

4. Six-Five, Try to Stay Alive

By Ron Klinger

Try these problems:

North dealer : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	?	

What would you do as East with:

♠ J
♥ AQ876
♦ AKJ1065
♣ 6

2. Dealer North : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	3NT	Pass
?			

What would you do as West with:

♠ K
♥ AK953
♦ A
♣ A97652

The question is whether you should run from 3NT to 4♥ to show your 6-5 pattern. If 2NT is not forcing, then responder has to bid 3NT on many balanced hand types and you should remove 3NT to 4♥. That does not come with guarantees, but it is your best shot. That would have worked on [Problem 1](#), which arose in Stage 1 of the 2019 Butler Open Trials:

Session 2 : Board 5

North dealer : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ Q73	
	♥ J53	
	♦ 97	
	♣ AKJ97	
West		East
♠ A982		♠ J
♥ K42		♥ AQ876
♦ 84		♦ AKJ1065
♣ Q843		♣ 6
	South	
	♠ K10654	
	♥ 109	
	♦ Q32	
	♣ 1052	

As you can see, 4♥ is a great spot and makes easily. Datum: E-W 350. Results: 4♥ +450 x 25; 5♥ +450; 6♥ -50 x 3, +980 x 1; 5♦ +400 x 2; 3♥ +200; 2♥ +200 x 3; 2♦ +150; 3♦ + 150; 3NT -200 (♠3 lead); 3NT -100 x 2 (♣A lead), +400 x 2 (♣7 lead x 1, ♣A lead x 1).

The -200 in 3NT came about via ♠3 lead: jack – king – ace. When West took the diamond finesse, South switched to the ♣10. The defenders won a diamond, five clubs and two spades, taking 3NT four down. Where 3NT was down two, -100, North led a top club and switched to a heart. West won and took the diamond finesse. When that lost, South returned the ♣10. Whether West ducked or covered, the defence collected four more club tricks.

When North led the ♣7, West had nine tricks when hearts split 3-2 and did not need the diamond finesse. How did one West make 3NT after the ♣A lead? North might have played the ♠K next, but more likely South signaled with the ♣10, high-hate. North shifted to a heart and now when South came in with the ♦Q and returned the ♣5, West could play the ♣8 and the ♣Q was still protected.

Deal 2 arose in a 2020 teams' match on BBO:

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 985	
	♥ 7642	
	♦ J10	
	♣ KQ84	
West		East
♠ K		♠ QJ1076
♥ AK953		♥ --
♦ A		♦ KQ6532
♣ A97652		♣ 103
	South	
	♠ A432	
	♥ QJ108	
	♦ 9874	
	♣ J	

At one table, after the auction given, West bid 4♥ and East removed to 5♣, all pass (although North might well have doubled). North led the ♦J: two – nine – ace. West ruffed the ♥3 in dummy and discarded the ♠K on the ♦K. Then came the ♠Q: two – ♥5 – ♠9 and the ♠J: three – ♥9 – ♠8. Declarer continued with the ♣A and a second club. Had clubs been 3-2, 5♣ would have made. With the actual layout, the result was one down, East-West – 100.

At the other table, it went Pass : 2♠ by East (5 spades, 4+ minor) : Pass : 3♣ (to play), all pass. West made ten tricks, +130 and +6 Imps.

So, which game contracts can East-West make? Not 5♣, on any play, but you can make 4♥ in the 5-0 fit, 4♠ in the 5-1 fit, 5♦ in the 6-1 fit, but not 5♣ in the 6-2 fit!! Not only that, but East can make ten tricks in 3NT. Amazing.

One solution to cater for these 6-5 problems after a reverse is to play a 2NT rebid by responder as forcing (like Lebensohl after 1-Major : Pass : 2-Major : Double, Pass). On **Deal 1**, West bids 2NT, East bids 3♥ and West has an easy raise to 4♥. On **Deal 2**, East bids 3NT to show a total misfit and West can choose to pass or bid 4♥ or 4♣. The North-South hands will not always be so accommodating to allow 3NT to make.

Show me a sane man and I will cure him for you. (Carl Gustav Jung, 1875-1961)