

318. Length before strength

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ 32
♥ AK76
♦ KQ1062
♣ 65

South
♠ AK95
♥ J943
♦ --
♣ Q8742

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

(1) Game-force, asking about heart length

(2) 4 hearts, 5 diamonds

In reply to the 2NT ask, many would play 4♣ as showing club shortage. West leads the ♠J. Plan the play.

The deal is from the 2017 Spingold (USA K-O Open Teams) semi-final between [LAVAZZA](#) and [SCHWARTZ](#).

Board 3: Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

North	
♠ 32	
♥ AK76	
♦ KQ1062	
♣ 65	
West	East
♠ J1087	♠ Q64
♥ Q2	♥ 1085
♦ 8753	♦ AJ94
♣ A103	♣ KJ9
South	
♠ AK95	
♥ J943	
♦ --	
♣ Q8742	

This was yesterday's question:

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

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

What would you do as South with

♠ AK95
♥ J943
♦ --
♣ Q8742

With [SCHWARTZ](#) North-South, 2♥ was passed out. With South having a 6½ loser hand facing a 6-7 loser hand, that was a very conservative action by South. Recommended is a 2NT rebid to ask North about the heart length and the hand strength. In reply 3♥ = 4 trumps, minimum, 3-other-suit = 3 hearts only and 4-level = 4 trumps, maximum. West led the ♠J. Declarer made eight tricks (to justify the pass), North-South +110.

Board 3: Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

North	
♠ 32	
♥ AK76	
♦ KQ1062	
♣ 65	
West	East
♠ J1087	♠ Q64
♥ Q2	♥ 1085
♦ 8753	♦ AJ94
♣ A103	♣ KJ9
South	
♠ AK95	
♥ J943	
♦ --	
♣ Q8742	

LAVAZZA North-South had the auction to 4♥ at the top of page 1. North has only 12 HCP, but with the two doubletons and the excellent location of the high cards (in the long suits), North has a 6-loser hand and that justifies insisting on game.

West led the ♠J: two – six – king. The recommended approach for situations like this is to set up your long suit. You can deal with the spade losers by setting up a diamond winner and, if need be, ruffing a spade in dummy.

At trick 2, Alejandro Bianchedi, South, played the ♣7: ten – six – nine. West switched to the ♥2: ace – five – three. South continued with the ♣5: jack – two – three. East returned the ♥8: nine – queen – king. After ♦K, ace, ruffed, and a club ruffed in dummy, South played diamonds and had ten tricks, losing two clubs and a heart. That was worth +420 and 6 Imps to **LAVAZZA**.

This was the auction when the deal was replayed in a game on BBO:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

If partner is allowed to raise 1♥ to 2♥ with three trumps and a suitable hand, it is risky to jump to 4♥. It cannot hurt to check on partner's heart length via 2NT. It could go:

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

(1) 4 hearts and maximum values

West led the ♠J; South took the ♠A, ♠K and went off track, ruffing the ♣5 with the ♥6. Next came the ♦K, ace, ruffed, and the ♠9: ten – ♥K – ♣9. Declarer discarded a club on the ♦Q and ruffed a diamond in hand. After ♣4: three – five – jack, West switched to the ♥5: nine – queen – ace. Down to a trump in each hand, declarer played the ♥7 to the ♥J and lost the last three tricks for one down, –50.

Notice that declarer did not touch the long suit until much too late and never enjoyed the benefit of the 3-3 split in clubs.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♣	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ K765
♥ Q64
♦ A42
♣ KQJ

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

I used to eat a lot of natural foods, until I found out that most people die of natural causes.