399. Finding an opening

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	Dble
Pass	3♣	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ A75
♥ KJ73
♦ K8
♣ K765

The deal arose in a quarter-final match in the 2020 Spingold (USA Knock-out Open Teams):

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

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                North
                ♠ 1064
                ♥ A8
                ♦ 63
                ♣ AQ9432
West                          East
♠ QJ82                        ♠ K93
♥ 109642                      ♥ Q5
♦ 1052                        ♦ AQJ974
♣ J                           ♣ 108
                South
                ♠ A75
                ♥ KJ73
                ♦ K8
                ♣ K765
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In the Spingold, both North-South pairs were playing a strong 1♣ system, where 1♣ was artificial and showed 16+ points. Unable to open 1♣ as North, both Norths began with 2♣ showing 5+ clubs and 10-15 points. The auction at both tables went this way:

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

(1) For takeout

Note that both Souths bid 3NT with just one diamond stopper. The 3NT contract might have failed. Instead of the ♥A, give North ♦Q-x + ♠J and ♣J or ♥Q-x, ♦Q-x and South would have only 8 tricks via 6 clubs and two aces. To win, you cannot afford negative thoughts like this. The worst scenario could exist, but so could the best. Focus on the positive side and assume you will be reasonably lucky.

Both Wests led the ♦2 (bottom from three to an honour . . . yes, the ten is an honour). One East took the ♦A and returned the ♦Q. South won and rattled off the clubs. West held on to four hearts and declarer made a spade, a diamond, six clubs and three hearts, 11 tricks +460.

At the other table, East played the ♦Q at trick 1 (if you are not going to play the ace, then the ♦J is preferable). South won and also played six rounds of clubs. West discarded two hearts, which gave South a spade, a diamond, six clubs and four hearts, 12 tricks, +490 and +1 Imp.

This was yesterday's question. You are the dealer at favourable vulnerability. What would you do with:

♠ 1064
♥ A8
♦ 63
♣ AQ9432

Assuming you are playing a system such as Acol or Standard American, do you pass or do you open 1♣?

There is a good guide for opening in first or second seat: Add your high-card points (HCP) to the number of cards in your two long suits (LP – Length Points) and the number of Quick Tricks (QT) you hold (A-K = 2, A-Q = 1½, A = 1, K-Q = 1 and K-x or longer = ½). If the number = 22 or more (21½+ at favourable vulnerability), you have a sensible 1-opening in first or second seat. If you wish to open aggressively, reduce that to 21½ normally and 21 at favourable vulnerability.

Here the North hand has 10 HCP + 9 LP + 2½ QT, total 21½ and so a 1♣ opening is recommended. Bridge bidding should not be based solely on high-card points.

This is what happened when the deal was played in a game on BBO:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	Dble
Pass	3♣	All Pass	

Declarer made 11 tricks, drawing trumps and pitching a spade from North on the third heart winner. It is normal for South to pass North's jump to 3♣. North would be expected to have (9) 10-11 points, 4+ clubs and no diamond stopper (North would prefer 2NT with 10-11 points and diamonds stopped).

If North opens, it should go:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♦	1♥
Pass	2♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT[1]
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Any weak hand, up to 7 HCP, 6-8 total points, 4+ spades

What would you lead as West from:

♠ Q95
♥ 3
♦ A1083
♣ A10953

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

It's important to have a good vocabulary. If I had known the difference between the words, 'antidote' and 'anecdote,' one of my good friends would still be alive.