310. Taking shape

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West: East-West vulnerable

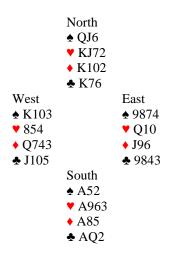
West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

- **♦** A52
- ♥ A963
- ♦ A85
- ♣ AQ2

Today's deal comes from the final of the 2020 Australian National Open Teams.

Board 22: Dealer West: East-West vulnerable



Where would you like to be with the North-South cards? Yes, you have a 4-4 heart fit, but there is no potential for ruffing. A 4-3-3-3 shape opposite a 4-3-3-3 usually makes as many tricks in a trump fit as in no-trumps. In no-trumps here, you have 1 spade, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and 3 clubs on top. Making a second spade trick is no problem. Conclusion: You can make 3NT against any distribution, even if hearts were 5-0.

If you are in 4 you figure to lose a spade and a diamond. If the hearts are very friendly, you make 11 tricks. If hearts are 3-2 you always make ten tricks, even if you lose a trump trick.

How will you play the hearts? There is a safety play to ensure 3 heart tricks. Heart to the king and a low heart towards the A-9-6 guarantees 3 tricks. If East shows out on the second heart, you play the ♥A and lead a heart towards the J-7. If East follows low on the second heart, you play the ♥9. If that loses, there is only one heart out and the ♥A will collect it later. This play guards against ♥Q-10-x-x with East. If East plays the ♥10 on the second heart, you take it with the ace and your ♥9 and ♥J in dummy will lose only one trick to the ♥Q.

As the cards lie here, heart to the king and a low heart will bring in 11 tricks when the ♥Q falls. If you start the hearts by playing the ♥A, you could lose four tricks: a spade, a diamond and two hearts if East did begin with ♥Q-10-x-x.

Board 22: Dealer West: East-West vulnerable

```
North
         ♦ QJ6
         ♥ KJ72
         ♦ K102
         ♣ K76
West
                  East
★ K103

◆ 9874

9 854
                  ♥ Q10
♦ Q743
                  ♦ J96
♣ J105
                  ♣ 9843
         South
         ♠ A52
         ♥ A963
         ♦ A85
         ♣ AQ2
```

DON North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	$1^{(1)}$
Pass	2 ♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

- (1) 4+ hearts
- (2) Minimum hand with 4 hearts

East led the ♠7: two – king – six. West returned the ♠10, won by the ♠Q. North played the ♥2: ten – ace – four and the ♥3: five – jack – queen. A spade ruff would have been unwelcome at this point, but that was not available to the defence. South lost a diamond later and made ten tricks, +420.

After 2, one option for South is to jump to 3NT, offering North the choice between 3NT and 4. North would have passed 3NT here, but with some ruffing value, North might retreat to 4. The downside of jumping to 3NT is that you telegraph to the opponents that you have a 3-4-3-3 pattern. Once dummy appears, the opponents know the exact distribution around the table, whether you are in 4♥ or in 3NT.

Sartaj Hans (S) found a better route to 3NT:

HANS North-South:

```
West
           North
                     East
                                   South
           1•(1)
Pass
                     Pass
                                   1♥
           2y
                                   2NT^{(2)}
Pass
                     Pass
           3NT<sup>(3)</sup> All Pass
Pass
```

- (1) Playing a strong 1♣ system
- (2) Asking about North's heart length
- (3) Exactly 3-4-3-3

West led the ◆3: two – nine – ace. Had West's ◆3 been from Q-9-4-3, then ◆3: two – jack – ace would have allowed South to collect three diamond tricks. The same would be true if the ◆3 was from J-9-4-3. Playing dummy's ◆10 has less chance of a third trick. It works only if West has led from Q-J-4-3.

South played the ♥A: four – two – ten and the ♥9: five – seven – queen. East returned the ◆J, winning, and the ♦6 to the ♦K. The ♠Q lost to the ♠K and West cashed the ♦Q. South had 9 tricks, +400, -1 Imp, but the contract was never in jeopardy.

If East had followed low on the \(\forall A\) and West had shown out on the next heart, South would have won with the **▼**K and taken the spade finesse, again making 9 tricks safely.

After ♥A: four – two – ten, South could have made overtricks. South elected to play West for Q-8-5-4 and that could have been the position. Had South played ♥A and ♥K, he would have made 11 tricks. If East had shown out, South could return to hand with a club and play a low heart towards dummy's ♥J-7 to ensure 9 tricks.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East: Nil vulnerable

West North East South

What would you do as South with:

- **♠** 9 **♥** AQJ9752
- **♦** J6
- **♣** 972

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

What's money? A man is a success if he gets up in the morning and goes to bed at night and in between does what he wants to do. (Bob Dylan).