

81. Matters of system

By Ron Klinger

The 36-board final of Alt-Invitational III, organized by bid72, bridge 24 and netbridgeonline, together with BBO (Bridge Base Online) was between **Gupta** (Naren Gupta, Bauke Muller, Simon de Wijs, Huub Bertens, Cedric Lorenzini, Thomas Bessis) and **Russia** (Andrey Gromov, Anna Gulevich, Vadim Kholomeev, Yury Khuppenen, Yury Khokhlov, Alexander Dubinin).

With only East-West vulnerable, West passes and North opens 1♠. Pass on your right. What do you do with:

♠ --
♥ K1052
♦ J2
♣ QJ106532

Whether you play standard methods, with 2-over-1 being just a one-round force or 2-over-1 game-force, this hand is not strong enough for a 2♣ response. You might get away with a standard 2♣ with 9 HCP and long clubs, but 7 points is quite a way short of the 10+ points expected. Not only that, the void in your partner's suit, spades, is not an asset. Recommended is a 1NT response.

Suppose it starts:

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

What now?

Having responded 1NT, you can now bid 3♣ without over-bidding your hand. The 3♣ rebid shows 6+ clubs, about 5-8 HCP and no support for spades or diamonds.

Bd. 6: West dealer : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A9853	
	♥ A6	
	♦ K9854	
	♣ A	
West		East
♠ KQ1042		♠ J76
♥ Q987		♥ J43
♦ 7		♦ AQ1063
♣ K97		♣ 84
	South	
	♠ --	
	♥ K1052	
	♦ J2	
	♣ QJ106532	

With **GUPTA** North-South the auction went as suggested above, with South bidding 3♣, all pass. West led the ♦7: four – queen – two. The ♦J from South might have saved a trick if East switches to a heart or a spade. East cashed the ♦A and continued with the ♦6, ruffed with the ♣6, over-ruffed with the ♣7. West switched to the ♠K: three – six – ♣3. South played a club to the ♣A and had 9 tricks, North-South +110.

At the other table, it went West 1♠ : North Pass : East 2♠ : South 4♣, all pass. West led the ♦7: four – queen – two (again). East returned the ♦6. West ruffed and played the ♣9 to the ♣A.

	North	
	♠ A9853	
	♥ A6	
	♦ K98	
	♣	
West		East
♠ KQ1042		♠ J76
♥ Q987		♥ J43
♦		♦ A103
♣ K		♣ 4
	South	
	♠ --	
	♥ K1052	
	♦	
	♣ QJ10653	

South has lost two tricks and can see another two losers, the ♣K and a heart (barring a miracle heart position). With West playing the ♣7 and ♣9, the ♣4 is almost certainly with East. South can hardly lose by playing the ♦K here. Maybe East will duck and South discards a heart. West ruffs, but with the ♣K and South makes the rest, the other heart loser going on the ♠A. If East covers the ♦K, South ruffs (♣5 or higher) and is no worse off.

In practice, South ruffed the ♣3 and played the ♣Q. West won and switched to a low heart : six – jack – king. South had a heart to lose later for one down, –50 and 4 Imps to [GUPTA](#).

With only North-South vulnerable, South opens 1NT, 15-17, in third seat. Pass on your right. What would you do as North with:

♠ 985
♥ A
♦ 98653
♣ KQ52

You have 9 HCP plus a 5-card suit (add 1 point). That is enough to justify a shot at game at Imps when vulnerable. The problem is the singleton heart. It might be fine to be in 3NT if partner has values in hearts, but if not, 3NT could be in jeopardy.

Most top players permit a 1NT opener (and a 2NT opener) to have a 5-card major. If so, it is good to have methods to locate a 5-card major with opener. If South has 5 spades, you would certainly like to be in 4♠.

Some play 1NT : 3♣ asks for a 5-card major (like 2NT : 3♣ puppet Stayman). Others play 1NT : 2♣ as 5-card major Stayman (see *A Good Game of Modern Bridge*). After 1NT : 2♣, opener bids 2♠ / 2♥ with a 5-card major and 2♦ without. If that does not suit, responder can rebid 3♣ to ask for a 4-card major if holding values for game or 2♥ / 2♠ with a 4-card major and invitational values.

Another option is 1NT : 3♥ as a splinter (or 3♦ as a submarine splinter to show shortage in hearts), although it is not attractive to splinter with a singleton ace here. Partner might have one stopper in hearts and could be reluctant to try 3NT with just one stopper.

Of course, you could simply punt 3NT and take your chances. That is what happened at one table in the final.

North dealer : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 985	
	♥ A	
	♦ 98653	
	♣ KQ52	
West		East
♠ K		♠ 10642
♥ KJ864		♥ Q753
♦ 1042		♦ AJ
♣ 10873		♣ J64
	South	
	♠ AQJ73	
	♥ 1092	
	♦ KQ7	
	♣ A9	

As I said, it is good to have methods. After 1NT : 2♣ 5-card major Stayman, South bids 2♠ and North 4♠. After 1NT : 3♣ puppet Stayman, South bids 3♠ and North 4♠. You could survive even if playing simple Stayman via 1NT : 2♣, 2♠ : 3♥ expressing concern about hearts, 3♠ : 4♠, all pass.

With GUPTA North-South it went 1NT : 3NT, all pass. West led the ♥6: ace – seven – two. Declarer played the ♠9: two – queen – king. West continued with the ♥4 to the ♥Q. East returned a heart and the defence had five tricks. The ♦A made it six tricks, taking 3NT two down, East-West +200.

At the other table, with East-West silent, it began Pass : 1♣ (artificial, strong) : 2♦ (8+ points, 5+ diamonds, game force), 2♠ and ended in 4♠. West led the ♣7. South took the ♣A, crossed to the ♥A and finessed the ♠Q. West won and returned the ♣3, king. Next came the ♦3. East rose with the ♦A and played a third club. South discarded a heart, crossed to the ♠A, ruffed a heart and claimed ten tricks, losing two spades and the ♦A, for +620 and +13 Imps.

GUPTA won the 36-board final by 91-75 [62-1, 25-39, 4-35].

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. With neither side vulnerable South opens 3♠ and North raises to 4♠, all pass. What do you lead as West from:

♠ 8
♥ 965
♦ AJ52
♣ A10954

2. Vulnerable against not, partner opens 1♠, you respond 1NT and partner rebids 2♥. What would you do with:

♠ J5
♥ KQJ754
♦ 32
♣ J87

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

*30 Days hath September, April, June and November
All the rest have 31, except March which had 8000.*