

24. Jack-Knifed

By Ron Klinger

South dealer : North-South vulnerable

North

♠ Q4
♥ K53
♦ QJ107
♣ QJ96

East

♠ 1073
♥ A64
♦ 9654
♣ 432

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♥	Pass	Pass	Dble
1♠	2♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	3NT	Dble	Pass
Pass	4♣	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

West leads the ♠A: four – ten (discouraging) – five. West switches to the ♥J: three from dummy. Which heart would you play as East?

Today's deals come from a teams' match in March, 2020.

South dealer : North-South vulnerable

North

♠ Q4
♥ K53
♦ QJ107
♣ QJ96

West

♠ AK62
♥ J109872
♦ A8
♣ A

East

♠ 1073
♥ A64
♦ 9654
♣ 432

South

♠ J985
♥ Q
♦ K32
♣ K10875

At one table it went:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♥	Pass	Pass	Dble
2♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

North led the ♦Q, ducked, and switched to the ♣Q, taken by the ♣A. West played ♠A, ♠K and the ♠2: ♦7 – ♠10 – ♠J. West ruffed the ♣K return with the ♥2, cashed the ♦A and played the ♥J: three – four – queen. Back came the ♣5, ruffed, followed by the ♥8: five – six – ♣7 and the ♥A. Declarer still had a spade to lose, but had nine tricks, +140.

Declarer could have made ten tricks by cashing the ♥A, returning to hand via the ♦A and ruffing the fourth spade.

	North	
	♠ Q4	
	♥ K53	
	♦ QJ107	
	♣ QJ96	
West		East
♠ AK62		♠ 1073
♥ J109872		♥ A64
♦ A8		♦ 9654
♣ A		♣ 432
	South	
	♠ J985	
	♥ Q	
	♦ K32	
	♣ K10875	

At the other table, after the auction in the problem on page 1, West cashed the ♠A. East discouraged and West switched to the ♥J: three – four – queen. Declarer now lost a club, a diamond and a second spade, one down, East-West +200 and +2 Imps, but had East taken the ♥A it would have been two down, East-West +500 and +8 Imps. Would you care to assess the blame on this deal?

(a) East: ?% East should have taken the ♥A. Even if South had started with ♥Q-x, it was unlikely that South would have a useful discard on the ♥K later. Also, East did not need to double 3NT. As it happens if East passes and 3NT becomes the contract, the defence can come to nine tricks, +500, whether East leads the ♥A or the ♥4.

(b) West: ?%. One of the key elements in defence is to prevent partner from making a mistake when you can. Assume partner is old and decrepit and has few marbles left and so make things as clear as you can for partner. East had passed 1♥ and so could not have ♥A-Q. West did not need to lead the ♥J. West can save partner by switching to the ♥7 or similar. That could not cost whether East has the ♥A, ♥Q or nothing hearts, After ♥7 from West, low from dummy, East is bound to play the ♥A. Even though East did not know West had six hearts and should have played the ♥A, West might have made it easier for partner.

(c) North ?%. North has 11 HCP and a balanced hand. What was North doing bidding to game opposite a partner who was a passed hand? If North passes 3♣, the result will be -100 and +1 Imp if the defence take all their tricks or +110 and +6 Imps, if East's ♥A goes begging.

West dealer : Nil vulnerable

North

♠ AJ93
♥ A3
♦ 96542
♣ A3

East

♠ Q2
♥ J109652
♦ J3
♣ 1087

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West led the ♠6: three – queen – king. South returned the ♠5: four – jack – two and played the ♦2: three – seven – ten. West switched to the ♥Q, ace from dummy. Which heart would you play as East?

West dealer : Nil vulnerable

North

♠ AJ93
♥ A3
♦ 96542
♣ A3

West

♠ 10764
♥ Q8
♦ AQ10
♣ Q954

East

♠ Q2
♥ J109652
♦ J3
♣ 1087

South

♠ K85
♥ K74
♦ K87
♣ KJ62

The early play in 3NT went:

1. ♠6 lead: three – queen – king.
2. ♠5 from South: four – jack – two.
3. ♦2 from dummy: three – seven – ten.
4. West switched to the ♥Q: ace – jack - four.

Declarer played dummy's ♦4: jack – king – ace. West reverted to the ♥8: three – nine – king. South finessed the ♠9, cashed the ♠A, pitching the ♣2, cashed the ♣A and finessed the ♣J. West won, cashed the ♦Q and exited with the ♣5. South won, but had to lose the ♥7 to East's ♥10 for one down.

South could have succeeded as the cards lie by playing for West to have the ♦Q and to have started with only two hearts. After winning with the ♥K, play the ♦8. West wins, but is out of hearts and so declarer makes 4 spades, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and 2 clubs.

In general, playing West to have the ♦A and only two hearts would be a poorer chance than playing East for the ♣Q, but there was a clue which made the chance of the ♦A with West a reasonable chance compared with the ♣Q with East. West had switched to the ♥Q. That was consistent with Q-singleton, Q-doubleton or a holding headed by Q-J. When East played the ♥J, the holding headed by Q-J was eliminated and so when West played the ♥8 later, it was reasonable to assume that West was out of hearts.

Now South could judge that East began with two spades and two diamonds (proven) and six hearts (assumed) and so at most three clubs. That would give West four clubs and the ♣Q would be more likely to be with West. That might persuade South to play West for the ♦A.

To avoid this, East could be less ostentatious with the signaling in hearts. Playing the ♥J can telegraph the heart position to South. East can ask for hearts to be continued with a less violent signal, say the ♥9 with standard signals or the ♥2 if playing low-like. Now the heart situation remains ambiguous to South, who would be almost certain to rely on the club finesse.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. East dealer : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
3♦	Dble	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♥	Pass	?

(1) Strong hand

What would you do as South with:

♠ K1065
♥ J1065
♦ 62
♣ 854

2. West dealer : North-South vulnerable

North
♠ A54
♥ QJ54
♦ 8752
♣ 102

East
♠ K732
♥ 72
♦ J106
♣ 9876

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	2♣ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Artificial, game-force

(2) 5-8 balanced

(3) Cue-bid in support of hearts

West leads the ♠J: four – king – six. What do you play at trick 2?

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

*The woman who sat at the table
Was my bridge partner, 'unlucky' Mabel.
She would make such a scene,
If you know what I mean,
Which is why some would call her unstable.
(ACBL Bulletin, March 2020)*