

115. Train (your) spotting

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ KJ754
♥ 102
♦ K983
♣ 105

West
♠ Q9
♥ K76
♦ Q106
♣ AQ863

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

(1) 5-card weak-two in hearts or in spades

(2) Strong inquiry

(3) 5 spades + 4 diamonds or 4 clubs

1. West leads the ♦6: eight – jack – ace.
2. South plays ♠2: nine – jack – ace.
3. East returns the ♦4: five – ten – king.
4. Declarer plays the ♠K: ten – eight – queen.
5. Declarer plays the ♣5: two – king – ace.

What would you play as West at trick 6? Make your own decision if possible, but if you need it, here is a clue. Check what happened on tricks 1 and 3.

The deal comes from a qualifying round of the 2020 English Bridge Union Open Trials.

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ KJ754
♥ 102
♦ K983
♣ 105

West
♠ Q9
♥ K76
♦ Q106
♣ AQ863

East
♠ A10
♥ J954
♦ J4
♣ J9742

South
♠ 8632
♥ AQ83
♦ A752
♣ K

After the play given above up to trick 5, this was the position:

	North		
	♠ 754		
	♥ 102		
	♦ 93		
	♣ 10		
West		East	
♠		♠	
♥ K76		♥ J954	
♦ Q		♦	
♣ Q863		♣ J974	
	South		
	♠ 63		
	♥ AQ83		
	♦ 72		
	♣		

West now erred by playing the ♣Q. South ruffed and exited with the ♦7. West won and was endplayed. A heart would go straight into South's A-Q while a club would allow South to ruff in hand and pitch a heart from dummy. Either way South had ten tricks, +420.

In the ending above, West needed to cash ♦Q first and then play ♣Q. Now West always comes to a heart trick.

How could West tell? West needed to note the spot cards in diamonds on tricks 1 and 3. On trick 1, dummy had played the ♦8 and South captured East's ♦J with the ♦A. When East returned a diamond at trick 3 it was the ♦4 and South played the ♦5, with dummy's ♦K capturing West's ♦10. What was significant was the absence of the ♦2. If East had it, then East had begun with J-4-2 and South would have a third diamond. West could safely cash the ♦Q before playing the ♣Q. Likewise, if South had the ♦2, there was no harm in West's playing the ♦Q at trick 6. If East had started with J-7-4-2, then the correct diamond to play at trick 3 would have been the ♦2, bottom from an original 4-card holding (if no sequence is held).

South could have made it harder for West by playing the ♦2 at trick 3, not the ♦5. Now the ♦4 return would be consistent with an original holding of J-7-5-4 with East.

At the other table it went:

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

(1) 5-card weak-two in hearts or in spades

(2) Strong inquiry

(3) 5 spades, 4 diamonds

West led the ♦6: three – jack – ace. After ♠2: nine – jack – ace. East switched to the ♥J, queen, king, and so South lost a trick in each suit, +140 but –7 Imps.

Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	?	

What would you do as East with:

♠ 2
♥ K9875
♦ J42
♣ A732

Partner is a passed hand, you have an 8-count and a modest 5-card suit. The obvious answer is to pass. The suit quality of the heart suit is not enough to warrant a 1♥ overall even if the hand were a bit stronger.

Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 843	
	♥ A1063	
	♦ AK93	
	♣ 84	
West		East
♠ K975		♠ 2
♥ QJ4		♥ K9875
♦ Q6		♦ J42
♣ Q965		♣ A732
	South	
	♠ AQJ106	
	♥ 2	
	♦ 10875	
	♣ KJ10	

In a practice session on BBO, with robots North-South, it went:

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

- (1) Maximum pass, spade support
- (2) Minimum opening
- (3) Still enthusiastic
- (4) Oh, all right.

West led ♥Q: ace – nine (encouraging) – two. Declarer played ♣4: three – jack – queen. West continued with ♥J: three – five – ♠6. The ♣K went to the ace and East returned ♠2: queen – king – three. Then came ♥4: six – seven – ♠10. Declarer cashed ♠A, ♦A, ♦K, but had a diamond and two spades to lose, two off, East-West +100.

The deal arose in the Round of 16 Monaco vs Rosenthal match in the 2015 Vanderbilt (USA K-O Open Teams). The auctions there were less serene than the one above.

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

- (1) 5+ spades

East led the ♥5: two – jack – ace. North played the ♣4: two – king – five and the ♣10: six – eight – ace. East returned the ♥7: ♠6 – ♥4 – ♥3. Declarer continued with the ♣J, queen, ruffed, and the ♠4: two – ten – king. West persevered with the ♥Q, ruffed by South. West now had trump control. Declarer cashed ♦A, ♦K and exited with a third diamond. The ♥K forced South to ruff again. He made nine tricks, East-West +50.

Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 843	
	♥ A1063	
	♦ AK93	
	♣ 84	
West		East
♠ K975		♠ 2
♥ QJ4		♥ K9875
♦ Q6		♦ J42
♣ Q965		♣ A732
	South	
	♠ AQJ106	
	♥ 2	
	♦ 10875	
	♣ KJ10	

At the other table:

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

- (1) 4+ spades
(2) Strong heart raise
(3) Three spades

West led the ♥Q, ace. After ♣4: two – king – five and ♣J: six – eight – ace, East switched to the ♠2, queen, king. Had West continued hearts (the ♥4 is best), South would have to ruff and the defence would prevail. Instead, West returned a trump. South won, ruffed the club loser, cashed ♦A, ♦K, and exited with a diamond. Whether East played a heart or a club, South would ruff and draw trumps, North-South +420, +10 Imps. Did you notice that (a) both Easts overcalled 1♥ and (b) both declarers guessed clubs correctly? Coincidence or cause and effect? Just saying the case for East overcalling 1♥ is not strong. Both Norths opened, but that is not mandatory. One can still score well without overbidding. There is a time to pass and a time to bid.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	?		2NT ⁽¹⁾

(1) 20-22 points

What would you do as North with:

♠ 954
♥ J2
♦ Q98762
♣ 85

2. At favourable vulnerability, South opens 1♣ (3+ clubs). What would you do as West with:

♠ 8
♥ 5
♦ J953
♣ AKQ9854

What do you do as West if South opens 1NT?

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

With so many sporting events cancelled, they're having to televise the World Origami Championship...It's on Paperview.