

373. Another day at the office

By Ron Klinger

This was yesterday's puzzle:

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?

If your 1NT opening can contain a 5-card major, then playing 1NT : 2♣ to ask for a 5-card major makes a lot of sense. You could have a 5-3 heart fit. You can play a simple version: 1NT : 2♣, 2♥ or 2♠ = 5 cards in that major and 2♦ = no 5-card major. After 2♦, you bid 2♥ or 2♠ with a 4-card major and inviting game or 3♣ as game-forcing Stayman to ask for a 4-card major. You can find more information in [A Good Game of Modern Bridge](#).

If you do not play 5-card major Stayman, then the normal sequence is 1NT : 3NT, all pass. If you do play 5-card major Stayman, then after 1NT : 2♣, 2♦ North would rebid 3NT with the hand above.

Are you thinking, 'But I don't have a stopper in spades'? So what? Partner might have 4 spades, partner might have a spade stopper. When you have the values for game and a balanced hand, you do not worry about stoppers in raising opener's 1NT to 3NT. Most of the time, partner has a stopper or two. Sometimes they do not lead that suit anyway. Sometimes if they lead a spade, partner will have three spades and the suit will split 4-4. If they do lead that suit and partner has no stopper and they take the first five or six tricks, big deal. So you go down. So? You have done the normal thing. It's just another day at the office.

The deal arose in the 2016 Vanderbilt quarter-final between [LAVAZZA](#) and [FLEISHER](#):

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 106	
	♥ A84	
	♦ Q1094	
	♣ A975	
West		East
♠ AK54		♠ Q9873
♥ 5		♥ J7632
♦ K8762		♦ 3
♣ 864		♣ J3
	South	
	♠ J2	
	♥ KQ109	
	♦ AJ5	
	♣ KQ102	

With [LAVAZZA](#) North-South, it went Pass : 1NT : Pass : 3NT, all pass. West led the ♠A and East played the ♠3, low-like. West continued with the ♠K and ♠5 and the defenders took the first five tricks, East-West +50.

With [WELLAND](#) North-South, North opened and with East-West silent it went 1♣ : 2NT(forcing), 3♣ (Minimum, no shortage), 3♦ (Stayman) : 3NT (no major), all pass. West began with ♠A, ♠4 to ♠Q and the defenders also took the first five tricks, no swing.

When the deal was replayed in a game on BBO, it also went 1NT : 3NT, all pass. West led ♠A, ♠K and South likewise lost the first five tricks, East-West +50.

It is important that you do not let a result like that bother you. The bidding was normal, the contract was normal, the one down result was normal. Accept it and move on to the next deal. Do not try to find a solution and definitely do not start a blame game. If the top players in the world land in 3NT and go one down, consider yourself to be in elite company.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

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

What would you do as South with:

♠ AQ
♥ Q6532
♦ A10
♣ KJ62

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

My doctor told me that jogging would add years to my life. He was right. I feel ten years older already.