

## 372. What constitutes a stopper?

*By Ron Klinger*

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♥ <sup>(1)</sup>	Dble <sup>(2)</sup>	Pass	3♥ <sup>(3)</sup>
Pass	?		

(1) Six hearts, 6-10 points

(2) For takeout

(3) Maximum pass

What would you do as North with:

♠ KQ  
♥ Q9  
♦ AK1063  
♣ AQJ4

Make up your mind before reading further.

This was yesterday's puzzle:

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♥ <sup>(1)</sup>	Dble <sup>(2)</sup>	Pass	?

(1) Six hearts, 6-10 points

(2) For takeout

What would you do as South with:

♠ AJ84  
♥ 64  
♦ Q972  
♣ K83

You have 10 HCP, plus a doubleton, and 4 spades. That looks like a sound jump to 3♠. Some play that if it goes 2♥ : Double : Pass : 2NT (Lebensohl puppet to 3♠), Pass : 3♣ : Pass : 3♠, this shows spades plus a stopper in hearts. If it goes 2♥ : Double : Pass : 3♠, this shows spades and denies a stopper in hearts. The hand qualifies for the immediate 3♠ bid if you are playing the Lebensohl 2NT Convention.

If South had bid 3♠, what should North do with the 21-point hand above? Would 4♦ be forcing? I would think so. If North does not have support for spades, North must have a very strong hand to have chosen a takeout double. What would a bid of 4♥ over 3♠ mean? It would be fine if it says, 'Pick a game'. South could then bid 4♠ with 5+ spades, 5♣ with 4+ clubs and 5♦ with 4+ diamonds (the actual hand). If South had a 4-3-3-3 pattern, South should bid 4NT over 4♥ and hope that North takes that as bid your longer minor rather than as an offer to play in 4NT.

When the hand arose, South bid 3♥ in reply to the takeout double. That showed a maximum pass and South hoped North would bid 3♠ with 4 spades, 3NT with a heart stopper or 4-minor with 5+ cards in that minor. If playing Lebensohl 2NT, 3♥ denies 4 spades and denies a stopper in hearts. This North-South pair were not playing Lebensohl and North took 3♥ simply as a maximum passed hand. North rebid 3NT and all passed.

A holding of Q-x often operates as a stopper or a second stopper. It can be very useful opposite A-x-x or K-x-x. Opposite J-x-x, Q-x produces a combined stopper. There can even be a stopper with Q-x opposite 10-x-x if the partner of the weak-two opener has J-x or K-J or A-J. This was not one of those days, as this was the full deal:

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ KQ	
	♥ Q9	
	♦ AK1063	
	♣ AQJ4	
West		East
♠ 105		♠ 97632
♥ AK10853		♥ J72
♦ J4		♦ 85
♣ 752		♣ 1096
	South	
	♠ AJ84	
	♥ 64	
	♦ Q972	
	♣ K83	

The ♥2 is the normal lead against North's 3NT. When West plays ♥K and then ♥A, East unblocks the ♥J and West takes six tricks. East actually led the ♥J. West did not duck this, but played ♥A ♥K and four more heart tricks. That was two down, North-South -100 and 8.2 Imps to East-West.

No other pair played in 3NT. One was in 6♠, -100, also -8.2 Imps. One was one down, -50, -6.9 Imps, in 4♠. The auction had been Pass : 2♥ : Double : Pass, 3♠ : Pass : 4♠, all pass.

Some played in a part-score, for example: Pass: 2♥ : Double : Pass, 2♠ : Pass : 3♦, all pass, +150, -2.3 Imps and Pass : 2♥ : Double : Pass : 2♠, Pass : 3♥ (very strong hand) : Pass : 4♦, all pass, +150 -2.3 Imps. Apparently not everyone treats 4♦ as forcing in this auction.

The most popular contract was 5♦, making 11 tricks, +400 and +3.9 Imps.

## Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT - 15-17
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ 106  
♥ A84  
♦ Q1094  
♣ A975

If you have 2♣ 5-card major Stayman available, it goes 1NT : 2♣, 2♦ (no 5-card major). Now what?

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

*If at first you don't succeed, you belong to the vast majority.*