

315. First things first

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	?

(1) Game-force, 3-1-5-4 or 3-1-4-5

What would you do as South with:

♠ AJ854
♥ K86
♦ A84
♣ K8

Clearly you are going to bid spades, but will it be 3♠ or 4♠? When a game-force has been established, bidding game in the trump suit ('fast arrival') is played as weaker than setting the trump suit below game-level. Here, bidding 3♠ would show a hand with potential slam interest. Jumping to 4♠ would show a minimum hand and no slam interest. The fact that you have 5 spades is not particularly relevant. You would be unlikely to set spades as trumps with a 4-card suit opposite a declared 3-card holding.

The good news for South is that the hand is full of controls, aces and kings. That is pretty much the end of the good news. The bad news: (a) South has 15 HCP, minimum for the 1NT opening; (b) South has a 7-loser hand, also minimum for a 1NT opening, which is often a 6-loser hand; (c) opposite a singleton, the ♥K has virtually no value. Even if the ♥A is onside and the ♥K becomes a winner, you have no useful discard for dummy's long minor suits. If the ♥A is not onside, you must deal with the three heart losers. My vote would go to 4♠ over 3♥.

This was yesterday's question:

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

North
♠ KQ7
♥ A
♦ 109765
♣ J764

South
♠ AJ854
♥ K86
♦ A84
♣ K8

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	3♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

(1) 15-17 points

(2) Game-force, 3-1-5-4 or 3-1-4-5

It is often unattractive to splinter with a singleton ace, but here it looks the best response for North.

West leads the ♠10. Plan the play.

The ABF Daily Columns 311 to 314 were designed to prepare you for today's problem which arose on this deal from the final of the 2020 Australian Mixed Teams Playoff.

Board 36: Dealer North : Both vulnerable

<p>North ♠ KQ7 ♥ A ♦ 109765 ♣ J764</p> <p>West ♠ 103 ♥ 10953 ♦ KQJ ♣ A532</p>	<p>East ♠ 962 ♥ QJ742 ♦ 32 ♣ Q109</p> <p>South ♠ AJ854 ♥ K86 ♦ A84 ♣ K8</p>
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West <i>Yuen</i>	North <i>Rankin</i>	East <i>Geromboux</i>	South <i>Fischer</i>
Pass	3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

(1) Game-force, 3-1-5-4 or 3-1-4-5

West led the ♠10: king – two – four. South played the ♦5: two – four! – queen. West switched to the ♥10, taken by the ♥A. Next came the ♦A and a third diamond. West won and played the ♣A and another club. South won, ruffed the ♥8 in dummy, cashed the ♠Q and claimed ten tricks when everyone followed, North-South +620.

The play by Stephen Fischer is virtually textbook. Note the setting up of the diamond suit, especially playing low on the first round to keep East off lead in order to protect the ♣K and so avoid a guess in clubs. As the cards lie, South could have played ♦A and another diamond, but this would have been inferior if the diamond layout had been like this:

<p>North 109765</p> <p>West East QJ3 K2</p> <p>South A84</p>	OR	<p>North 109765</p> <p>West East KJ2 Q3</p> <p>South A84</p>
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Had the diamonds been as above, Fischer's play of low diamond after East played low kept East off lead. If you play ♦A and another diamond, East can come on lead with the doubleton honour. Now a club switch beats 4♠ if West began with ♣A-Q. As the cards lie, if East switches to the ♣9 or ♣10, South has to guess whether to play the ♣K or a low club. The low club wins this time and playing the ♣K loses. Swap the ♣A and ♣Q and playing low loses and playing the ♣K wins. Note how the handling of the diamonds by Fischer avoided that awful guess in clubs.

At the other table, the auction and the alert were the same except that South bid 4♠ over the 3♥ shortage bid. Here, West also led the ♠10: king – six - four. At trick 2 South played the ♥A?, followed by the ♣4??: nine – king – ace. For this to come from a top player astounded me. The result was –100 and –12 Imps.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

North

♠ Q1063

♥ Q5

♦ Q742

♣ KQ6

East

♠ J2

♥ A84

♦ A65

♣ A9743

West	North	East	South
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Pass	1♥ ⁽¹⁾	Dble	4♠
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Pass	Pass	Pass	
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(1) 10-14 points, 4+ spades, not 4 hearts

West leads the ♣J: king – ace – five. What do you play at trick 2?

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

Don't let anyone in authority tell you not to put a fork into an electric socket. It's your right. More people are killed by the flu each year anyway.