56. Conflicting evidence

By Ron Klinger

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ Q5
♥ AQJ
♦ J109764
♣ 72

South
♠ KJ73
♥ 98
♦ AK32
♣ A94

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

(1) For takeout

1. West leads the ♣5: two – king – four
2. East returns the ♣J: nine – six – seven
3. East plays the ♣10: - ace – queen – ♥J
4. South plays the ♦A: eight – four – five
5. South plays the ♦K: queen – six – ♥7 (playing high-encourage)

How would you continue as South?

Today's deals come from the final of the 2019 Spingold (USA Open Teams Knockout) between BLASS and ZIMMERMANN.

Bd. 46: West dealer : East-West vulnerable

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              North
              ♠ Q5
              ♥ AQJ
              ♦ J109764
              ♣ 72
West                        East
♠ 98642                     ♠ A10
♥ K64                       ♥ 107532
♦ Q8                        ♦ 5
♣ Q65                       ♣ KJ1083
              South
              ♠ KJ73
              ♥ 98
              ♦ AK32
              ♣ A94
```

In the Spingold final, it was a 'nothing' board. At both tables it went Pass : Pass : Pass : 1NT, Pass : 3NT, all pass. West led a low spade. East won and switched to the ♣J. South took the ♣A and the obvious ten further tricks for +660, no swing.

Things took a different turn in a BBO match after North made a light-opening bid.

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                    North
                    ♠ Q5
                    ♥ AQJ
                    ♦ J109764
                    ♣ 72
West                                East
♠ 98642                             ♠ A10
♥ K64                               ♥ 107532
♦ Q8                                ♦ 5
♣ Q65                               ♣ KJ1083
                    South
                    ♠ KJ73
                    ♥ 98
                    ♦ AK32
                    ♣ A94
```

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

(1) For takeout

1. West leads the ♣5: two – king – four
2. East returns the ♣J: nine – six – seven
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4. South plays the ♦A: eight – four – five
5. South plays the ♦K: queen – six – ♥7 (playing high-encourage)

What next?

East took considerable risk to make a lead-directing bid opposite a passed partner. Had 3♣ doubled been passed out, East would have been in heaps of trouble.

What does South know by trick 6? West has shown up with ♦Q and ♣Q and East with ♣K, ♣J. To warrant the 2♣ overcall you would expect East to have the ♠A and ♥K. However, how could you then justify West's 3♣ raise with just ♦Q-x and ♣Q-x-x. That makes no sense. West needs either the ♥K or the ♠A as well as the minor suit queens. You now need to judge whether East is more likely to have bid 2♣ with ♠A plus K-J-10-x-x in clubs or ♥K plus the same club holding. The holding with the ♠A is more likely and the ♥K with West is enough for the 3♣ bid.

There is also conflicting evidence in East's carding. After ♣K, ♣J, East continued with the ♣10, suit-preference for spades. To ask for hearts, East would have played the ♣3 at trick 3. To ask for spades, East needed to play the ♣10 at trick 3, just in case South had started with Q-x-x and West with ♣A-x-x, even though that was not likely.

South paid more attention to East's ♥7 encouraging signal and played a spade at trick 6. East won and cashed two clubs for one down. East's ♥7 was aimed at disillusion. It could not cost if South had the ♥K and if West had the ♥K, West would know it was a false card.

South could have made nine tricks by finessing the ♥Q at trick 6 or ten tricks by discarding the ♠5 on the ♣A and finessing ♥Q at trick 5, returning to ♦K and repeating the heart finesse.

South dealer : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ J102
♥ A4
♦ A1098
♣ J1064

South
♠ AKQ863
♥ 93
♦ 54
♣ K85

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	3♥(1)	4♥	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Limit or stronger spade raise

1. West leads the ♦K: ace – seven - four
2. ♠J
3. ♠2 to ♠K, all follow
4. ♦5: jack – eight – three
5. West switches to the ♥K: ace – two – three
6. ♦9: six – ♥9 – ♦Q
7. West continues with the ♥6: four – queen – ♠A
8. South plays ♠6: ♥7 – ♠10 – ♥5
9. ♦10: - ♥10 – ♣5 – ♣2
10. ♣J: two . . .

Which club should West play from hand? Decide before consulting the full deal.

South dealer : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ J102
♥ A4
♦ A1098
♣ J1064

West
♠ 94
♥ KJ876
♦ KQJ2
♣ A9

East
♠ 75
♥ Q1052
♦ 763
♣ Q732

South
♠ AKQ863
♥ 93
♦ 54
♣ K85

In the Spingold, one table bid 1♠ : 2♥ : 4♠, all pass. West led the ♦K. The play followed a similar path to the problem above except that when in on the second round of diamonds, West switched to the ♥7, ace, and East encouraged. When in on the third diamond, West played the ♥K. At trick 11, Michal Klukowski (S) picked the club layout and played ♣J, low, low, ace for ten tricks, +420.

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                North
                ♠ J102
                ♥ A4
                ♦ A1098
                ♣ J1064
West                          East
♠ 94                          ♠ 75
♥ KJ876                       ♥ Q1052
♦ KQJ2                        ♦ 763
♣ A9                          ♣ Q732
                South
                ♠ AKQ863
                ♥ 93
                ♦ 54
                ♣ K85
```

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
Helness	*Drijver*	*Martens*	*Brink*
			1♠
2♥	2NT	3♥	Dble
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

West led the ♦K, ace. Back came the ♦8 to the ♦J. West switched to the ♠9. South won and crossed to the ♠10. Then came the ♦9: six – ♣5 – ♦Q. Judging that a heart switch was too risky, West exited with the fourth diamond. East discarded the ♥10 and South the ♣8. Declarer played the ♣4: two – king – ace. Now West switched to a heart. Declarer took the ♥A and played ♣J: three – ♥9 – ♣9. Declarer lost two diamonds and a club for ten tricks, +420, no swing.

On the BBO replay:

1. West leads the ♦K: ace – seven - four
2. ♠J
3. ♠2 to ♠K
4. ♦5: jack – eight – three
5. West switches to the ♥K: ace – two – three
6. ♦9: six – ♥9 – ♦Q
7. West continues with the ♥6: four – queen – ♠A
8. South plays ♠6: ♥7 – ♠10 – ♥5
9. ♦10: - ♥10 – ♣5 – ♣2
10. ♣J: two . . .

Declarer needs to pick the club position. South knows West began with K-Q-J in diamonds and the ♥K. The defence has been helpful – more of that later – so that South knows West's hearts are K-J-8-7-6. The question South needs to ask is whether West would overcall 2♥ with 2 low spades, ♥K-J-x-x-x, ♦K-Q-J-x plus ♣Q-x or ♣A-x. It is a close decision but because the hearts are so weak, ♣A-x with West is more likely.

On the other hand, where is East's 4♥ bid? Could East have bid 4♥ with no more than two queens and a balanced hand? Either West or East has done more than their cards warrant. You have to guess which one it is.

As for the defence, there were too many helpful cards, which might point declarer to guess correctly in clubs. West's ♥K was very good. It gave the illusion of K-Q in hearts, maybe K-Q-J. West's choice of lead of the ♦K from K-Q-J does not discount strength in hearts. When in with the ♦Q at trick 6, West should have continued the illusion of holding ♥K-Q-J by playing the ♥J. Now it is highly likely declarer will misguess clubs.

Instead, West played the ♥7 and East played the ♥Q. East knew declarer had no more hearts and could have contributed the ♥5 (best) or the ♥10, but the ♥Q gave away the heart position. At trick 9, on dummy's ♦10, East should discard a club. Playing the ♥10 told South that West had only five hearts and poor ones at that.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. South dealer : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♣
3♠	4♥	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ J64
♥ A764
♦ A
♣ AJ973

2. East dealer : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	4♣
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ AJ5
♥ AK1062
♦ AQ4
♣ 87

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

Why is it that at school reunions, you feel so much younger than everyone else looks.