

41. Gold spun from the Spingold

By Ron Klinger

South dealer : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	Pass	2♠
Dble	Pass	3♥	Pass
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

What would you lead as West from:

♠ Q
♥ K1094
♦ KQ103
♣ AQJ3

Today's deals come from the 2019 Spingold (USA Knockout Open Teams) and were replayed in a match on BBO in early April:

Bd. 34: South dealer : Both vulnerable

	North		East
	♠ J53		♠ K87
	♥ A		♥ J752
	♦ AJ75		♦ 94
	♣ K10854		♣ 9762
West			
♠ Q			
♥ K1094			
♦ KQ103			
♣ AQJ3			
	South		
	♠ A109642		
	♥ Q863		
	♦ 862		
	♣ --		

In the BBO match, after the auction given, West led the ♦K. Avi Kanetkar (S) took the ♦A, cashed the ♥A and cross-ruffed clubs and hearts. He made the ♥A, ♦A, three hearts in dummy, four club ruffs in hand, plus the ♠A, ten tricks, +620.

Comment on the bidding: (a) South's jump to 2♠ as a passed hand would be expected to be a 6-card spade suit. Why then didn't South open with a weak 2♠ initially? The expected answer is that South had four hearts as well as six spades. That was the impetus for North jumping to 4♠.

Why didn't North bid 4♠ at once over the double? It was certainly an option, but one never knows when the opponents have a bidding misunderstanding and who knows, maybe you will be playing in 2♠ doubled. You can always bid 4♠ later.

In the Spingold:

	North	
	♠ J53	
	♥ A	
	♦ AJ75	
	♣ K10854	
West		East
♠ Q		♠ K87
♥ K1094		♥ J752
♦ KQ103		♦ 94
♣ AQJ3		♣ 9762
	South	
	♠ A109642	
	♥ Q863	
	♦ 862	
	♣ --	

West	North	East	South
<i>Nowo'zki</i>	<i>Gawrys</i>	<i>Kalita</i>	<i>Klukowski</i>
1NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass	2♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	Dble ⁽¹⁾
Pass	4♣	All Pass	2♠

- (1) 1-suiter
 (2) Which suit?

When South bid 2♠, North could deduce that South also had hearts for the failure to open 2♠. West led the ♦K. South took the ♦A, cashed the ♥A and, like Kanetkar, cross-ruffed clubs and hearts for ten tricks, +620.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
<i>Helness</i>	<i>Driiver</i>	<i>Martens</i>	<i>Brink</i>
			2♠
Dble	4♣	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

West led the ♠Q!! South took the ♠A, crossed to the ♥A and cross-ruffed clubs and hearts for the next five tricks. Next came the ♦2: queen – five – nine. West returned the ♦3, won by the jack. When declarer played the ♦A, East ruffed and played the ♥J, queen, king. The defence had taken a diamond, a diamond ruff, a heart and ♠K. That meant one down, East-West +200 and +13 Imps.

Point to note: When the opponents bid to game with significantly below their high-card values, they will almost always have significant shape to compensate for the lack of high cards. In those cases, a trump lead is often best, whether the opponents are bidding to make or as a sacrifice.

Here West has 17 HCP and partner might have a few points. That means the opponents are probably bidding 4♣ based on shape. Hence Tor Helness chose the ♠Q lead and it paid off.

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♥
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ J72
♥ K103
♦ K1072
♣ K108

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ J72	
	♥ K103	
	♦ K1072	
	♣ K108	
West		East
♠ AQ5		♠ 10983
♥ 864		♥ 95
♦ AQJ9		♦ 854
♣ 932		♣ J654
	South	
	♠ K64	
	♥ AQJ72	
	♦ 63	
	♣ AQ7	

South's sequence, Double and remove 1NT to 2♥ shows a good hand, game-invitational. With lesser values, South would have simply overcalled 1♥. After 2♥, North is worth 4♥.

This deal comes from a practice match on BBO and South was Susan Humphries in 4♥. This is her description of what happened:

'West led the ♦A followed by the ♦9, East following to both diamonds. My brain was working in overdrive. Given that West was marked with most of the outstanding strength, how could I throw him in to force him to play a spade to me? From the bidding, there was no way East could hold the ♠A. West needed it for his opening bid, while East might have responded if he held it.

My first thought was to eliminate the diamonds by ruffing two diamonds in my hand. After drawing trumps, I would be able to clear the clubs ending in dummy then lead the ♠J running it round to West for an endplay. At trick three, I ruffed a diamond in my hand.

When East followed suit, the hand developed further. I now knew the diamonds were 4-3, and when I drew trumps, West followed suit three times, confirming that he had three hearts and four diamonds, while East had two hearts and three diamonds. I changed my plan slightly, now looking to cater for East holding the ♠Q rather than relying on West holding both spade honours.

My next move was to play off three rounds of clubs ending in the dummy, everyone following suit. Shape check on West's hand: now either 2=3=4=4, or, what I needed, 3=3=4=3, depending on who had the thirteenth club. The ending, with me needing one spade trick plus my trump trick, was:

	North		
	♠ J72		
	♥		
	♦ 10		
	♣		
West		East	
♠ AQ5		♠ 1098	
♥		♥	
♦ Q		♦	
♣		♣ J	
	South		
	♠ K64		
	♥ Q		
	♦		
	♣		

If West had a 3=3=4=3 shape, I had a sure thing now. I played the ♦10 from dummy pitching a low spade from my hand. West was now endplayed to play a spade away from his ace. Contract making! Success. Nice to finish on a plus in our practice match.

This would not have worked if West started with 2=3=4=4 shape as he could play the thirteenth club for his exit card. I could ruff but have to play away from the ♠K-6. However, if his shape was indeed 2=3=4=4, I could not realistically succeed in the endgame – there would be no possibility of an endplay. In bridge, sometimes you have to hope for the best.

Happy Bridging! Stay Home, Stay Safe!’

(Note: Declarer can always succeed on the actual layout by playing a spade towards the jack sooner or later, but this would not work if the East-West hands were:

West	East
♠ A105	♠ Q983
♥ 864	♥ 95
♦ AQJ9	♦ 854
♣ J92	♣ 6543

Now only Susan’s line will succeed.)

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. South dealer : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1NT
2♣ ⁽¹⁾	2♠	Pass	?

(1) Takeout, shows both majors

What would you do as South with:

♠ K74
♥ AKJ3
♦ QJ107
♣ Q3

2. East dealer : Both vulnerable

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

(1) 20-22

(2) Asking

(3) No 5-card major, no 4-card major

What would you do as North with:

♠ 86

♥ K94

♦ 1082

♣ AQ972

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

“You’ve got to be careful if you don’t know where you are going, because you might not get there (Yogi Berra)”