

95. Agreements

By Ron Klinger

East dealer : Both vulnerable

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------------------|------|-------|
| | | Pass | 1♠ |
| Pass | 2♦ | Pass | 2♥ |
| Pass | 3♠ ⁽¹⁾ | Pass | 3♥ |
| Pass | ? | | |

(1) Fourth-suit, forcing to game

What would you do now as North with:

♠ J
♥ KJ8
♦ AK943
♣ AK75

Partner has shown 5+ spades and 5+ hearts. You have decent support for hearts, control in every outside suit and a 5-loser hand. As partner should have a 7-loser hand at worst, you have enough to look for slam. 5 losers + 7 losers = 12 losers; 24 – 12 = 12 tricks are likely. See *The Modern Losing Trick Count*. Given the 5-5 shape, partner's hand is likely to have fewer than 7 losers.

The simplest approach is to ask for ace/key cards with 4NT. The general agreement is that this agrees the last-bid suit as trumps. If you want to agree spades, bid 3♠ strong or 4♠ weaker.

In reply to 4NT, South bids 5♦, one key card for hearts. What next?

East dealer : Both vulnerable

| | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| | North | |
| | ♠ J | |
| | ♥ KJ8 | |
| | ♦ AK943 | |
| | ♣ AK75 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ 102 | | ♠ A6543 |
| ♥ 1094 | | ♥ 32 |
| ♦ 872 | | ♦ QJ10 |
| ♣ Q8632 | | ♣ J104 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ KQ987 | |
| | ♥ AQ765 | |
| | ♦ 65 | |
| | ♣ 9 | |

The deal comes from the England vs USA2 match in final of the 2013 Venice Cup (World Women's Teams). Both North-South pairs had effectively the same auction. Over 5♦, one North bid 6♥, all pass. The other bid 5♥, all pass. As you can see the play in 6♥ is trivial with the ♠10 dropping on the second round of spades and no bad breaks elsewhere.

The problem for North is that there is no way to ask safely for the ♥Q after 5♦ without going beyond 5♥. Swap South's ♥Q for the ♦Q or the ♣Q and now 6♥ is not so flash. Most bidding does not come with guarantees. You take your chances and hope you are right.

A useful agreement after 3♥ would be for 3♠ to agree spades and 4♣ to agree hearts. After 4♣, South signs off in 4♥. Now North can use 4♠ RKCB, receive a 5♣ reply (one key card) and then use 5♦ to ask for the ♥Q.

| | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| | North | |
| | ♠ J | |
| | ♥ KJ8 | |
| | ♦ AK943 | |
| | ♣ AK75 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ 102 | | ♠ A6543 |
| ♥ 1094 | | ♥ 32 |
| ♦ 872 | | ♦ QJ10 |
| ♣ Q8632 | | ♣ J104 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ KQ987 | |
| | ♥ AQ765 | |
| | ♦ 65 | |
| | ♣ 9 | |

Some experts use 4♠ as Roman Key Card Blackwood when hearts are agreed as trumps. That was not available here. Most would take a 4♠ bid over 3♥ as a sign-off in spades.

In reply to 4NT, some play 5♦ = 1 or 4 key cards and 5♣ = 0 or 3. Others prefer 5♦ = 0 or 3 and 5♣ = 1 or 4. Having 5♣ as 1 or 4 would have worked here, since North could then bid 5♦ to ask for the trump queen.

In the final of the Bermuda Bowl (World Open Teams), Italy and Monaco both bid to 6♥. In the final of the d'Orsi Trophy (World Seniors' Teams), both USA2 and Germany bid to 6♥.

East dealer : North-South vulnerable

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------------------|------|-------|
| | | Pass | 1♠ |
| 1♥ | 2♥ ⁽¹⁾ | 3♥ | ? |

(1) 10+ points, limit raise or better in clubs

What would you do as South with:

♠ AKQ3
 ♥ 10
 ♦ 106
 ♣ QJ7642

You could bid 3♠ to show your values there. Maybe partner can then bid 3NT. Other choices include Pass, 4♣, 4♥ (cue) and 5♣. It is useful to have agreements for each of these actions. I am no fan of 3♠. Partner could bid 3NT with a stopper in hearts and, say, ♣K-x-x-x or longer and 3NT might fail miserably.

You have found a good trump fit. You have 5 losers. For a minimum limit raise, about 10-12 points, you can expect partner to have 8 losers. 5 losers + 8 losers = 13 losers. Using the LTC formula, 24-13 = 11 tricks are likely. That entitles you to bid 5♣.

You and partner should have agreements about opener's actions here. My partners and I play this way: Pass = no interest in competing further; 5♣ = a minimum opening with club length and shortage in the suit bid by the opponents, here hearts; 4♣ = extra values, forcing, but 2+ losers in hearts; 4♥ = strong hand, length in clubs and shortage in hearts (replace the ♦10 with the ♦K or ♦A in the hand above). A 4♦ bid over 3♥ should be a cue-bid (diamond control) and seeking control in hearts.

Nothing is going to work all of the time, but you should find some use for your possible actions over 3♥.

East dealer : North-South vulnerable

| | | |
|---------|----------|---------|
| | North | |
| | ♠ 54 | |
| | ♥ A98 | |
| | ♦ AK87 | |
| | ♣ K1098 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ J1098 | | ♠ 762 |
| ♥ KQJ3 | | ♥ 76542 |
| ♦ 54 | | ♦ QJ932 |
| ♣ A53 | | ♣ -- |
| | South | |
| | ♠ AKQ3 | |
| | ♥ 10 | |
| | ♦ 106 | |
| | ♣ QJ7642 | |

With robots East-West and humans North-South on BBO it went:

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|
| | | Pass | 1♣ |
| 1♥ | 2♥ ⁽¹⁾ | 3♥ | 5♣ ⁽²⁾ |
| Pass | 5♥ ⁽³⁾ | Pass | 6♣ |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |

(1) Limit raise plus for clubs

(2) Minimum opening, 5+ clubs, 0-1 heart

(3) Cue-bid

There is nothing to the play. Play trumps, ruff a spade later in dummy.

In a teams' match on BBO, East-West at one table passed throughout and North-South bid 1♣ : 1♦, 1♠ : 3NT, all pass. A heart lead would have put paid to 3NT, but East led a spade and North made 11 tricks, +660. Chalk one up for leading the unbid suit.

At the other table, South opened 2♣ (10-15 points, 5+ clubs). West doubled and North jumped to 5♣ (a tad hasty, perhaps), all pass. South made 12 tricks, +620 but -1 Imp.

Question: What is orange and sounds like a parrot? Answer next page.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North

♠ K73

♥ J106

♦ AQ964

♣ 62

East

♠ 10

♥ K75432

♦ 82

♣ AQ98

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|----------|-------|
| | | | 1♠ |
| Pass | 2♦ | Pass | 3♦ |
| Pass | 4♠ | All Pass | |

West leads the ♣J: two . . . Plan your defence.

2. Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

North

♠ AQ82

♥ 5

♦ 864

♣ AK863

South

♠ K974

♥ AQ876

♦ AKQ

♣ Q

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

(1) Cue-bid

The 4♦ cue would not have been my choice over 3♠ (4NT seems a good idea), but the auction is as reported. West leads the ♦J. Plan the play.

Answer to What is orange and sounds like a parrot? A carrot