

## 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

North	
♠ QJ6	
♥ KJ72	
♦ K102	
♣ K76	
West	East
♠ K103	♠ 9874
♥ 854	♥ Q10
♦ Q743	♦ J96
♣ J105	♣ 9843
South	
♠ A52	
♥ A963	
♦ A85	
♣ AQ2	

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.

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South	
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♥ A963	
♦ A85	
♣ AQ2	

DON North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♦ <sup>(1)</sup>
Pass	2♥ <sup>(2)</sup>	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
Pass	1♦ <sup>(1)</sup>	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT <sup>(2)</sup>
Pass	3NT <sup>(3)</sup>	All 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 ♥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
		1♦	?

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).*