

401. Life savers

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

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

(1) 14-17

(2) Transfer to hearts

What would you do as South with:

♠ 3
♥ 943
♦ J
♣ AKQ76542

You might or might not be able to defeat 4♥. Chances are probably below 50%. Opponents who bid game when vulnerable against not are not expecting to fail. If 4♥ makes, 5♣ will not be expensive even when doubled. You have 8 tricks in your own hand in clubs and probably one at most in defence, perhaps none. If partner can provide two tricks, you will be one down. If partner supplies one trick you are two down, -300 if doubled, much better than -620 if 4♥ makes. The odds favour bidding 5♣.

That is what happened on this deal from a quarter-final in the 2020 Spingold (USA Knock-out Open Teams):

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

North	
♠	1098762
♥	A
♦	K872
♣	J9

West	East
♠ AQ4	♠ KJ5
♥ Q752	♥ KJ1086
♦ AQ109	♦ 6543
♣ 108	♣ 3

South	
♠	3
♥	943
♦	J
♣	AKQ76542

After the auction above, South bid 5♣ : Pass : Pass : Double, all pass. West led the ♥5, ace. On dummy's ♠10, East rose with the ♠K and switched to the ♣3, ace. Declarer ruffed a heart, ruffed a spade and played the ♦J. West took the ♦A and played the ♥7. East won and South claimed one down, losing a spade, a diamond and a heart, East-West +100.

This was yesterday's first question:

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	Dble	?

What would you do with the South hand?

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 1098762	
	♥ A	
	♦ K872	
	♣ J9	
West		East
♠ AQ4		♠ KJ5
♥ Q752		♥ KJ1086
♦ AQ109		♦ 6543
♣ 108		♣ 3
	South	
	♠ 3	
	♥ 943	
	♦ J	
	♣ AKQ76542	

At the other table after 1♦ : 1♠ : Double, South could have jumped to 5♣, but adopted a go-slow approach. Maybe it was possible to buy the hand below 5♣. Nope, no such luck.

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	Dble	2♣
2♥	Pass	4♥	5♣
Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass

West also led the ♥5, ace, and declarer also finished one down, East-West +100, no swing.

A second question from yesterday:

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Dble	?

(1) Weak jump-overcall

What would you do as South?

When the deal was replayed in a game on BBO, South jumped to 5♣ at once. West doubled, all pass. West led the ♣10: nine – three – ace. South played the ♦J, ace. West reverted to the ♣8 and South was again one down, East-West +100. South could pitch a heart on the ♦K, but still had a spade, a diamond and a heart to lose.

Points of interest:

(1) No one will be complimenting any of the Norths for the 1♠ overcall, the 2♠ overcall after 1NT or the weak jump-overcall of 2♠ with that ten-high suit, but note that every North did take a bid. You can credit that to the vulnerability.

(2) As it happens, 4♥ can be defeated. North leads the ♣J. South overtakes and switches to the ♦J. If declarer rises with the ♦A and plays a trump. North wins, cashes the ♦K and gives South a diamond ruff, one light, North-South +100. It is important in these situations not to say to yourself as South, 'Oh, I should have passed. Then we would be plus instead of minus.' That is being a 'result merchant'. Bidding 5♣ is the normal, sensible action. Your reasonable decisions do not bear fruit. Accept that as part of your bridge life. Even worse would it be for North to say to South, 'Look. 4♥ goes down. Maybe you should have passed 4♥.' If you have such a partner, ditch them asap and as politely as possible.

(c) Strange as it may seem, North-South are cold for 3NT. With the ♦A onside, East-West can take only four tricks before North-South take nine in no-trumps.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1NT – 15-17
Pass	?		

You, North hold:

♠ Q9754
♥ QJ109
♦ 1042
♣ 10

What would you do as North if you play:

- (1) Simple Stayman and 1NT : 2♣, 2♦ : 2♠ is not invitational?
- (2) Simple Stayman and 1NT : 2♣, 2♦ : 2♠ is invitational?
- (3) You play Extended Stayman, where partner might bid 2NT or at the 3-level with a maximum 1NT?

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

If you have to wear both a mask and glasses, you may be entitled to condensation.