

108. Placing the cards

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

North
♠ K103
♥ KQ92
♦ K97
♣ 853

South
♠ 9
♥ J87643
♦ Q5
♣ AK74

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

(1) Limit raise with 4+ hearts

(2) Based more on hope and shape than on points

West leads the ♥10: king – ace – four. East returns the ♠7: nine – ace – three. West continues with the ♠Q. Plan the play.

You have lost a heart and a spade and have a club loser and a diamond loser to come. How can you deal with that? You could take ♠K, discarding ♦5, and then play ♦7. If East has ♦A and ducks, you make the ♦Q without losing a diamond. The trouble is that East can beat you by rising with ♦A. This plan also fails if West has ♦A.

There is a better plan, known as a ‘Morton’s Fork’. If you lead low towards your ♦Q and East ducks with the ♦A or if you lead the ♦5 from hand and West ducks with the ♦A, your honour wins and you can pitch your other diamond on the ♠K. The first requirement then is not to play the ♠K on the ♠Q. You play the ♠10 and ruff in hand. You can then draw the missing trump.

The second requirement is to decide whether the ♦A is with East or West, since you need to lead through that opponent. If they play second-hand-high and rise with the ♦A, you can unblock the ♦Q later, cross to dummy with a trump and pitch two clubs, one on the ♠K and one on the ♦K. If the player with the ♦A plays second-hand-low, your honour wins and the ♠K allows you to pitch your second diamond from hand.

So, who has the ♦A? What do you know so far? East began with the ♥A and West with the ♠A and ♠Q. Given the ♠Q at trick 3, you can also place West with the ♠J. Either opponent can have the ♦J and the ♣Q and ♣J. There is no certainty of course, but chances are that these honours are split rather than all in one hand.

On West’s ♠Q, you duck in dummy, East plays ♠8 and you ruff in hand. When you play a low heart to dummy’s ♥Q, West follows with the ♥5 and East discards the ♦2. East-West play high-encourage, low-discourage. What credence do you give to East’s ♦2?

If the ♦2 is genuine, the ♦A will be with West. The defenders will signal honestly when they deem it necessary, but they are also not out to help you. You should view the ♦2 with a jaundiced eye.

Your best approach is to work with the information you have. East is a passed hand and has shown the ♥A. East could have the ♦A plus two out of the missing honours in the minor suits. With ♥A, ♦A and ♠Q, East still does not have enough to open. What about West? You have given West the ♠A, ♠Q, ♠J. If you add the ♦A and nothing more, then West has a pass. If you add a jack or two or the ♣Q, that would give West 12-13 points, a doubleton in hearts and very likely four spades. With five spades, West would definitely have overcalled 1♠ and with four spades, West would very likely have doubled. West did not do either. That places the ♦A with East.

Bd. 48: Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ K103	
	♥ KQ92	
	♦ K97	
	♣ 853	
West		East
♠ AQJ2		♠ 87654
♥ 105		♥ A
♦ J86		♦ A10432
♣ Q1096		♣ J2
	South	
	♠ 9	
	♥ J87643	
	♦ Q5	
	♣ AK74	

This deal was a replay from the final of the 2017 Spingold (USA Open K-O Teams).

South was in 4♥ after the auction given. West led the ♥10, king, ace. East switched to the ♠7. West took the ♠A and returned the ♠Q (helpful): ten – eight – ♥4. After ♥6 to the ♥9, East playing ♦2, declarer continued with the ♦7: four – queen – eight, followed by the ♥8 to the ♥Q and the ♠K, pitching the ♦5. South could ruff the fourth club in dummy for ten tricks.

In the Spingold:

West	North	East	South
<i>Sementa</i>	<i>Lindqvist</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Brogeland</i>
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♦	1♠	2♥
3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♠	4♣
Pass	4♥	Dble	All Pass

(1) Strong spade raise (in context)

West led the ♠A and switched to the ♦J: seven – ace – five. East switched to the ♣J, but South had no trouble coming to ten tricks, +590.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
<i>Diamond</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Platnick</i>	<i>Duboin</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣ ⁽¹⁾	2♥
Pass	2♠ ⁽²⁾	4♠	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Maximum pass + spade support

(2) Strong heart raise

North led the ♥K. Declarer lost a spade, two clubs and a diamond, one off, –100, but +10 Imps.

Of interest is the fact that in the Spingold, neither South opened even though the hand meets Marty Bergen's Rule of 20 (open in first or second seat if HCP + cards in the two long suits = 20+) or the extension, the Rule of 22 (open in first or second seat if total of HCP + cards in two long suits + quick tricks = 22+). Presumably both Souths downgraded the diamond holding.

Bd. 36: Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

North
 ♠ A
 ♥ AK62
 ♦ AK1073
 ♣ 753

South
 ♠ J742
 ♥ J1074
 ♦ 54
 ♣ 1094

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

West leads the ♠6: ace – ten – two. You play ♦A, ♦K and ruff the ♦3. Both opponents follow. How do you continue?

You have set up two winners in dummy. You might be tempted to play ♥A, ♥K and cash the diamond winners, pitching two clubs. That would work if the ♥Q came down doubleton, but it would not work on the actual deal:

	North	
	♠ A	
	♥ AK62	
	♦ AK1073	
	♣ 753	
West		East
♠ 65		♠ KQ10983
♥ Q98		♥ 53
♦ J86		♦ Q92
♣ AQJ82		♣ K6
	South	
	♠ J742	
	♥ J1074	
	♦ 54	
	♣ 1094	

After the early play and ♥A, ♥K, this is the position:

	North	
	♠	
	♥ 62	
	♦	
	♣ 753	
West		East
♠ 5		♠ KQ9
♥ Q		♥
♦		♦
♣ AQJ		♣ K6
	South	
	♠ J74	
	♥ J	
	♦	
	♣ 10	

When you play a club, West wins, plays ♥Q and South goes one down.

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A	
	♥ AK62	
	♦ AK1073	
	♣ 753	
West		East
♠ 65		♠ KQ10983
♥ Q98		♥ 53
♦ J86		♦ Q92
♣ AQJ82		♣ K6
	South	
	♠ J742	
	♥ J1074	
	♦ 54	
	♣ 1094	

After taking the ♠A, you could foresee this problem and instead play ♠A, ♥A, ♦A, ♦K, diamond ruff, ♥J, taking the heart finesse if West plays low. South draws the last trump and makes 1 spade, 3 hearts, 4 diamonds + a diamond ruff and a spade ruff at the end. South loses just three clubs.

The 4♥ contract is not very good. It needs favourable breaks in hearts (with the ♥Q onside) and in diamonds. There is also a point to be made about the auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

What strength do you expect from the 3♥ bid? With 4 hearts, South can be 0-6 points or so. With a good 6 or 7+ points, South could have made a negative double. After North's takeout double, some play 2NT as 'Lebensohl', asking opener to bid 3♣. The 2NT : 3♣, 3♥ shows a really weak hand and bidding 3♥ at once without travelling via 2NT shows reasonable values in context. Here, with 11 losers, South's actual hand would travel via 2NT, while an immediate 3♥ could be something like one of these:

♠ 8742	or	♠ 8742	or	♠ 874
♥ J1074		♥ QJ74		♥ 9874
♦ 54		♦ Q5		♦ 54
♣ A94		♣ 1094		♣ KQ106

In the Spingold:

West	North	East	South
<i>Platnick</i>	<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Diamond</i>	<i>Bilde</i>
Pass	1♦	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	Pass	2NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	3♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Please bid 3♣.

(2) My hand is too strong for 3♣. I have 4 hearts and 5+ diamonds.

East led the ♠K. Declarer played ♠A, ♦A, ♦K, diamond, ruffed low, followed by the ♥J: eight – two – three and ♥10: queen – ace – five for ten tricks, +420

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A	
	♥ AK62	
	♦ AK1073	
	♣ 753	
West		East
♠ 65		♠ KQ10983
♥ Q98		♥ 53
♦ J86		♦ Q92
♣ AQJ82		♣ K6
	South	
	♠ J742	
	♥ J1074	
	♦ 54	
	♣ 1094	

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Brogeland</i>	<i>Sementa</i>	<i>Lindqvist</i>
Pass	1♦	1♠	Pass
2♣	Dble	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♥	All Pass	

West led the ♠6 to the ♠A. Declarer played ♦A, ♦K, diamond ruff and exited with a club. He later took the heart finesse for ten tricks, +170 but -6 Imps.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer North : North-South vulnerable

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

(1) 15-17 points

(2) No 4-card or 5-card major

What would you do as North with:

♠ 10985
♥ A82
♦ KJ532
♣ 10

2. With neither side vulnerable, East deals and passes. What would you do as South with:

♠ 10532
♥ A84
♦ A10
♣ AK64

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

I don't like the fact that my chances of survival seem to be linked to the common sense of others.