

139. Signal ideas

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

	North		
	♠ 109		
	♥ J98		
	♦ 8		
	♣ AKQJ953		
West			
♠ 82			
♥ A53			
♦ 976542			
♣ 84			
West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	4♠	5♥
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

You, West, lead the ♠8: nine – jack – ace. South plays the ♥K. Plan the defence.

The first thing to note that there is no rush to take the ♥A. If you do and partner follows, you cannot be sure what to do next. If you let this heart go, South will need to play another trump. South cannot afford to run the clubs while there are still any low trumps about.

When South plays the next trump, you take ♥A. If partner shows out, quite likely, partner can signal to you what to play next. The question is whether to play a spade or a diamond. If you did not start with a singleton spade, partner knows from your ♠8 lead that you began with a doubleton. If East has 7 spades, K-Q-J-7-6-4-2, for example, partner could play the ♠K to ask for a spade. If partner has eight spades, in which case a second spade would be futile as it would be ruffed, East should signal to ask for a diamond if East has the ♦A.

Our methods are odd-discard = encouraging in that suit, even-discard is suit-preference. With K-Q-J-7-6-4-2, East discards ♠7 on the second heart, odd card, to ask for a spade. With K-Q-J-7-6-5-4-2 + ♦A, East throws the ♠2, even card, to ask for the low suit, in this case diamonds, since partner cannot possibly want a club here.

Suppose East also holds ♣10-2. East could discard the ♣10 to ask for a spade, the ♣2 to ask for a diamond. High-even asks for the high suit, low-even asks for the low suit.

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ QJ109
♥ Q632
♦ 1083
♣ 42

East
♠ 8532
♥ KJ
♦ 97642
♣ 75

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

West leads the ♦K, followed by the ♦A, South following with the ♦J and ♦Q. West switches to the ♥7: two – jack – ace. South returns the ♥10: four – three – king. What do you play now?

What would you play at trick 5 if trick 3 had been ♥4: two – jack – ace and trick 5: ♥10 – seven – three – king?

The first thing to note is the meaning of partner's ♦K lead, followed by the ♦A. In the modern style, one leads the ace from suits headed by A-K, such as A-K-x, A-K-x-x, A-K-x-x-x or longer. With A-K doubleton, we play king-then-ace to let partner know that we began with A-K doubleton and can ruff the third round.

Do not be put off by declarer's ♦J and ♦Q. Since dummy has the ♦10, it costs South nothing to let the ♦J and ♦Q go. Always trust partner's carding. Ace-then-king indicates one or more cards still in the suit. King-then-ace = partner has no more cards in the suit.

Partner has shifted to a trump, a strange choice, no doubt, but you are not asked to reason why in this case. If you do the problems for tomorrow – see later – that might give you an idea. What you are required to notice is that partner has played ♥7-then-♥4. Playing high-then-low in trumps shows an odd number of trumps and usually an interest in ruffing. Therefore when you win with the ♥K, you should return a diamond. Partner might have this hand:

♠ K64
♥ 754
♦ AK
♣ AJ1083

When you return the diamond, West ruffs, cashes the ♣A, exits with the ♣J and will eventually come to a spade trick for the sixth trick for the defence.

If partner switched to the ♥4 and played the ♥7 on the next round, partner is showing an even number. Since South opened 1♥, that means partner began with two hearts and is now out of hearts and cannot ruff a diamond. In that case you should switch to a club and hope partner has something like this:

♠ K64
♥ 74
♦ AK
♣ AQ9863

Partner can take two clubs, exit with the third club and wait to collect a spade trick.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

North
 ♠ KJ109
 ♥ Q632
 ♦ 1083
 ♣ 42

East
 ♠ A532
 ♥ J5
 ♦ 97642
 ♣ Q5

After South 1♥, North 2♥, South 4♥, all pass:

(a) Partner leads ♦K, then ♦A. Which diamonds do you play as East?

(b) Which diamonds would you play as East if you held:

♠ 6532
 ♥ J5
 ♦ 97642
 ♣ AQ

(c) What about if your hand as East was:

♠ 8532
 ♥ KJ
 ♦ 97642
 ♣ 75

2. Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

North
 ♠ 874
 ♥ KQJ6
 ♦ J8
 ♣ K1054

West
 ♠ QJ1092
 ♥ A87
 ♦ 65
 ♣ 832

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

(a) You lead the ♠Q and partner takes the ♠A. Partner continues with the ♠K. Which spade do you play as West?

What if your hand as West was:

(b)	♠ QJ1092	OR	(c)	♠ QJ1092
	♥ 873			♥ 873
	♦ 65			♦ A6
	♣ A32			♣ 832

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

The language of seniors: 'One for the road' = peeing before you leave the house.