

123. It ain't easy doin' the right thing

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

North

♠ 106
♥ AK75
♦ K9743
♣ K4

East

♠ KJ98
♥ --
♦ 1062
♣ A109763

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♣	2♥
3♣	3♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West leads the ♠5: four – ace – two. What would you play as East at trick 2?

There is little point in returning a club and a switch to dummy's longer non-trump suit is usually not attractive. That leaves a switch to dummy's weak suit, spades, as the choice. Which spade should you play?

When the deal arose in a BBO game, East switched to the ♠8. That was not best.

North

♠ 106
♥ AK75
♦ K9743
♣ K4

West

♠ A742
♥ J1062
♦ 85
♣ J85

East

♠ KJ98
♥ --
♦ 1062
♣ A109763

South

♠ Q53
♥ Q9843
♦ AQJ
♣ Q2

After ♠8: three – ace – six and the ♠2 to the ♠K, South's ♠Q is high and 4♥ cannot be defeated (as long as declarer plays accurately).

When switching to a new suit where dummy contains the ten or jack and you have that honour surrounded (dummy's ten is surrounded by your J-9 here) and you have a higher non-touching honour (here your king), it is usually best to lead the card above dummy's honour. Here you should switch to the ♠J. This is known as a 'surround play'. Another example:

	J65	
843		AQ107
	K92	

If East switches to the 7, South makes 2 tricks by playing low. Switch to the Q and South makes only 1 trick.

	North	
	♠ 106	
	♥ AK75	
	♦ K9743	
	♣ K4	
West		East
♠ A742		♠ KJ98
♥ J1062		♥ --
♦ 85		♦ 1062
♣ J85		♣ A109763
	South	
	♠ Q53	
	♥ Q9843	
	♦ AQJ	
	♣ Q2	

After ♣A, if East switches to the ♠J, queen, ace and a spade back to the king, East can play a third spade, forcing dummy to ruff. If it goes ♠J, low, low, low, East can play ♠K and a third spade or a low spade to West's ace and West returns a spade. In either case, dummy ruffs and is down to three trumps. Declarer can still succeed, double dummy, by finessing the ♥7 or running the ♥8 or ♥9, but that is never going to happen in real life.

Once the defence have taken a club and two spades and forced dummy to ruff with a third spade, West will come to a heart trick to take 4♥ one down.

This was yesterday's first problem:

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

North
 ♠ 106
 ♥ AK75
 ♦ K9743
 ♣ K4

South
 ♠ Q53
 ♥ Q9843
 ♦ AQJ
 ♣ Q2

	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♣	2♥
3♣	3♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West leads the ♣5: king – ace – two. East is not fooled by the ♣K play and East switches to the ♠8: three – ace – six. West returns the ♠2: ten – king – five. East plays the ♠6 at trick 4: queen – jack – four. Plan the play

In the BBO game, where the auction had been 1♦ : 1♥, 2♥ : 4♥, all pass, with East-West passing throughout, South played the ♣K from dummy. If East wins and returns a club, South can make 11 tricks. After ♣5: king – ace – two, robot East recognized that (a) South would never play the king from dummy if holding J-x and (b) with clubs headed by Q-J, West would have led the queen. Therefore, South must have the ♣Q.

In practice, after ♣5: king – ace – two and the ♠8 (not best) from robot East, human South played the ♠Q (not best). Robot West captured the queen and forgave South the error by reverting to a club to South's queen. South now did the right thing in the trump suit. South began with the ♥Q. When East showed out, South could handle West's remaining holding of ♥J-10-6. South played the ♥3. If West plays the ♥6, South inserts the ♥7. If West plays the ten or jack, dummy captures the honour. South returns to hand with a diamond and leads another heart to pick up West's remaining J-6 or 10-6.

	North	
	♠ 106	
	♥ AK75	
	♦ K9743	
	♣ K4	
West		East
♠ A742		♠ KJ98
♥ J1062		♥ --
♦ 85		♦ 1062
♣ J85		♣ A109763
	South	
	♠ Q53	
	♥ Q9843	
	♦ AQJ	
	♣ Q2	

The deal comes from an international match. At one table, it also went North 1♦, South 1♥, North 2♥, South 4♥, all pass. West led ♣5: four – ace – two and East switched accurately to ♠J: queen – ace – six. West returned ♠2: ten – king – three. East did not play a third spade. Declarer played the trumps correctly for ten tricks, +420.

At the other table, the auction went as in the problem:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♣	2♥
3♣	3♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

After ♣5 to the ace and the ♠8: three – ace - six, followed by the ♠2: ten – king – five, East exited with the ♣3 to the ♣K. The danger in these situations is complacency. Everything looks great and it is so easy to make a slip, which sometimes is fatal. When the contract looks straightforward, ask yourself, ‘What could go wrong?’.

When declarer played the ♥A at trick 5, West scored a trump trick later, South was one down, –50, –10 Imps.

That loss could easily have been avoided. The only danger after trick 4 is a 4-0 trump break. There is nothing you can do if East began with ♥J-10-6-2, but you can cater for J-10-6-2 with West.

When you have nine trumps in a 5-4 split and you hold the A, K and Q plus the 9 and 8 (or if the 9 is with two higher honours), you first play the honour that is on its own. For example:

North	North
K943	A643
or	
South	South
AQ852	KQ952

Play the king in the first example, the ace in in the second. If trumps are 2-2 or 3-1, draw trumps. If East turns up with J-10-x-x, you can deal with it (assuming you have another entry to the North hand). The principle here is, ‘When you are missing J-10-x-x, which has two honours, play the honour first opposite your two honours’.

If you are missing only J-x-x-x, one honour, then keep one honour in each hand. For example:

North	North
A1043	KQ643
or	
South	South
KQ952	A1092

Play the king or queen first, Then you can deal with any 4-0 break. Play the ace first and you might have a loser.

This was yesterday's second problem:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ A76
♥ A53
♦ KQJ10
♣ AK4

South
♠ KQ2
♥ K987
♦ A3
♣ 9876

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
Pass	6NT	All Pass	

West leads the ♠J. Plan the play.

You have 11 tricks on top. An extra can come from either hearts or clubs if the suit breaks 3-3. The trouble is if you pick the wrong suit, you might not have a second chance. Say, you duck a heart. All will be fine if hearts are 3-3, but if not, you do not have a chance any more to test the clubs. You might be lucky that one hand is guarding both clubs and hearts and will be squeezed after you duck a club or a heart and then cash the spades and diamonds. The problem there is you also have to make two discards on the diamonds yourself.

There is an extra chance. Maybe one of the defenders has Q-J or Q-10 or J-10 in one of your suits. In that case, your excellent spot cards, the 9-8-7 in your rounded suits, will enable you to set up your twelfth trick. This was the actual deal, related by Wally Malaczynski of Sydney. He spotted it while kibitzing a game on BBO.

	North	
	♠ A76	
	♥ A53	
	♦ KQJ10	
	♣ AK4	
West		East
♠ J1094		♠ 853
♥ J1062		♥ Q4
♦ 875		♦ 9642
♣ Q10		♣ J532
	South	
	♠ KQ2	
	♥ K987	
	♦ A3	
	♣ 9876	

In practice, declarer went one down, but Malaczynski saw the winning line. Win the spade and cash a top heart. When no honour appears, cash a top club. When the ♣10 appears, continue with the other top club and a third club sets up a trick in your hand. It is true that a cunning defender could drop the ten from ♣10-x, but then you just have to pay out to that. If no honour drops, you have to guess which suit to try for a 3-3 split.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
?			3♦

What would you do as West with:

♠ QJ93
♥ AQ1042
♦ K3
♣ 92

2. Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
2♥	Pass	?	1♠

What would you do as East with:

♠ AJ53
♥ 87
♦ KQ1087
♣ 106

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

Red meat is not bad for you. Fuzzy green meat is bad for you.