3. The Game is Spades

By Ron Klinger

Today's deals are based on replays on BBO of deals played in significant earlier events.

West dealer : Nil vulnerable

	North ♠ A96 ♥ QJ2 ♦ AJ2 ♣ Q1098	
West ♠ J1075 ♥ 53 ♦ 1098 ♣ A763		East ♠ 3 ♥ K1076 ♦ Q7643 ♣ J52
	South ♠ KQ842 ♥ A984 ♦ K5 ♣ K4	

With humans East-West and robots North-South, the auction went:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT(1)	Pass	2♦(2)
Pass	3♠!(3)	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 12-14 points
(2) New minor forcing
(3) Maximum and 3-card spade support

West led the ♦10: two – seven – king. South cashed ♠K, ♠Q, ♠A and played the ♣10: five – king – ace. West returned the ♦8, ace. After ♥Q, king, ace, South had ten tricks, losing only one spade, one heart and one club, North-South robots +420.

The deal arose in the final of the 2008 Autumn National Open Teams.

West ***Del'Monte***	North ***Peake***	East ***Fruewirth***	South ***Gill***
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♥(1)
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣(2)
Pass	4♦(2)	Pass	4♥(2)
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥(3)	Pass	6♠
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Smolen, 4 hearts and 5 spades
(2) Cue-bid
(3) Two key cards, no ♠Q

The slam is a poor one. You are off the ♣A and need the ♥K onside, spades 3-2 and still something more beyond that, all in all below a 35% chance. East led the ♣2: four – ace – eight. North could not avoid a spade loser, one off, East-West +100.

At the other table, North-South began 1♣ : 1♥ (4+ spades), 1♠ (3-4 spades) : 2♦ (artificial, forcing to game), 2NT (some 4-3-3-3 pattern) and ended in 4NT by North. East led the ♥7: nine – three – two. North made ten tricks comfortably, +430, +11 Imps.

East dealer : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ QJ8732
♥ A7
♦ A8
♣ K107

You have 14 HCP plus 2 points for the doubletons. Partner's range is 6-9 points. The combined total cannot come to 26 and that means game is odds against. On the other hand, your hand has six losers (2 in spades, 1 in hearts, 1 in diamonds and 2 in clubs). A 1♠ : 2♠ raise usually has 9 losers, but can be as good as 8 losers. With 6 losers opposite 8 losers, total 14 losers, deducted from 24 = 10 tricks are probable. That means you should invite game, either via 3♣ (long suit trial) or via 3♠ (simple invitation). It is true that if you try for game and end in 3♠, the contract might fail. On the other hand, if you do not try for game, ten tricks might be there. It is worse to play in 2♠ making four than 3♠ going one off.

	North ♠ AK9 ♥ J642 ♦ 97543 ♣ 8	
West ♠ 5 ♥ K10985 ♦ KQ102 ♣ Q52		East ♠ 1064 ♥ Q3 ♦ J6 ♣ AJ9643
	South ♠ QJ8732 ♥ A7 ♦ A8 ♣ K107	

With humans N-S and robots E-W:

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
3♥	Dble	Pass	3♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West led the ♠5, ace. Declarer played the ♣8, ace from East. South could ruff a club in dummy for ten tricks and +170. Without a trump lead, declarer could ruff two clubs in dummy, regardless of the location of the ♣A.

The deal arose in a Polish teams' championship. At one table, it went Pass : 1♠ : Pass : 2♠, all pass, North-South +170. At the other table: Pass : 1♠ : Pass : 2♠, Pass : 3♣ : Pass : 4♠, all pass, N-S +620, +10 Imps.

It is time I stepped aside for a less experienced and less able man.
(Professor Scott Elledge on his retirement from Cornell University)