177. One trick over the line, dear team-mates, one trick over the line.

By Ron Klinger

The second semi-final match in the 2020 North America Online Bridge Championship was between LEVINE (Mike Levine – Eddie Wold, Geir Helgemo – Tor Helness, Jeff Meckstroth – Eric Rodwell) and TULIN (Stan Tulin – David Bahkshi, Alon Birman – Dror Padon, Cornelis Van Prooijen – Louk Verhees).

Dealer West: East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♥	?

What would you do as South with:

- **▲** AQ10982
- **♥** K642
- ♦ 107
- **♣** 7

The options seem to be $1 \clubsuit$, a weak jump-overcall of $2 \clubsuit$ or, given the vulnerability, a pre-emptive $3 \clubsuit$. Your choice?

Since I am not a fan of weak jump-overcalls and try to persuade partners to exclude them from our system, I would not find the $2 \spadesuit$ bid. Is there some urgency to pre-empt the opponents? There is no evidence yet that they have a game available, so $3 \spadesuit$ does not appeal. If we should be sacrificing in $4 \spadesuit$, a simple overcall of $1 \spadesuit$ should find that. My vote goes to $1 \spadesuit$, but neither South chose that.

Dealer West: East-West vulnerable

North

- **♦** J763
- **♥** A10
- **♦** QJ8
- **♣** Q643

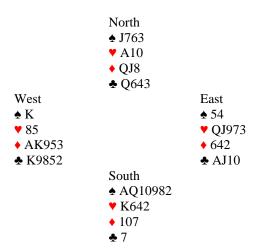
South

- **♠** AQ10982
- **♥** K642
- **♦** 107
- **♣** 7

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

West leads the ◆A: eight – two (not encouraging) – seven. West switches to the ▼8: ace – nine (encouraging) – six. Plan the play.

Board 19: Dealer West: East-West vulnerable



At one table it went:

West	North	East	South
Bahkshi	Wold	Tulin	Levine
1♦	Pass	1♥	2♠
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
Meckstroth	Van Prooijen	Rodwell	Verhees
1♦	Pass	1♥	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

These pre-empts would be great if partner did not raise the level of pre-emption. West led the A and switched to the 8, taken by the ace. Next came J: five – two – king. West continued with the A and the A. That was one down, –50, and 5 Imps to LEVINE.

Double dummy, South can make $4 \triangleq$ by playing the $\triangle A$ at trick 3. That is seriously anti-percentage if you consider just the spade suit. Playing the $\triangle J$ and letting it run wins if East holds $\triangle K$ -5, $\triangle K$ -4 or $\triangle K$ -5-4. Playing the $\triangle A$ wins only against the bare $\triangle K$ with West. Finessing spades covers three of the relevant cases. Playing the $\triangle A$ wins only against one case.

Is there other evidence to consider? North-South have 19 HCP and so East-West have 21. West opened and East responded. The missing points could be divided 12-9, 13-8, 14-7, maybe 15-6 or 11-10 (especially as East-West play a strong club system). You can place West with ♦A, ♦K for the lead and East with ♥Q, ♥J for the ♥8 switch and East's encouraging ♥9. If West had ♣A, ♣K, might West have tried a top club at trick 2? Once you place East with ♥Q, ♥J plus the ♣A or ♣K, the odds for West having the ♠K are improving, but probably not enough to sway you against the finesse.

West did well not to bid $3\clubsuit$ over $2\clubsuit$. That would have put West into the 13-15-point range. Now there is a stronger case to place West with the $\spadesuit K$.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North: Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

- **♠** A9
- **v** 108764
- **♦** A
- ♣ KQJ98

Suppose you are playing Precision, a strong 1♣ system, where your opening bid is limited to 10-15 points. Would that change your answer?

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

Instead of a sign that says, 'Do Not Disturb', there needs to be a sign for some bridge players. That sign should read, 'Already Disturbed. Proceed With Caution'.

New book: *The Power of Pass* (by Harold Schogger and Ron Klinger). \$A25.00 Available from Suzie Klinger, post free until 2021: email suzie@ronklingerbridge.com or telephone 0411 229 705.