

94. A ducking good time

By Ron Klinger

East dealer : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ A53
♥ A5
♦ A8
♣ AKQ1096

South
♠ Q7
♥ K7
♦ QJ96532
♣ 32

West	North	East	South
		Pass	3♦
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	6♦	All Pass	

(1) 0 or 3 key cards for diamonds

West leads the ♠6. Plan the play.

The opening lead is a nuisance. On some other lead, say, a heart, you could take the ♥A and play ♦A and a second diamond. That would be plain sailing unless West began with the four missing trumps.

Anyway, over to you. Decide before reading further.

East dealer : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A53	
	♥ A5	
	♦ A8	
	♣ AKQ1096	
West		East
♠ KJ9642		♠ 108
♥ J84		♥ Q109632
♦ 74		♦ K10
♣ 54		♣ J87
	South	
	♠ Q7	
	♥ K7	
	♦ QJ96532	
	♣ 32	

Yesterday's first problem: What should West lead after the auction above?

Any lead could work on a given day. West chose the spade lead in case East had the ♠A and North-South were off two spade tricks. Another possibility was to find East with the ♠Q and an early entry to be able to cash a spade. That was not the case. The deal comes from the final of the 2019 Spingold (USA K-O Open Teams) between [BLASS](#) and [ZIMMERMANN](#) and was replayed on BBO with robots North-South.

On the ♠6 lead, robot South played the ♠A, crossed to the ♥K and led the ♦Q: four – eight – king. East returned a spade and that was one down.

East dealer : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A53	
	♥ A5	
	♦ A8	
	♣ AKQ1096	
West		East
♠ KJ9642		♠ 108
♥ J84		♥ Q109632
♦ 74		♦ K10
♣ 54		♣ J87
	South	
	♠ Q7	
	♥ K7	
	♦ QJ96532	
	♣ 32	

That seemed a strange play. Unless the ♠6 lead was a singleton – and why should it be? – playing low in dummy gives you two chances (1) that West has led from the ♠K or (2) South has no diamond loser. South took only chance 2, while taking both chances would have landed the slam.

Leading from a king in a trump contract is not particularly attractive ('Leads from a suit headed by K-J or K-J-10 are the very worst of the leads from a king-high suit.' *Winning Suit Contract Leads*, by David Bird and Taf Anthias.). Here, however, it was unlikely that South would have the ♠Q or the ♠A, given the 3♦ opening (even though South in fact did have the ♠Q). Note that on any lead but a spade, declarer has no problem.

The above was Board 57 in the final of the 2019 Spingold. At one table:

West	North	East	South
		2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
3♥ ⁽²⁾	Dble	Pass	5♦
Pass	7♦	All Pass	

(1) Weak two in hearts or in spades

(2) Pass or correct

If West had led a spade here, declarer would of course take the ♠A. West led the ♥4. Declarer was one down, East-West +50.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
		2♥	Pass
2♠	3NT	All Pass	

East led ♠10: seven – jack – three. West switched to the ♥4. North took the ♥A, cashed ♣A, ♣K and played ♦A and ♦8 for 11 tricks, +460 and +11 Imps.

East dealer : North-South vulnerable

North
♠ 42
♥ A85
♦ AK92
♣ Q532

West
♠ 10
♥ KQJ10763
♦ 4
♣ K864

West	North	East	South
		Pass	4♥
4♠	5♥	Dble	All Pass

Do you agree with North's 5♥ bid?

West leads the ♠A and switches to the ♣J: two – seven – king. Plan the play. Trumps are 2-1

In days gone by, pre-empts were based on the Rule of 3 and 2. You were expected to be three tricks short of your contract if not vulnerable, two tricks short if vulnerable. Not many experts stick to the Rule of 3 and 2 these days, though many do when vulnerable against not vulnerable. The popular approach nowadays is to be three tricks short of your contract at any vulnerability. There are some who are happy to be four tricks short at favourable vulnerability. You and your partner should agree on the expectations for pre-empts.

South has six playing tricks in the heart suit and a potential trick in clubs. With the freakish shape, South has only five losers, which translates into eight playing tricks. That makes 4♥ reasonable.

As for North, there are three winners on top, the ♣Q might be useful and there is potential for a ruff in spades. That justifies competing to 5♥.

	North	
	♠ 42	
	♥ A85	
	♦ AK92	
	♣ Q532	
West		East
♠ AQJ9875		♠ K63
♥ 4		♥ 92
♦ Q108		♦ J7653
♣ J10		♣ A97
	South	
	♠ 10	
	♥ KQJ10763	
	♦ 4	
	♣ K864	

On BBO, after ♠A lead and ♣J switch: two – seven – king, I played ♥K: four – five – nine, ♦A, ♦2 ruffed and ♥7: ♠10 – ♥A – ♥2. Eventually I lost club tricks for one down, doubled, -200. However, I had missed a golden opportunity to shine.

The ♣J switch marked East with the ♣A. If East started with ♣A-doubleton, I was always all right, but I could have catered for the actual position.

	North	
	♠ 42	
	♥ A85	
	♦ AK92	
	♣ Q532	
West		East
♠ AQJ9875		♠ K63
♥ 4		♥ 92
♦ Q108		♦ J7653
♣ J10		♣ A97
	South	
	♠ 10	
	♥ KQJ10763	
	♦ 4	
	♣ K864	

After ♠A and ♣J, ducked to the ♣Q, South crosses to the ♥A, ruffs the ♠4, plays ♦4 to the ♦A, cashes the ♦K and ruffs a diamond. These cards are left:

	North	
	♠	
	♥ 85	
	♦ 9	
	♣ Q53	
West		East
♠ QJ987		♠ K
♥		♥ 9
♦		♦ J7
♣ 10		♣ A9
	South	
	♠	
	♥ KQJ7	
	♦	
	♣ 86	

South exits with the ♣6: ten – three from dummy . . . If East did begin with ♣A doubleton, all is well. When West began with J-10 doubleton, West wins (East cannot afford to overtake) and has to play a spade. You ruff in dummy and discard your last club. Alas, playing a second round of hearts allowed West to jettison the ♣10 (not bad for a robot) and enable East to collect two club tricks later.

At one table in the Spingold final, the auction was the same, except for the final double: Pass : 4♥ : 4♠ : 5♥, all pass. West led the ♠A and ♠Q. South ruffed with the ♥3 and played ♥K, ♥A, ♥8 to the ♥10, then ♣4: jack – king – ace. East switched to the ♦3. Declarer played ♦A, ♦K, diamond ruff and lost a club later for –100.

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	4♥
4♠	5♥	Pass	Pass
5♠	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

North led the ♦K and continued with ♥A, ♦A and a third diamond, ruffed. Declarer had the rest. That was two down, –300 and 9 Imps to [BLASS](#).

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. East dealer : Both vulnerable

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

(1) Fourth-suit, forcing to game

What would you do now as North with:

♠ J
♥ KJ8
♦ AK943
♣ AK75

2. East dealer : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
1♥	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	3♥	?

(1) 10+ points, limit raise or better in clubs

What would you do as South with:

♠ AKQ3
♥ 10
♦ 106
♣ QJ7642

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

Our local newsagency has a sign on the door: "No toilet rolls kept on the premises".