you have only 9 tricks. You have to create an extra trick.

Where might there be an extra trick?

Clearly not from diamonds or clubs, so it has to be from spades. You have six spades and so the opponents have seven. *What will you need from the spade suit in order to produce an extra trick?*

The spades will need to be 4-3 (about a 63% chance) or much less likely, an opponent will need to have K-Q doubleton (presumably East, as West might have five spades but East is highly unlikely to have five spades). Suppose the spades are 4-3.

How will the play have to go to benefit from that?

♠A, spade ruff, over to dummy, spade ruff, over to dummy, spade ruff. After ♠A and three spade ruffs, dummy's fifth spade is a winner. Now you need to cross to dummy to reach the fifth spade to discard a club loser. You hope that the full deal looks like this:

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ AJ642	
	♥ K108	
	♦ 84	
	♣ A53	
West		East
♠ K1083		♠ Q75
♥ 63		♥ 4
♦ 1072		♦ AKQ953
♣ K864		♣ QJ10
	South	
	♠ 9	
	♥ AQJ9752	
	♦ J6	
	♣ 972	

After ♠A, spade ruff, you need three entries to dummy, two to ruff two more spades and one to return to dummy to cash the fifth spade. You are lucky. Dummy has three entries outside spades.

What are they?

The ♥K, the ♥10 and the ♥8. After taking the ♣A, you should play ♠A, ruff a spade high (I would use the ♥A), then ♥2 to the ♥8, ruff a spade high, ♥5 to the ♥10 and ruff a spade high. As the missing trumps were 2-1 you have already drawn trumps and so you can cross to the ♥K and cash the ♠J to discard a loser.

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

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♠ AJ642	
♥ K108	
♦ 84	
♣ A53	
West	East
♠ K1083	♠ Q75
♥ 63	♥ 4
♦ 1072	♦ AKQ953
♣ K864	♣ QJ10
South	
♠ 9	
♥ AQJ9752	
♦ J6	
♣ 972	

What could go wrong?

An easy mistake would be to draw trumps before starting on the spades. If you play two rounds of hearts and then start the spades, ♠A, ruff a spade, cross to dummy's last trump and ruff a spade, the fifth spade is not even a winner yet and dummy is out of entries. Even one round of trumps would be fatal. If you play one trump first, then you can set up the fifth spade, but dummy will have no entry to reach it.

What other mistake might a player make? (Not you, of course!)

After ♣A, ♠A, spade ruff with the ♥2, ♥5 to the ♥K, spade ruff with the ♥7, ♥9 to the ♥10, spade ruff with the ♥J. Dummy's ♠J is now a winner, but as dummy has the ♥8 and South has ♥A-Q, there is no entry to dummy to reach the winning spade. That is why you should ruff spades high in your hand and use the entries in hearts with the ♥8 first and ♥10 next. This avoids any chance of blocking yourself off from dummy.

How might you make 11 tricks?

You need spades 4-3 and the 3-card holding to include the ♠K and the ♠Q, as in this layout:

North	
♠ AJ642	
♥ K108	
♦ 84	
♣ A53	
West	East
♠ 10873	♠ KQ5
♥ 63	♥ 4
♦ 1072	♦ AKQ953
♣ K864	♣ QJ10
South	
♠ 9	
♥ AQJ9752	
♦ J6	
♣ 972	

After ♦Q, ♦K, ♣Q to ♣A, you play ♠A, low spade ruffed (with the ♥A), ♥2 to the ♥8, low spade ruffed (with the ♥Q). You will / should have noted that the ♠K and ♠Q have gone. That means the ♠J is high and as only one spade is still missing, the ♠J will remove it and the next spade will also be a winner. Play a heart to dummy and cash the ♠J, discarding one club, and the fifth spade, discarding another club. That is why you should win the ♣A on this deal on the first round of clubs. Note if East on the deal above had started with three hearts, you would need to draw all of East's trumps and end in dummy on the third heart to cash the ♠J and the next spade.

The play on this deal is not difficult, but setting up a long suit for an extra trick or more can be very profitable and satisfying.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

North

♠ J108

♥ AK843

♦ Q62

♣ 43

South

♠ AKQ932

♥ J2

♦ 1095

♣ AQ

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

(1) 5+ spades, forcing to game

(2) 'Fast arrival', weaker than 3♠

West leads the ♦A: two – jack – nine. West continues with the ♦K: six – seven – ten and the ♦3: queen – ♠4 – ♦5. East switches to the ♣6. Plan the play?

Do you finesse the ♣Q? If not, what other hope is there?

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

All my passwords, laptop, phone, whatever, are protected by amnesia.