374. In shape

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

WestNorthEastSouthPass1 ◆Pass1 ♥Pass2 ◆Pass2 ◆- fourth suit forcingPass?

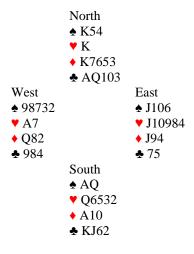
What would you do as North with:

▲ K54
♥ K
♦ K7653
▲ AQ103

You have no more shape than promised, but you do have a spade stopper and your hand is better than a minimum opening. How can you convey that to partner. (*More later*.)

The deal arose in the quarter-final match between FLEISHER and LAVAZZA in the 2016 Vanderbilt (USA Knockout Open Teams):

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For WELLAND, the auction began $1 \diamond : 1$ NT (artificial, forcing to game). After a series of relays, North revealed a 3-1-5-4 pattern with extra values. South then checked on controls and bid $6 \blacklozenge$ after the reply. With trumps 3-2 and diamonds 3-3, $6 \blacklozenge$ was an easy make, North-South +1370.

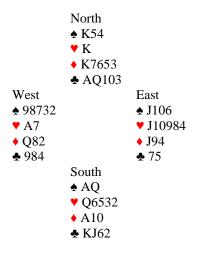
With LAVAZZA North-South it went:

West North East South $2^{(1)}$ Pass 1NT Pass 2**♠**⁽²⁾ Pass 2♥ Pass $2NT^{(3)}$ $4NT^{(4)}$ Pass Pass Pass Pass Pass (1) Transfer to hearts (2) Artificial, forcing, exactly 2-5-2-4 and an invitational hand (3) Minimum (4) Inviting slam

I am no fan of opening 1NT with a singleton even when it is a singleton king or a singleton ace. If no-trumps is the right spot, you will find it after your natural 1 opening. Meanwhile, when you open 1NT, partner expects a balanced hand and not the trick-taking potential of a shapely hand.

North could have bid 3 over 2. If it was a part-score hand, 3 figured to be safer than 2NT. If partner was strong, the club fit would have galvanized South into heading for 6. North might have bid 6 over 4NT.

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East led the \checkmark 10 (underleading): two – seven – king. North played the \diamond 3 to the \diamond 10 and \diamond Q. West shifted to a club and North made 4 clubs, 4 diamonds, 3 spades and the \forall K, +690, but –12 Imps. Given the strength in dummy, West might have known, after taking the \diamond Q, that there was little more for the defence other than the \forall A. West could have cashed the \forall A and held North to 11 tricks. That would not have changed the score here, but it would be vital if playing a pairs' game.

This was yesterday's question:

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

What would you do as South with:

▲ AQ
♥ Q6532
♦ A10
♣ KJ62

South's problem is that North's rebid has a wide range. It could be a minimum 11-12- point hand or a good hand up to 17-18 points. It could be 5-4 in the minors, but it might also be 5-5 or 6-5 or 1-3-5-4. Opposite a minimum with no heart fit, 3NT might be best. Opposite extra strength or extra shape, a slam is feasible.

South should rebid 24, fourth-suit forcing, to find out more about opener's hand. In reply, 34 is the default bid to deny extra shape and to deny a spade stopper. It could be 5 diamonds – 4 clubs or 6 diamonds – 4 clubs. A 34 rebid would show 5-5 or 6-5 in the minors. With extra strength and no spade stopper, North can raise the fourth suit, here 34. With a spade stopper, opener is expected to bid no-trumps.

In this auction, it is useful to distinguish between opener's rebid of 2NT or 3NT. The partnership can stipulate the difference. One option is to play 3NT as a minimum with spades well held and 2NT for all others, but with a spade stopper. This allows the fourth-suit bidder to clarify the hand. Here responder would rebid 3* over 2NT and that should lead the partnership to 6*.

Another option would be to play 2NT as minimum 11-14 or 18+ and 3NT as 15-17. That approach would also have led to $6\clubsuit$. It is certainly worthwhile for a partnership to sort out their agreements in this area.

In practice, it went $1 \diamond : 1 \heartsuit, 2 \bigstar : 2 \bigstar, 3 \bigstar : 3NT$, all pass.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : North-South vulnerable

 $\begin{array}{c|cccc} West & North & East & South \\ Pass & Pass & 1NT \\ Pass & 2 \bigstar^{(1)} & Pass & 2 \bigstar^{(2)} \\ Pass & 2NT & Pass & ? \\ (1) Simple Stayman \\ (2) No 4+ major \\ \end{array}$

What would you do as South with:

▲ AJ3
♥ K2
♦ KQ1062
▲ Q104

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

It would be a good idea to get rid of democracy. All in favour, raise your hand.