

# 251. The high ground

*By Ron Klinger*

Yesterday's problem:

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	4♥
4♠	Dble	All Pass	

What would you lead as North from:

♠ AK75  
♥ K74  
♦ 42  
♣ Q653

Suppose you have decided to lead the ♥4. This is what you see:

North	East
♠ AK75	♠ 1064
♥ K74	♥ 62
♦ 42	♦ 97
♣ Q653	♣ AJ10842

Trick 1: ♥4 – two – ace – three.

Trick 2: ♦J: ace – two – seven.

Trick 3: Declarer played the ♠8. Which spade do you play as North?

*(Make up your mind before reading further. Answer next page)*

With neither side vulnerable, East opens 3♣. What would you do as South with:

♠ --  
♥ AQJ1085  
♦ J108653  
♣ 7

A 2-suited hand, at least 5-5, gives you a better chance of a trump fit than if you have a 1-suited hand with a 6-card suit or longer. After a 3-level pre-empt in a minor, the non-leaping Michaels convention allows you to show a 5-5 pattern conveniently at the 4-level.

After 3♣ : 4♣ = majors and 4♦ = diamonds and a major (then 4♥ or 4♠ = pass or correct). After 3♦ : 4♦ = majors and 4♣ = clubs + a major. The strength expected for non-leaping Michaels is a sound opening hand and about 5 losers or fewer. After a pre-empt, the common approach is to play partner for two tricks.

The hand above would not qualify as a sound opening bid, but it does have only 5 losers. The danger of bidding 4♦ here is that partner will play you for a strong hand in high cards and look for a slam. A bid of 4♥ would also show a strong hand and runs the same risk. A bid of 3♥ does not convey as much strength as 4♥, but you might now miss the diamond fit. If you are going to bid at all, then at least 4♦ shows the nature of your hand. If possible, it is better to describe your hand as a two-suiter than just showing one of your suits.

The deal comes from the finals of the 2016 World Teams. The results ranged from a part-score to a slam. If the world's top players have trouble finding the best spot, no wonder the rest of us do, too.

Board 81: Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

North	
♠ AK75	
♥ K74	
♦ 42	
♣ Q653	
West	East
♠ QJ9832	♠ 1064
♥ 93	♥ 62
♦ AKQ	♦ 97
♣ K9	♣ AJ10842
South	
♠ --	
♥ AQJ1085	
♦ J108653	
♣ 7	

Women's final, France North-South:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	4♥
4♠	Dble	All Pass	

It is not clear why North considered the hand worth a penalty double. North has two sure tricks and not much extra. South might or might not have a defensive trick. Still, the defence can take two hearts and two spades, but that did not happen. North led the ♥4: two – ace – three. If the ♥4 was from K-7-4, K-9-4 or a singleton, a heart return was a good idea. South must have played North for K-9-7-4 or 9-7-4, as South switched to ♦J at trick 2.

West played ♦A and ♠8: five – four – three, followed by ♦K and ♦Q: ♠7 – ♠10 – ♦6. Declarer crossed to the ♣K, finessed the ♣J and ditched the ♥9 on the ♣A. West lost a heart and two spades, but had ten tricks, +590.

How might North-South have avoided this disaster? (1) North could have led the ♥K at trick 1. In case the ♥K was singleton, South would overtake with the ♥A and cash a second heart. That would be fine whether the ♥K was singleton or doubleton or, as in the actual case it was from a 3-card holding. North could also have led a top spade at trick 1 and switched to the ♥K. Again, South would overtake and play a second heart winner. (2) South could have returned a heart at trick 2 anyway. There were sufficient holdings in hearts where this would be right. Still, a diamond switch might have been the right move if North's diamonds were headed by the A-Q.

Both of the foregoing defences would have worked, but North can be forgiven for the ♥4 lead and South's diamond switch is understandable. The last opportunity came at trick 3 and it is hard to see how North's playing low on the ♠8 from West could be the right move.

Could South possibly have ♠J or ♠Q singleton? Would West have bid 4♠ on just ♠Q-9-8-3-2 or ♠J-9-8-3-2? What should North make of South's ♦J switch? It certainly denied ♦Q. Therefore, West had ♦A-Q or ♦A-K-Q. Given South's second seat pre-empt with hearts headed by A-Q-J, South would not also have diamonds headed ♦K-J(-10). Once you place West with A-K-Q in diamonds, the danger of dummy's heart being discarded is clear. Yes, South might well have seven hearts and rising with the ♠K and playing the ♥K might not work, but what other chance is there? If the defence happens to have a club trick, that will not run away, but West will very likely have the ♣K and if a guess in clubs is needed, West figures to get it right anyway.

USA North-South:

West	North	East	South
		3♣	3♥
4♠	Dble	Pass	5♦
Dble	5♥	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

No doubt North intended the double of 4♠ as penalties, but with the freak shape and weakness in high-card values, South was not prepared to pass. West led ♦A, ♠K, ♦K, one off, East-West +100, but 10 Imps to USA.

Board 81: Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

		North	
		♠ AK75	
		♥ K74	
		♦ 42	
		♣ Q653	
West		East	
♠ QJ9832		♠ 1064	
♥ 93		♥ 62	
♦ AKQ		♦ 97	
♣ K9		♣ AJ10842	
		South	
		♠ --	
		♥ AQJ1085	
		♦ J108653	
		♣ 7	

Open final, Monaco East-West:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	4♥
4♠	5♥	5♠	6♥?
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

I still remember the time when a pre-emptive opener in first or second seat did not bid again unless forced to do so by partner. Clearly those days have passed, given South's 6♥ bid. South's void in spades meant that partner had length in spades, possibly including a spade winner or two. It is true that 6♥ figured to be a cheap save against 5♠ making, but aye, there's the rub, who's to say that 5♠ is making? The disciplined action for South would have been to pass and leave the decision to partner.

West led ♦A, ♦K and switched to a trump. South won, drew trumps and pitched the ♣6 on dummy's second spade winner, one down, -100.

Netherlands East-West:

West	North	East	South
		3♣	3♥
3♠	4♥	4♠	5♥
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

West led the ♦K, ♦Q and switched to the ♣9. East took the ♣A and returned a club. South ruffed with the ♥10, cashed the ♥Q and claimed ten tricks, one light, -100. He could ruff a diamond with the ♥K, draw the missing trumps and the South hand was high. A flat board does not always signify good bridge. Had South passed 5♠ at the other table, Netherlands could have won 5 Imps or 9 Imps.

Seniors' final, France North-South:

West	North	East	South
		3♣	4♣ <sup>(1)</sup>
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

- (1) Diamonds plus a major  
(2) Pass or correct

Lead: ♣A. North won the trump switch and played a diamond, won the next trump and played another diamond, making ten tricks, North-South +420

USA North-South:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	4♥
4♠	5♥	5♠	6♥? <sup>(1)</sup>
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

- (1) So much for discipline

West led ♦A, ♦K, ♣K, to take 6♥ doubled two down, East-West +300, 12 Imps to France.

Board 81: Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

North	
♠ AK75	
♥ K74	
♦ 42	
♣ Q653	
West	East
♠ QJ9832	♠ 1064
♥ 93	♥ 62
♦ AKQ	♦ 97
♣ K9	♣ AJ10842
South	
♠ --	
♥ AQJ1085	
♦ J108653	
♣ 7	

Mixed final, Netherlands East-West:

West	North	East	South
		3♣	All Pass

South led ♥A, followed by the ♥Q. North overtook and switched to ♠A, ♠K and ♠5, ruffed by South. After the diamond return, declarer still had a loser via North's ♣Q, two down, North-South +100.

Russia East-West:

West	North	East	South
		3♣	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

West led ♦K, ♦A and switched to the ♠J, ace. South played ♥A, ♥K, ♠K, discarding the ♣6, ruffed a club, ruffed a diamond and made 11 tricks for +450 and 8 Imps to Netherlands.

## Problem for Tomorrow:

With only North-South vulnerable, North passes and East opens a Gambling 3NT (solid 7+ minor, no outside ace or king). South doubles, penalties. What would you do as West with:

♠ J103  
♥ J76532  
♦ Q2  
♣ 75

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

*Afraid of Santa? You are probably Claustrophobic.*