264. Trumps versus no-trumps

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT[(1)]
Pass	2♥[(2)]	Pass	2NT[(3)]
Pass	3♥[(4)]	Pass	3♠
Pass	?		

(1) 15-17 points
(2) Transfer to spades
(3) 3 spades, maximum 1NT
(4) re-transfer to spades

What would you do as North with:

♠ KQ842
♥ 743
♦ K93
♣ 94

Make up your mind before reading further.

This was yesterday's first problem:

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT[(1)]
Pass	2♥[(2)]	Pass	?

(1) 15-17 points
(2) Transfer to spades

What would you do as South with:

♠ J76
♥ AK6
♦ Q87
♣ AK52

You have 3-card support for spades and you have 17 points, maximum for your 1NT opening. That might incline you to go beyond 2♠ with a super-accept bid. Some play 3♠ = super-accept with 4-5 trumps. Others play 3♠ as minimum with 4-5 trumps and use other bids to show the maximum with 3 trumps.

Some play that a new suit is a long-suit trial bid, seeking help in that suit. That has a downside in giving information to the opponents. Here you could bid 3♦ with that meaning. Others play step 1 as any super-accept (1NT : 2♦, 2♠ and 1NT : 2♥, 2NT). Some play that 1NT : 2♥, 2NT = a maximum with a 4-3-3-3 pattern. You pays your money and you takes your choices.

Of course, not everyone would consider the South hand a maximum for spades. Yes, it does have 3 spades and 17 points, but how about counting the losers. A maximum 1NT will usually have six losers. South has 7 losers and that is generous. Recommended for a suit headed by the queen and including no other honour (the Q-x-x in diamonds here) is 2½ losers. That makes it 7½ losers in all, quite a distance from a 6-loser hand.

South could well bid 1NT : 2♥, 2♠. That will be fine if North is very weak. If North rebids to invite game, you can accept. If North forces to game, you can then bid 3♠ to show strong preference after a new suit bid. If partner rebids 3NT, my inclination is to pass that. If you have a different view, then you can bid 4♠ over 3NT. A lot of the time, a 4-3-3-3 pattern facing a 5-3-3-2 pattern will make the same number of tricks in no-trumps as in the major-suit game. If it is pairs and you make 10 tricks, you have a top. If the total is 9 tricks, 3NT is best.

Here is the full deal which comes from the final of a Sydney teams' event in 2018.

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

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                    North
                    ♠ KQ842
                    ♥ 743
                    ♦ K93
                    ♣ 94
West                              East
♠ A10                            ♠ 953
♥ 1092                           ♥ QJ85
♦ 65                             ♦ AJ1042
♣ QJ10873                        ♣ 6
                    South
                    ♠ J76
                    ♥ AK6
                    ♦ Q87
                    ♣ AK52
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At one table it went:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT[(1)]
Pass	2♥[(2)]	Pass	2NT[(3)]
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

(1) 15-17 points
(2) Transfer to spades
(3) 3 spades, maximum 1NT

West led the ♦6: three – ten – queen. South played the ♠6. West rose with the ♠A and reverted to the ♦5: nine – jack – seven. East cashed the ♦A and switched to the ♥5. South could not avoid a heart loser and the result was one down, East-West +50.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT[(1)]
Pass	2♥[(2)]	Pass	2♠!
Pass	2NT[(3)]	Pass	3NT!
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 15-17 points
(2) Transfer to spades
(3) Inviting game

West led the ♣Q, winning, and the ♣10: nine – ♦2 (encouraging) – ♣K. Declarer knocked out the ♠A, captured West's ♣8 return, ran the spades and played the ♦3: ten – queen – five. South made 4 spades, 2 hearts, 2 clubs and 1 diamond, 9 tricks, +400 and +10 Imps.

The auction above that reached 3NT is very attractive. At the other table, 3NT could have been reached a number of ways:

West	North	East	South		West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT(15-17	OR		Pass	Pass	1NT(15-17)
Pass	2♥(♠s)	Pass	2NT(1)		Pass	2♥(♠s)	Pass	2NT[(1)]
Pass	3NT[(2)]	All Pass			Pass	3♥(♠s)	Pass	3♠
(1) 3 spades, maximum 1NT					Pass	3NT[(2)]	All Pass	
(2) Choice of contracts					(1) 3 spades, maximum 1NT			
					(2) Choice of contracts			

Problem for Tomorrow:

West dealer : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	1♥	2♥(1)
3♥	Pass	Pass	?

(1) Strong hand, denies 4 spades

What would you do as South with:

♠ A42
♥ K5
♦ Q107
♣ A10754

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

I sued the airline for losing my luggage. I lost the case.

A great gift: *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.