

113. The view on high

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣	Pass	1NT – 15-17
Pass	3♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	6NT

(1) Natural, forcing

What would you lead as West from:

♠ Q8762
♥ 10876
♦ Q74
♣ 9

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

	North		East
	♠ 109		♠ J43
	♥ KJ2		♥ Q4
	♦ AK85		♦ J92
	♣ KQ62		♣ 107543
West			
♠ Q8762			
♥ 10876			
♦ Q74			
♣ 9			
	South		
	♠ AK5		
	♥ A953		
	♦ 1063		
	♣ AJ8		

On BBO, with robots North-South and East-West passing throughout, the bidding went 1NT : 2♣ (minor suit inquiry), 2NT : 4NT, all pass. West led the ♠6: ten – jack – king. South cashed ♣A, ♣J, West discarding the ♥6. A heart to the jack lost to the ♥Q. South ended with 11 tricks, +460.

The deal originated in the 2015 Vanderbilt (USA K-O Open Teams) in the Round of 16 match, [MONACO](#) vs [ROSENTHAL](#). For [MONACO](#), Tor Helness (S) – Geir Helgemo (N) bid 1NT : 2♣, 2♥ : 2NT (forcing, looking for a minor suit fit), 3NT (shows 3-4-3-3), all pass. West led the ♠7. South captured East's jack and finessed the ♥J. East won and returned the ♠4, ducked to the ♠Q. Back came a third spade. Declarer made ten tricks, +430.

At the other table, South reached 6NT after the auction given. Even though South had bid hearts, West thought a heart lead was safe and began with the ♥8: two – four -nine. Playing the ♥Q would not have helped. Declarer played to the ♦A and ducked a diamond. Back came a club. When the ♥A dropped the ♥Q, declarer claimed 12 tricks, +990 and +11 Imps.

When the opponents' hands are known or expected to be balanced, it is recommended not to lead a suit which contains an unsupported honour card against a 6NT contract. That rules out a spade and a diamond at once and likewise a heart, since the 10-8-7-6 in hearts includes an honour. Certainly a heart appeals more than a spade or a diamond, but given South has shown four hearts, the heart lead is also risky. That leaves the ♣9 as your best choice and you just pray it does not trap an honour in partner's hand. Double dummy, declarer can always make 6NT, but in practice there is a good chance it will fail on the ♣9 lead as South will probably finesse the ♥J.

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

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

(1) Game-force, 4+ spades

What would you do as South with:

♠ AK9863
♥ KQ5432
♦ --
♣ 4

Partner has shown 4+ spades, so that you expect there will be no spade loser. If partner has four low spades, the chance of a 2-1 break is 78% and there is a strong chance that partner has the ♠Q anyway. The right level now could be 5♠ or 6♠ or 7♠. The grand slam would be fine opposite:

♠ Q754	or	♠ Q754
♥ A6		♥ A6
♦ A987		♦ QJ87
♣ A62		♣ A62

You would be happy to be in 6♠ opposite:

♠ Q754	or	♠ Q754	Even though the second hand requires some work
♥ A6		♥ 96	
♦ KQ72		♦ KQ72	
♣ K85		♣ AQ3	

The limit would be 5♠ if partner has something like this:

♠ Q754
♥ J3
♦ KQJ3
♣ KQ85

How can you find out? 4NT will help you only if partner shows no aces or three aces. If partner shows one or two aces, you will not know which ones they are. Expert players have chosen to solve this problem with Exclusion Key Card Blackwood. After you have agreed on your trump suit, a jump-bid in a new suit beyond game in your trump suit asks for key cards excluding the suit you have just bid. Exclusion KCB is almost invariably based on a void in that suit.

The popular reply structure to EKCB is Step 1 = 0, Step 2 = 1, Step 3 = 2, no Q, Step 4 = 2 + Q, Step 5 = 3. In this auction, after 1♠ : 2NT, South could bid 5♦ EKCB. After 5♥, no key cards outside diamonds, South signs off in 5♠. Opposite 5♠, one key card outside diamonds, South is worth 6♠. After 5NT (2, no Q), 6♣ (2 + Q) or 6♦ (3), South can bid 7♠.

The deal comes from Session 13 in the round-robin qualifying stage in the 2020 England Open Trials.

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ QJ102	
	♥ 10	
	♦ KQ105	
	♣ AK85	
West		East
♠ 5		♠ 74
♥ A6		♥ J987
♦ 98762		♦ AJ43
♣ QJ1072		♣ 963
	South	
	♠ AK9863	
	♥ KQ5432	
	♦ --	
	♣ 4	

At one table it went:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♠
Pass	2NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	5♦ ⁽²⁾
Pass	5♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass	6♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Game-force, 4+ spades

(2) EKCB

(3) One key card outside diamonds

West led the ♣Q: ace – six – four. Declarer played the ♥10: seven(?) – king – ace. West returned the ♣J: king – three – ♥2. Declarer ruffed a diamond, ruffed a heart high in dummy, played the ♠2 to the ♠A and ruffed another heart in dummy, 12 tricks, +1430.

At the other table, it began 1♠ : 2♣ (artificial game-force) and a complex auction followed, also ending in 6♣. West led the ♣Q. The play followed the same path as at the other table (except that East covered the ♥10), 12 tricks, +1430, no swing.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ K1095
♥ 109
♦ 6532
♣ K32

South
♠ AJ
♥ AKQJ43
♦ Q10
♣ Q64

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

You are not required to agree with South's bidding, but that is what happened. West leads the ♣J: two – nine – queen. Plan the play

2. Dealer South : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Pass	Pass
			?

What would you do as South with:

♠ --
♥ 109642
♦ K52
♣ 109876

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

I watched a documentary on marijuana last night. That's probably how I'll watch all documentaries from now on.