

127. Paragon or a pair-o'-goners

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

North
♠ A654
♥ J9853
♦ 1043
♣ 10

East
♠ J9
♥ AKQ1072
♦ KJ7
♣ Q6

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

West leads the ♥6: nine – ten – four. What do you play next?

The deal arose in a BBO game with humans East-West and robots North-South. After trick one, East knows that West and South are both out of hearts. East is going to play a top heart and hope West can over-ruff South. Does it matter which heart you play?

Since the ♥A, ♥K and ♥Q will all have the same affect, you can choose the one you play to have a suit-preference message. Thus, the ♥A = spade interest, ♥Q = diamond interest and ♥K = no interest or equal interest in the non-trump suits. Here, as you have values in diamonds, the ♥Q is the card to play. The full deal:

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A654	
	♥ J9853	
	♦ 1043	
	♣ 10	
West		East
♠ 10832		♠ J9
♥ 6		♥ AKQ1072
♦ A985		♦ KJ7
♣ 9742		♣ Q6
	South	
	♠ KQ7	
	♥ 4	
	♦ Q62	
	♣ AKJ853	

Yesterday's question was for West, after the same auction. West led the ♥6: nine – ten – four. After East plays the ♥Q: ♣5 – ♣7 – ♥5, what should West play to trick 3?

Recognizing the suit-preference message of the ♥Q, West switches to a diamond? Which one? You can see that ♦A and a diamond to the king sets up South's ♦Q. Then, if East plays another heart, it will promote another trump trick for West to take 3♣ one down.

In practice, West switched to ♦5: three – king – six. Another top heart would give West a trump trick, whether South ruffs high or low. West would also come to the ♦A for one down. Instead, East switched to the ♣Q.

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	North	
	♠ A654	
	♥ J9853	
	♦ 1043	
	♣ 10	
West		East
♠ 10832		♠ J9
♥ 6		♥ AKQ1072
♦ A985		♦ KJ7
♣ 9742		♣ Q6
	South	
	♠ KQ7	
	♥ 4	
	♦ Q62	
	♣ AKJ853	

After ♥6 won by the ♥10, the ♥Q, ruffed with the ♣5 and over-ruffed and the ♦5 won by East's ♦K, East switched to the ♣Q. South won and played three more rounds of clubs, coming down to this position:

	North	
	♠ A654	
	♥ J	
	♦ 10	
	♣	
West		East
♠ 10832		♠ J9
♥		♥ AK
♦ A9		♦ J7
♣		♣
	South	
	♠ KQ7	
	♥	
	♦ Q2	
	♣ 3	

If South now plays the ♣3, West is squeezed. Needing to hang on to four spades, West lets the ♦9 go. If South picks the position, South can play the ♦2, setting up the ♦Q. West could have avoided this problem by switching to ♦A and ♦5 at tricks 3-4.

Of course, the position is not certain from declarer's point of view. If South plays the ♣3 and then the ♦2 and East has the ♦A, East cashes two hearts.

However, South did not cash the ♣3, but played ♠K, ♠Q and the ♠7: eight – ace – ♥K. Then came ♦10: jack – queen – ace and the ♦9 was the fifth trick for the defence for one down, East-West +100.

West dealer : North-South vulnerable

North
♠ AQ
♥ A10982
♦ KQ106
♣ K2

West
♠ 64
♥ J76
♦ A87
♣ J10865

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

West leads the ♣J. What would you play next if:

- (a) It goes two – seven – four, OR
- (b) It goes king – ace – four and East returns the ♣7: nine – ten – two?

Decide on your answers before reading further.

This was yesterday's second problem:

West dealer : North-South vulnerable

North
♠ AQ
♥ A10982
♦ KQ106
♣ K2

East
♠ 1095
♥ K53
♦ 5432
♣ AQ7

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

West leads the ♣J: king – ace – four. How do you continue as East?

The deal arose in a teams' match on BBO. This was the full deal:

West dealer : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ AQ	
	♥ A10982	
	♦ KQ106	
	♣ K2	
West		East
♠ 64		♠ 1095
♥ J76		♥ K53
♦ A87		♦ 5432
♣ J10865		♣ AQ7
	South	
	♠ KJ8732	
	♥ Q4	
	♦ J9	
	♣ 943	

In practice, the defence against South's 4♠ went ♣J lead: king – ace – four. East returned the ♣7: nine – ten – two. Avi Kanetkar of Sydney found the excellent switch of the ♥J: two – king – four. East shifted to the ♦5 (high-hate). West won with the ♦A and the defence had the first four tricks.

Note that if East captures the ♣K and plays the ♣Q, only a low heart return now can beat the contract as long as South plays low. If South guesses to rise with the ♥Q, South makes 4♠.

If declarer had played low from dummy at trick 1, West needs to switch to a heart at trick 2. If West were to play a second club, East wins and again has to switch to a low heart and hope South misguesses.

Note also Kanetkar's choice of the ♥J at trick 3. On the bidding South is known (or very strongly expected) not to have three hearts. The ♥J switch catered for this heart layout:

	A 10 9 8 2	
J 7 6		Q 5 3
	K 4	

If West switches to a low heart, it could go six – ten – queen – king. Now South could finesse the ♥9 later and make five heart tricks. The ♥J could not cost.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. You are the dealer, not vulnerable vs vulnerable. What do you do with:

♠ 1085
♥ KJ9862
♦ K5
♣ 85

2. With both sides vulnerable it goes Pass : Pass to you. What do you do with:

♠ A93
♥ Q5
♦ AKQ32
♣ AK4

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

Advice for Seniors: Talk to yourself. There are times when you need expert advice.