

27. To Pass or not to Pass

By Ron Klinger

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ 54
♥ Q10654
♦ K54
♣ A65

Suppose you have chosen 1NT. It continues:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2NT
Pass	?		

What now?

Today's deals come from a teams' match in March, 2020.

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 54	
	♥ Q10654	
	♦ K54	
	♣ A65	
West		East
♠ 1093		♠ K86
♥ 732		♥ J8
♦ 73		♦ AJ102
♣ J10743		♣ KQ92
	South	
	♠ AQJ72	
	♥ AK9	
	♦ Q986	
	♣ 8	

At one table, South's 1♠ overcall was passed out. West led the ♦7: four – ten – queen. South crossed to the ♣A, finessed in spades, played ♥9 to the ♥Q, finessed in spades and cashed the ♠A. He ended with 10 tricks, +170.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

	North	
	♠ 54	
	♥ Q10654	
	♦ K54	
	♣ A65	
West		East
♠ 1093		♠ K86
♥ 732		♥ J8
♦ 73		♦ AJ102
♣ J10743		♣ KQ92
	South	
	♠ AQJ72	
	♥ AK9	
	♦ Q986	
	♣ 8	

After Pass : Pass : 1♦ : 1♠, the North hand is strong enough for a 1NT reply. Some play this as 8-11, but many choose to treat it the same as after a 1-opening, so 6-9 (10) points. South had a strong overcall, but within the modern-day parameters for a 1-level overcall, and so invited with 2NT. Playing 1NT as 6-9(10) points the North hand is maximum and so should accept the invitation. It costs nothing to show the heart suit via 3♥. If that does not suit South, there is the obvious retreat to 3NT or in some cases, even 3♠.

East led the ♣K. Declarer took the ♣A and finessed in spades. Twelve tricks are available ((draw trumps, repeat the spade finesse, cash ♠A, pitch two clubs and a diamond on dummy's spades, but this would not have worked so well if West had the ♠K and had ducked the first round of spades).). Declarer played ♥A, ♥K, followed by the ♦Q. East won and exited with the ♣2, ruffed in dummy. Declarer crossed to the ♦K, drew the last trump and cashed two more hearts. East pitched spades and so North made 12 tricks after all, +480 and +7 Imps.

North dealer : North-South vulnerable

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

What would you do as South with:

♠ A654
♥ 5
♦ AK94
♣ 10983

North dealer : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ K3	
	♥ K98762	
	♦ 52	
	♣ AQ7	
West		East
♠ Q10982		♠ J7
♥ A104		♥ QJ3
♦ 63		♦ QJ1087
♣ K52		♣ J64
	South	
	♠ A654	
	♥ 5	
	♦ AK94	
	♣ 10983	

At one table, North's 2♥ was passed out. East led the ♦Q, taken by the ace. South ran the ♠10 to the ♣J and East switched to the ♠J. Declarer won with dummy's ♠A and played the ♥5: four – king – three and exited with a heart. East continued with the ♠7, won by the ♠K. North played a third heart. West won and continued spades, North ruffed, crossed to the ♦K and finessed the ♣Q. When that won, North had ten tricks, +170. North lost two hearts and a club.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West led the ♠10: three – seven – ace. South played the ♠10 and when West played low, South put in dummy's ♣Q, winning. Then came ♣A and a third club. West won and continued with the ♠9: king – jack – four. South came to hand with a diamond, cashed the ♠9 and exited with the ♥5. West took the ♥A, cashed the spades, followed by the ♦6. South won but was left with a diamond loser, one down, –100 and –7 Imps.

South can make 2NT double dummy, but it incurs a risk of being several down if things go sour. On the actual line chosen, declarer set up the ♥K but lacked access to it. These lines would work.

(1) Win the ♠10 lead with the ♠A and play the ♥5. If West ducks, the ♥K wins. Continue with another heart. If East wins and plays another spade to the ♠K, play a third heart. West wins and can cash three more spades, but South has 2 spades, 3 hearts, 2 diamonds and 1 club. If West takes the ♥A at trick 2, you can likewise set the hearts up.

(2) Win the ♠10 lead with the ♠A, play a heart. If West ducks, the ♥K wins. Cross to the ♦A, finesse the ♣Q, cash ♣A and play a third club. You make 2 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 3 clubs.

(3) Win the spade lead with the ♠A, finesse the ♣Q, cross to the ♦A and play a heart. You will be able to set up the hearts or the clubs.

None of the above lines is straightforward and if the ♥A would be with East, you would be two or three off.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. North dealer : North-South vulnerable

	North
	♠ 1054
	♥ K10
	♦ 9863
	♣ K1083
West	
	♠ J83
	♥ A62
	♦ QJ2
	♣ A942

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

West leads the ♠J (not a universal choice; standard from J-8-3 is the 3): four – two (even number) – king. South plays the ♥4: two – king – three (even number) and the ♥10: seven – five – ace. What would you do next?

2. North dealer : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Fourth-suit, forcing to game

What would you lead as West from:

♠ J932
♥ 8743
♦ A
♣ 10986

Why not discuss the problems by phone with your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

This limerick won second place:

*For fifty-six years of my life
I've partnered at bridge with my wife.
It's been a long road
But she's carried the load
And now we are Masters for Life.
(ACBL Bulletin, March 2020)*