

19. Hang 'em High

By Ron Klinger

South dealer : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ J65
♥ 1086
♦ Q8
♣ KQ842

East
♠ K8
♥ A973
♦ AJ65
♣ J93

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♠	Dble	Pass
3♦	Pass	Pass	3♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West leads the ♥J: six from dummy. Which heart do you play as East?

Today's deals arose in the 2018 Victor Champion Cup Open Teams in Melbourne.

Round 1: Board 14

South dealer : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ J65	
	♥ 1086	
	♦ Q8	
	♣ KQ842	
West		East
♠ 42		♠ K8
♥ J4		♥ A973
♦ K7432		♦ AJ65
♣ A1075		♣ J93
	South	
	♠ AQ10973	
	♥ KQ52	
	♦ 109	
	♣ 6	

Third-hand-high is a good guide, but that is all it is, a 'guide'. It is not an absolute. You have to judge each situation on its merits. With the ♥10 in dummy, you know as East that West's lead is either ♥J-x or ♥J singleton. If it is a singleton, you can take the ♥A, give partner a heart ruff with the ♥9 (suit-preference for diamonds), regain the lead with the ♦A and give partner another heart ruff.

However, playing the ♥A here would not work. If you play ♥A and then ♥9, dummy wins with the ♥10. Declarer can now finesse the ♠Q, cash ♠A and make nine tricks.

How do you judge whether to take the ♥A or whether to play partner for ♥J-x and duck at trick 1? Ask yourself, 'If partner's ♥J is a singleton, how many hearts does declarer have?'. That would give declarer five hearts, possible, but not likely. Why? Because with 5+ spades and 5 hearts, South might have tried for game.

In practice, East played the ♥3, low-like, on the ♥J. South won and returned the ♣6. What should West do? Second-hand low is another good guide, but again, it is just a guide. If West plays low, dummy wins and declarer takes the spade finesse to make ten tricks. At the table, West rose with the ♣A and continued with the ♥4. East took the ace, cashed the ♦A and then gave West a heart ruff. West cashed the ♦K for one down.

Datum: N-S +120. Results: 4♠ on the ♥J lead: +420 x 9, +450 x 3, -100 x 6, -50 x 2; 3♠, ♥J lead: +140 x 6, +170 x 7, -100 x 3, -50 x 10.

East dealer : Nil vulnerable

North
 ♠ K965
 ♥ Q432
 ♦ J982
 ♣ 2

East
 ♠ J107
 ♥ KJ8
 ♦ K1043
 ♣ J84

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

(1) 15-17 points

(2) Simple Stayman

(3) No 4-card major

West leads the ♦5, two from dummy. Which diamond would you play as East?

East dealer : Nil vulnerable

North
 ♠ K965
 ♥ Q432
 ♦ J982
 ♣ 2

West
 ♠ A832
 ♥ 1065
 ♦ A75
 ♣ K73

East
 ♠ J107
 ♥ KJ8
 ♦ K1043
 ♣ J84

South
 ♠ Q4
 ♥ A97
 ♦ Q6
 ♣ AQ10965

You are in a third-hand high problem again. In situations similar to this, one often inserts the ten, but given dummy's ♦9-8, that is not a good idea here. The only time playing the ♦10 works is if partner has led the ♦5 from A-Q-5. That will not be the case and so you should play low. Declarer might have ♦A-Q doubleton. If you play the ♦10, you make one trump trick. Play low and you make two.

On the actual layout, if East plays the ♦10, declarer makes two trump tricks. When East played low, the ♦6 won. Declarer continued with the ♦Q, ace from West and the defence had three trump tricks. South finished two down, East-West +100.

Datum: E-W 20. Results: 2♦ on the ♦5 lead: -150 x 1, -100 x 5 -50 x 1, +90 x 1.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. West dealer : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♥	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	6♦	Pass	6♣
Pass	7♠	Dble	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ A9
♥ 854
♦ A2
♣ AKQJ103

2. North dealer : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2♣
2♠	7♥	Pass	Pass
7♠	Pass	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ --
♥ KJ
♦ AKQJ1098
♣ AQ32

Why not discuss the problems by phone with your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

*A rookie had very few bubs
For his bidding produced many flubs
The lad was a layman
And didn't know Stayman
Was dummy sometimes in two clubs.
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