154. It's all in the bidding and the passing

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	3♣[(1)]	Pass	?

(1) 4+ spades, 10-12 points

What would you do now as South with:

♠ AK10643
♥ AQ4
♦ --
♣ A874

Partner has 4+ spades and so you have an excellent trump fit. You have a 4-loser hand and for a 10-12 point hand, partner will often have an 8 loser hand. 4 losers + 8 losers = 12 losers and 24 – 12 losers = 12 tricks expected. That means slam can be a good bet. The success of a 6♠ contract will depend largely on partner's diamond holding. The more partner has in diamonds the less chance of success for 6♠. How can you find out?

In the fourth quarter-final in The Major Alt, organized by bid72 and netbridgeonline, together with BBO (Bridge Base Online), LAVAZZA (Dennis Bilde, Norberto Bocchi, Philippe Cronier, Massimiliano Di Franco, Giorgio Duboin, Agustin Madala, Andrea Manno, Antonio Sementa, Italy, #7 qualifier, 115.04) beat STREET (Kamel Fergani, Nicolas L'Ecuyer, Ron Pachtman, Fred Pollack, Paul Street, Piotr Zatorski, USA, #4 qualifier, 123.40) by 66-57.1. STREET had been among the top teams in previous ALT Invitational Teams.

Other teams which had done well in previous ALT events, but did not make the top eight in the 36-team format were DE BOTTON (10th), BLASS (20th) and MELTZER (32nd).

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North
♠ Q872
♥ J5
♦ KQ75
♣ Q65

South
♠ AK10643
♥ AQ4
♦ --
♣ A874

After the problem auction above, a good idea for South would be a splinter bid of 4♦ (if available) to show a shortage in diamonds, singleton or void. With the ♦K-Q largely wasted North would sign off in 4♠. If prepared to trust partner, South should pass that.

That is not what happened. For STREET, South cue-bid 4♣, North bid 4♠ and South jumped to 6♠, all pass. South probably took 4♠ as denying control in diamond and hearts. In that case North figured to have very strong clubs to make up the 10-12 points. If so, 6♠ would be at worst on the heart finesse. Give North ♠Q-x-x-x and ♣K-Q-J and the ♥J and 6♠ is cold. North could also have done better. Had North cue-bid 4♦ over 4♣, that might have deflected South from jumping to slam.

But wait. West has led the ♦A. Is there still a chance for 6♠? How would you play 6♠ after ruffing the ♦A? All follow to the ♠A.

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

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                    North
                    ♠ Q872
                    ♥ J5
                    ♦ KQ75
                    ♣ Q65
West                                East
♠ J                                 ♠ 95
♥ 87632                             ♥ K109
♦ A942                              ♦ J10863
♣ J93                               ♣ K102
                    South
                    ♠ AK10643
                    ♥ AQ4
                    ♦ --
                    ♣ A874
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STREET North-South: After West led the ♦A against 6♠ and South ruffed with the ♠6, South played ♠A and the ♠4 to the ♠Q. South ruffed the ♦7 with the ♠10, cashed the ♥A and played the ♠3 to dummy's ♠7. South pitched the heart losers on the ♦K, ♦Q and ruffed the ♥J. Then came the ♣A and the ♣4: nine – queen – king. East cashed the ♣10 and 6♠ was one down, East-West + 100.

Declarer's line had a 50% chance of success. The line can be improved to 75%. Ruff the ♦A, Play ♠A, ♠K and a low club to the ♣Q. If the ♣K is onside, you pitch your heart losers on the ♦K-Q. If the ♣Q loses to the ♣K, win the club return, cross to the ♠Q, ditch your club losers on the ♦K, ♦Q and take the heart finesse. You fail only if both the ♣K and the ♥K are wrong. See SELIGMAN North-South below.

LAVAZZA North-South:

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	3♦(1)	Pass	3♥(2)
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣(3)
Pass	5♦(3)	Pass	5♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 4+ spades, 10-12 points
(2) Trial bid
(3) Cue-bid

You can see how North's diamond cue-bid turned South off the idea of proceeding to slam. West led ♥3: five – king – ace. South played ♣4 to ♣Q and ♣K. East's heart return went to the jack. Declarer played ♠A, ♠K, ♥Q, ditching a club from dummy, 12 tricks via ♣A and ruffing two club in dummy. North-South +680 and +13 Imps.

GOLDBERG North-South bid 1♠ : 3♦ (4+ spades, 10-12 points), 4♦ (shortage) : 4♠, 6♠, all pass. Why did South bother to consult North by showing the diamond shortage and then disregard North's opinion? Effectively South bid 6♠ over 3♦. West led the ♣3: five – ten – ace. South played ♠A, ♠Q, ♦5, three, ruffed and the ♣7: jack – queen – king. The club return to the ♣9 meant one down, East-West +100.

SELIGMAN North-South:1♠ : 3♦ (4+ spades, 10-12 points), 6♠, all pass. Who needs science? West led the ♦A, ruffed. South played, ♠A, ♠10 and the ♣4 to the ♣Q and ♣K. South won the club return, crossed to the ♠Q, cashed ♦K, ♦Q, discarding the ♣8, ♣7 and took the heart finesse, 12 tricks, +1430, 17 Imps to SELIGMAN.

GUPTA North-South: 1♠ : 1NT (forcing), 3♣ : 3♠, 4♠, all pass. Lead: ♥2, 11 tricks, +650.
NICKELL North-South bid 1♠ : 2♠, 3♣ (trial bid) : 4♠, all pass. Lead: ♥2, 11 tricks, +650, no swing.

BIANCHI North-South: 1♠ : 2NT (3 spades, 10-11 or 4 spades, 9-11), 3♣ (ask) : 3♦ (4 spades), 3♥ (slam try with 4 clubs) : 3NT (minimum in context), 4♣ (cue) : 4♦ (cue), 4♥ (last train) : 4♠, all pass. Lead: ♦2: five – ten – ♠3, 11 tricks, +650.
IRELAND North-South: 1♠ : 3♦ (4 spades, 10-12 points), 4♦ (cue) : 4♠, all pass. Lead: ♣3, +650, no swing.

This was yesterday's second question:

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣(1)	?	

(1) Artificial, game-force or 23+ balanced

What would you do as East with:

♠ 9
♥ 85
♦ K109654
♣ K1072

For LAVAZZA, Massimiliano Di Franco passed as East. This was the auction, STREET North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣(1)	Pass	2♥(2)
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠(3)	Pass	4♦(3)
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣(4)
Pass	5♦(5)	Pass	5♠(6)
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

(1) Artificial, game-force or 23+ balanced
(2) Positive, 5+ hearts
(3) Cue-bid, support hearts
(4) 1 or 4 key cards
(5) Asking for the ♥Q
(6) ♥Q and no kings

This was the full deal:

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

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                North
                ♠ AK62
                ♥ K2
                ♦ AQJ3
                ♣ AQJ
West                          East
♠ QJ107                       ♠ 9
♥ J76                         ♥ 85
♦ 872                         ♦ K109654
♣ 865                         ♣ K1072
                South
                ♠ 8543
                ♥ AQ10943
                ♦ --
                ♣ 943
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East's pass over 2♣ turned out to be critical. West led the ♠Q, ace. Declarer drew trumps, discarding the ♦3 on the third round. The ♣3 to the ♣Q lost and East returned the ♣2 to the ♣J. Declarer cashed the ♣A and ♦A, discarding a spade, followed by the ♦J: six – ♥3 – ♦7. Declarer elected to play West for the ♦K and planned to squeeze West between the ♦K and the spades. South cashed the ♥10 and ♥9, but since the ♦K was with East, there was no squeeze and declarer went one down, East-West +100.

Declarer could have made via ♦A, discarding a spade and ♦J, discarding another spade after East played low on the second diamond. Had East bid, as other Easts did, South would have placed the ♦K with East. By keeping quiet, East gave South the option to adopt a losing line of play.

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

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                        North
                        ♠ AK62
                        ♥ K2
                        ♦ AQJ3
                        ♣ AQJ
        West                            East
        ♠ QJ107                         ♠ 9
        ♥ J76                           ♥ 85
        ♦ 872                           ♦ K109654
        ♣ 865                           ♣ K1072
                        South
                        ♠ 8543
                        ♥ AQ10943
                        ♦ --
                        ♣ 943
```

With LAVAZZA North-South, it began Pass : 2♣ (artificial, strong) : 3♦ : 3♥ . . . and ended in 6♥ by South. West led the ♠Q, ace. Declarer drew trumps, lost the club finesse to East, won the club return with the ♣Q, ruffed the ♦3, crossed to the ♣A, cashed the ♦A, discarding a spade, and played the ♦Q: nine – ♠5! – ♦8, 12 tricks, +1430 and 17 Imps to LAVAZZA. Note the price tag for the 3♦ bid.

With SELIGMAN North-South, it went Pass : 2♣ : 3♦ : 3♥, 4♦ : Double, all pass. South led ♣3. Declarer lost a spade, 2 hearts, 2 clubs and 3 diamonds, five light, North-South +1100. That was a good result for the 3♦ bid.

With GOLDBERG North-South: Pass : 1♣ (artificial, strong) : 3♦ : 3♥, 4♦ : Double : Pass : 4♥, Pass : 6♥, all pass. West led ♦2: jack – king – ♥3. South drew trumps and had 12 tricks, +1430, 8 Imps to GOLDBERG.

BIANCHI North-South: Pass : 2♣ : 3♦ : 3♠ (5+ hearts), Pass : 3NT : Pass : 4♦ (general forcing bid) : Pass : 4♥ by North, all pass. East led the ♠9. Declarer drew trumps and eventually played East for the ♦K, 12 tricks, +680.

IRELAND North-South: After Pass : 1♣ (11-13 balanced or 17+ any) : 1♦ : 2♦ (5+ hearts), North became declarer in 6♥. East led the ♠9– three – seven – ace. North played the ♦Q, four, ♠4, and made 12 tricks, +1430 and 13 Imps to IRELAND.

NICKELL North-South: Pass : 2♣ (artificial, strong) : 2♦ : 2♥, Pass : 2NT : Pass : 3♦ (general force), Pass : 3NT, all pass. East led the ♦9. North made 12 tricks, +690.

With GUPTA North-South it went Pass : 2♣ (artificial, big) : 3♦ : 3♥ : 4♦, Double : Pass : 4♠, Pass : 5♦ (pick a contract) : Pass : 6♥, all pass. West led the ♦2: queen – king – ♥3 and South made 12 tricks comfortably from there, +1430 and 12 Imps to GUPTA.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer West : Both vulnerable

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

What would you do as North with:

♠ 7
♥ K54
♦ QJ64
♣ AQ732

2. Dealer West : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
?			

What would you do as West with:

♠ KJ942
♥ 10642
♦ A9
♣ Q3

Suppose you have decided to pass. The auction goes:

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

What do you do now as West?

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

I ate a frozen apple. Hard core.