208. It's hard to play the new bridge with an old bridge mind

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣(1)
Pass	1♥(2)	Pass	?

(1) 2+ clubs
(2) Spades

What would you do as South with:

♠ K93
♥ AK97
♦ K
♣ KJ862

Suppose you have bid 1♠, showing 2 or 3 spades. Partner continues with 2♥, a transfer to 2♠. What now?

The fourth quarter-final in MontreALT, organized by bid72 and netbridge.online, was between KOEPPEL (Lynne Greenberg Koeppel, Agustin Nicolas Madala, Antonio Sementa, Mustafa Cem Tokay, Alfredo Versace), fourth with 121.49 Victory Points (14.66 VPs behind the leader) and ZHAO (Jing Liu, Choon Chou Loo, Danny Molenaar, Ricco van Prooijen, Tim Verbeek, Louk Verhees, Chen Zhao), sixth on 114.63 VPs.

Board 15: Dealer East : East-West vulnerable

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                    North
                    ♠ 108642
                    ♥ 52
                    ♦ AJ953
                    ♣ 9
West                               East
♠ QJ7                              ♠ A5
♥ Q863                             ♥ J104
♦ Q62                              ♦ 10874
♣ A103                             ♣ Q754
                    South
                    ♠ K93
                    ♥ AK97
                    ♦ K
                    ♣ KJ862
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I do not know how you feel, but I can assure you that I find it hard to deal with the modern bidding style. The players in the ALT Invitation competitions include some of the best players in the world. Even though they might be playing artificial methods, the bids I would choose are often at odds with the bids chosen at the table. Perhaps you have the same feeling.

If playing natural and standard methods, the bidding on the above deal, with East-West passing throughout, might go 1♣ : 1♠, 2♥ : 2♠ (not forcing), 3♠ : 4♠, all pass. Whether 4♠ makes or not is a separate issue.

With ZHAO North-South, it started as above. My inclination as South after 1♣ : 1♥ (♠s), would be to bid 2♥, a reverse to show 16+ points, but South for ZHAO bid 1♠. North then bid 2♥, transfer to spades. Since South has not shown better than a minimum opening, my gut feeling here is to jump to 3♠ to show 3-card support and a strong invitation to game. I am not prepared to cater for North having 0, 1, 2 or 3 points just because of the favourable vulnerability. At the table, South bid 2♠, which might have been no better than an 11-point hand, and everyone passed.

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                        ♥ 52
                        ♦ AJ953
                        ♣ 9
        West                            East
        ♠ QJ7                           ♠ A5
        ♥ Q863                          ♥ J104
        ♦ Q62                           ♦ 10874
        ♣ A103                          ♣ Q754
                        South
                        ♠ K93
                        ♥ AK97
                        ♦ K
                        ♣ KJ862
```

Against South's 2♠, West led the ♥6: two – ten – ace. South played the ♣2. West won with the ♣10 and switched to the ♠7. East took the ♠A and returned the ♠5. South won with the ♠K, cashed the ♦K and ruffed a low club in dummy. Then came the ♦A and a low diamond, ruffed with the ♠9. When the ♦Q dropped, South claimed ten tricks, +170, losing a club and two spades.

KOEPPEL North-South:

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

(1) Alerted as '18-19', but I suspect it is almost always 18-19 balanced, with South treating it as such because the singleton is a king.
(2) Diamonds or 5 spades-some-3-3-2

West led the ♥6: two – ten – ace. South cashed the ♦K, ♥K, and ruffed the ♥7 with the ♠2. Then came ♦A, discarding a club, a diamond ruff with the ♠3 and the ♥9. When West produced the ♥Q, South made the loser-on-loser play, ditching dummy's ♣9. West switched to the ♣3: ♦9 – ♣Q – ♣K. After a club ruff in dummy, South played the ♠6: five – king – seven and ruffed another club in dummy for ten tricks, +620 and 10 Imps to KOEPPEL, who won the match by 77.1 Imps to 49.

MACAVITY North-South, with East-West silent: 1♣ : 1♦ (0-6), 1♥ (natural or any 14-16/17 balanced) : 1♠ (relay), : 2♣ (alerted as '11-15 unbalanced'), all pass. Presumably 2♣ also showed clubs and perhaps South downgraded the hand because of the singleton ♦K. Yes, yes, I know all systems can have problems, but please, no, no, do not try to persuade me to adopt this system. Then again, maybe it's the singer, not the song.

West led the ♣3: nine – five – two. After ♠2: five – king – seven, South cashed the ♦K, ♥A, ♥K, and exited with the ♥7. Declarer finished with 7 tricks, one light, East-West +50.

GUPTA North-South had a sensible, natural auction: 1♣ : 1♠, 2♥ : 2♠, 3♠ : Pass. I wouldn't be passing 3♠ with the North hand, but of course, on other layouts 4♠ might fail. With South having shortage in diamonds and only three spades and North having poor spades, you can understand why North passed 3♠. Still, North has 8 losers. South's reverse, 16+ points, will usually have 5-6 losers. Applying the Losing Trick Count (I hope my opponents never do that), 8 + 6 = 14 and 24 – 14 = 10 tricks are likely.

East led the ♠A and the ♠5. North took the ♠K, cashed the ♦K, ♥A, ♥K and ruffed a heart. Then came the ♦A and a diamond ruff. When the ♦Q came down, North ruffed a heart and played ♦J, ♦9, making ten tricks, +170, and 6 Imps to GUPTA. You could say that declarer was lucky that the ♦Q came down short. True enough, but then again South's ♣K, ♣J were wastepaper here and South might have had the ♣A instead of the ♣K-J.

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        West                            East
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        ♥ Q863                          ♥ J104
        ♦ Q62                           ♦ 10874
        ♣ A103                          ♣ Q754
                        South
                        ♠ K93
                        ♥ AK97
                        ♦ K
                        ♣ KJ862
```

BLACK North-South bid 1♣ : 1♠, 2♥ : 2♠ (5+ spades, forcing for one round), 3♠ : 4♠, all pass. East led the ♥J, ace. Declarer cashed the ♦K, ♥K, and ruffed the ♥7 with the ♠2. Then came the ♣9: four – king – ace. West played the ♥Q: ♠8 – ♠A – ♥9. East switched to the ♠5, taken by the ♠K. Declarer thus lost a club, the ♠A and two more spades to West, –50. As mentioned earlier, you should reach 4♠. Making ten tricks is another matter.

RED DEVILS North-South bid 1♣ (16+) : 1♦ (5-7 any or 7+ with 5+ hearts), 1♥ (relay) : 1♠ (5-7 any), 1NT (16-18) : 2♥ (transfer to spades), 2♠ : 3♦ (natural), 3♠, all pass. East led the ♥J. North took the ♥A, ♥K, heart ruff, and played the ♣9: seven – king – ace. West played the ♥Q, ruffed with the ♠8. East over-ruffed with the ♠A. South won the ♠5 switch with the ♠K and made 9 tricks, +140 and 5 Imps to RED DEVILS.

This was yesterday's problem:

Dealer East : East-West vulnerable

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

(1) Artificial, 16+ points
(2) Artificial, 0-7 points
(3) 16-17 points
(4) Transfer to spades

What would you do with the North hand?:

With SWEICE North-South, after the above start, North passed. South made nine tricks, +140. Applying the Losing Trick Count formula (see previous page), North should bid again with the 8-loser hand. A rebid of 3♦ will attract a 3♠ bid from South and North can then bid 4♠.

At the other table, with BARNSLEY North-South, it went 1♣ (2+ clubs) : 1♥ (spades), 2♦ (artificial, unbalanced hand, 3+ spades, 14+ points) : 2♠, all pass. Given South has 14+ points, North with 8 losers should find a game-invitational bid and South would bid 4♠.

Both declarers made nine tricks, +140, no swing. After that, both Norths no doubt thought, 'Thank goodness I did not make a try for game.'

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ J104
♥ 54
♦ 1086
♣ AK754

East
♠ 872
♥ AKJ63
♦ J
♣ 8632

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	3♣[(1)]	Pass	3♦[(2)]
Pass	3NT[(3)]	All Pass	

(1) Asking for a 5-card major
(2) No 5-card major
(3) No interest in a 4-card major

1. West leads the ♦4 (fourth-highest): ten – jack – king.
2. South plays the ♠3: five (natural count) – jack – two.
3. ♣4 from dummy: six – jack – queen.
4. West reverts to the ♦5: six – ♠8 – ♦3.
5. ♠4: from dummy: seven – king – six.

This is the position:

North
♠ 10
♥ 54
♦ 8
♣ AK75

East
♠
♥ AKJ63
♦
♣ 832

6. South plays the ♠Q: ace – ten . . . What would you play as East?

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

Grammar humour: A dangling participle walks into a bar. Enjoying a cocktail and chatting with the bartender, the evening passes pleasantly.