

131. Show and tell

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North

♠ QJ10

♥ A94

♦ Q1084

♣ K93

East

♠ 762

♥ 87532

♦ A76

♣ 62

West

North

East

South
1NT⁽¹⁾

Pass

3NT

All Pass

(1) 12-14 points

West leads the ♠4: queen from dummy . . . Your agreements are that you play low to encourage, high to discourage, low-high with an even number of cards, high-low with an odd number and standard suit-preference signals. Which spade would you play as East? Does it matter?

Most players prefer to signal attitude (like vs dislike) on partner's lead at trick 1. However, when attitude is patently obvious, then you should choose a count signal or a suit-preference signal, whichever is appropriate. In a trump contract, a suit-preference signal is usually most helpful. In no-trumps, telling partner how many cards you hold in the suit led will be best most of the time.

Here, when East plays low, it will be clear that East does not have the ace or king and cannot possibly like spades. You do not need to tell partner you do not like spades when that will be obvious to partner without any signal from you. What will be the most useful information for partner? The number of spades you hold.

In this situation, it is important for partner not to lead a second spade when partner comes on lead:

	North (dummy)	
	QJ10	
West		East
K984		762
	South	
	A53	

Partner led the 4, won in dummy. If partner comes on lead and plays the suit again, declarer makes three spade tricks instead of just two.

In this layout, it is a good idea for partner to lead another low spade, since it sets up three tricks for West:

	North (dummy)	
	QJ10	
West		East
K9843		762
	South	
	A5	

How does partner know? By East telling West that East has an odd number of spades. You play the ♠2 if you are playing natural count (lowest = odd number) or the ♠7 for reverse count (high-low = odd number). Today's deals are based on two deals from another book I re-read during the days of quarantine. Here is the full deal:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ QJ10	
	♥ A94	
	♦ Q1084	
	♣ K93	
West		East
♠ K9843		♠ 762
♥ J10		♥ 87532
♦ J9		♦ A76
♣ AJ104		♣ 62
	South	
	♠ A5	
	♥ KQ6	
	♦ K532	
	♣ Q875	

West leads the ♠4: queen – seven (reverse count) – five. West should deduce that the ♠7 is either a singleton (in which case there is virtually no hope of defeating 3NT) or top from three spades. If East has three spades, South has only two and the ♠A is bare after trick 1.

West also knows that East has between 4 and 6 HCP. West will have counted dummy's points as soon as they appear. North has 12 points, West has 10. Total 22. South's 1NT showed 12-14 points. Total: 34-36, leaving East with 4-6 points. That means East figures to have at least one high card in the red suits.

Suppose South plays the ♣5 next? What should West do?

One usually plays second-hand-low, but here West should rise with the ♣A and continue with a low spade to dislodge the ♠A. Playing the ♣A will at worst give South a second club trick, but that will not be enough for South to make nine tricks. As it happens, it would be fatal for West to play the ♣4 or the ♣10 or the ♣J. Dummy's ♠K wins. Declarer plays a low diamond to the king and another diamond, jack – queen – ace, and has 2 spades, 3 hearts, 3 diamonds and a club.

If West grabs the ♣A and plays another spade, declarer has 2 spades, 3 hearts and 2 clubs, but when East comes in with the ♦A and returns a spade, the defenders collect five tricks.

Incidentally, note that North should simply raise 1NT to 3NT. There cannot be a 4-4 major-suit fit, so why look for one? If 1NT can contain a 5-card major, even then 1NT : 3NT is preferable. Most of the time a 4-3-3-3 pattern opposite a 5-3-3-2 will make the same number of tricks in no-trumps as in the 5-3 fit.

This was yesterday's second question:

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

What would you lead as West from:

♠ 62
 ♥ A1085
 ♦ --
 ♣ Q876432

If you have paid attention to the bidding, you should deduce that North has shown 5+ hearts with the 2♥ response and South has shown 3-4 hearts with the raise to 3♥. That leaves partner with a singleton heart or a void in hearts. That should make it easy for you to lead the ♥A.

This is what you see:

North
♠ A974
♥ QJ943
♦ AQ6
♣ J

West
♠ 62
♥ A1085
♦ --
♣ Q876432

Trick 1: ♥A – three – seven – six. What do you play at trick 2?

Yes, I know you are playing another heart, but which one?

Since partner is going to ruff this heart, you can tell partner which suit to play next via the heart you play. With spades as trumps, the contending suits are diamonds (higher suit) and clubs (lower suit). Low heart at trick 2 asks for clubs, the lower suit. High heart at trick 2 asks for diamonds, the higher suit. That means you should play the ♥10 at trick 2.

East ruffs with the ♠10 and returns the ♦J: three – ♠2 – ♦6. What do you do now?

You could play another heart and hope partner has another trump (South could have six spades) or play a club and hope partner has the ♣A to give you another ruff. How can you tell?

Given dummy's diamonds are headed by the A-Q and your ♥10 asked for a diamond return, East has deduced that you are void in diamonds. Which diamond did partner play at trick 3?

Yes, the ♦J. Since that is a high diamond, partner is asking for another heart and so has a second spade with which to ruff. Which heart do you play this time?

Correct. The ♥8, to tell partner that you also have a second spade and can trump another diamond. The full deal:

North
♠ A974
♥ QJ943
♦ AQ6
♣ J

West
♠ 62
♥ A1085
♦ --
♣ Q876432

East
♠ J10
♥ 7
♦ KJ107542
♣ K109

South
♠ KQ853
♥ K62
♦ 983
♣ A5

Note that if you lead a club or a spade, South wins, draws trumps, knocks out the ♥A and can make 12 tricks. South's diamond losers go on dummy's heart winners. After drawing trumps, South plays hearts and finesses the ♥9 after learning East began with a singleton heart.

After ♥A, ♥10 ruffed, ♦J ruffed, ♥8 ruffed and a diamond ruff, South is held to eight tricks, two down.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
?		Pass	1♣

What would you do as West with:

♠ KQJ1092
♥ 87
♦ Q7
♣ 653

2. Dealer South : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
?			1♠

What would you do as West with:

♠ 9842
♥ J1098652
♦ 3
♣ 8

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

Advice for Seniors #5: The biggest lie you tell yourself is, "I don't need to write that down. I'll remember it."