

106. The location of queens

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♠	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ A4
♥ AKJ62
♦ Q8
♣ AKJ5

Suppose you double. It continues:

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

What now?

Still it goes on:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♠	Dble
2♠	Pass	Pass	Dble ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾	Pass	?

(1) Still for takeout

(2) Weak hand, asking you to bid 3♣, which partner might be intending to pass.

Your move?

Today's deals come from the finals of the Spingold (USA K-O Open Teams). This one is from 2017.

Board 24: Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 862	
	♥ 1093	
	♦ 9754	
	♣ 1086	
West		East
♠ 1095		♠ KQJ73
♥ Q8		♥ 754
♦ K102		♦ AJ63
♣ 97432		♣ Q
	South	
	♠ A4	
	♥ AKJ62	
	♦ Q8	
	♣ AKJ5	

On BBO with robots North-South and humans East-West, it went Pass : 1♠ : Double : Pass(!), 2♦ : Pass : 3♥, all pass. This looks like a sensible auction. West led the ♠10 to the ♠A. South played ♥A, ♣A, ♥K and made ten tricks, losing just a spade and two diamonds.

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 862	
	♥ 1093	
	♦ 9754	
	♣ 1086	
West		East
♠ 1095		♠ KQJ73
♥ Q8		♥ 754
♦ K102		♦ AJ63
♣ 97432		♣ Q
	South	
	♠ A4	
	♥ AKJ62	
	♦ Q8	
	♣ AKJ5	

The auctions in the Spingold final were identical:

West	North	East	South
<i>Madala</i>	<i>Brogeland</i>	<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Lindqvist</i>
<i>Diamond</i>	<i>Duboin</i>	<i>Platnick</i>	<i>Bilde</i>
	Pass	1♠	Dble
2♠	Pass	Pass	Dble ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Still for takeout

(2) Weak hand, asking you to bid 3♣, which partner might be intending to pass.

Essentially, both Souths bid to game on their own with a 5-loser hand. Had the ♥Q not dropped or if West had ♣Q-x-x or longer, the game would have failed. Single dummy, 4♥ is not much of a contract, but it made, thanks to the location of the short queens in the rounded suits.

South's double of 1♠ and 2♠ are clearcut, but after North's 2NT, a bid of 3♥ by South seems adequate. That shows 5+ hearts in a hand too strong to take the puppet, about a 4-loser hand. Instead, both Souths chose 3♣, forcing to game. This looks like an overbid, but what do I know? These players are world champions, after all.

As for West's raise to 2♠, the need or desirability is not immediately obvious. West has a 10-loser hand, while the raise to 2♠ is usually 6-9 points and 9 losers, occasionally 8 losers. Suppose it had started:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♠	Dble
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	?	Pass	?

(1) Very strong hand

What would North have done now? Tricky, isn't it?

The next problem arose in the final of the 2018 Spingold:

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

North
♠ J3
♥ K73
♦ KQJ9
♣ 6432

South
♠ A95
♥ AJ10862
♦ 1084
♣ 5

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♦	1♥ ⁽¹⁾	2♥
Dble ⁽²⁾	3♥	3♠	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 4+ spades

(2) Support double, 3 spades exactly

West leads the ♠K: three – four (odd number) – five and switches to the ♣K: two – nine – five, followed by the ♠Q: jack – eight – ace. Plan the play.

The simple answer is to play ♥A, ♥K and ruff your spade loser. If the ♥Q drops, you are home. If not, you lose a trick in each suit.

There is no immediate urgency to test the hearts. Unless you fall victim to a singleton diamond with one of the opponents, you can explore with a discovery play. You have 19 points, so East-West began with 21. West opened and East responded. East competed to 3♠. The points could be divided 12-9, 13-8 or, less likely, 11-10, 14-7 or 15-6.

Suppose at trick 4 you play the ♦8: three – king – seven and then the ♣3: ace – ♥2 – ♣8. How would you play from here?

You have located the ♣A, but you are no wiser as to the location of the ♥Q. Either East or West could have it. It is too dangerous to play another diamond, as that could lead to a diamond ruff.

Suppose that when you played the ♦8 to the ♦K, East thought for some time – which is what happened in real life – and then played the ♦7. Does this affect your play after ruffing the ♣A?

Clearly East was considering whether to take the ♦A or whether to duck. Now you know East began with the ♣A and you also place the ♦A with East. It is more likely that West began with 12-13 points and East with 8-9 than West with 11 points and East with 10.

The full deal appears on the next page:

Board 40: Dealer West : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ J3	
	♥ K73	
	♦ KQJ9	
	♣ 6432	
West		East
♠ KQ2		♠ 108764
♥ Q95		♥ 4
♦ 32		♦ A765
♣ KQ1087		♣ AJ9
	South	
	♠ A95	
	♥ AJ10862	
	♦ 1084	
	♣ 5	

World champion, Tor Helness of Norway was South. Here is the auction again:

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♦	1♥ ⁽¹⁾	2♥
Dble ⁽²⁾	3♥	3♠	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 4+ spades

(2) Support double, 3 spades exactly

West led ♠K: three – four (odd number) – five and switched to the ♣K: two – nine – five, followed by the ♠Q: jack – eight – ace. South played the ♦8: three – king . . . East thought for some time and then followed with the ♦7. Then came the ♣3: ace – ♥2 – ♣8. Clearly East was considering whether to take the ♦A and then turned up with the ♣A.

Placing the ♥Q now with West, South played the ♥10: five – three! – four. South ruffed the ♠9, cashed the ♥K, ruffed a club, cashed the ♥A and played a diamond for ten tricks, +620. Well done!

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♥
Dble ⁽¹⁾	3♥	3♠	All Pass

(1) 3 spades exactly

South led the ♣5. East, Michal Klukowski of Poland, won with the ♣A in hand and played the ♠7: five – king – three. He played a low club to his ♣9. South ruffed, cashed the ♥A and continued with the ♥J: nine – seven – ♠6. East played another trump, won by South's ♠A. East conceded a diamond and claimed nine tricks, +140 and +13 Imps.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1NT ⁽¹⁾	3♣
Pass	4♣	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) 15-18 points, balanced in theory

What would you lead as West from:

♠ K63
♥ 76432
♦ QJ
♣ 954

2. Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
1♦	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	4♦	4♣
5♦	Dble	Pass	5♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 6+ spades, 7-10 points

What would you lead as West from:

♠ A4
♥ K542
♦ KQJ542
♣ 2

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

Retribution is great. Here's to all the parents who never taught their kids respect and now they're stuck at home with the little darlings!