122. Losers don't count losers

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South: North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♣	3♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	?
(1) 10+ points	3+ enades	limit raise o	r etronger in enac

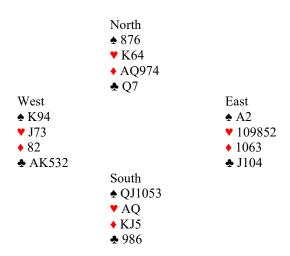
(1) 10+ points, 3+ spades, limit raise or stronger in spades

What would you do as South with:

- **♦** OJ1053
- **♥** AO
- ♦ KJ5
- **♣** 986

The deal arose in a game on BBO against robots.

Dealer South: North-South vulnerable



With humans North-South, robots East-West, South bid 3♠ after the auction above, all pass. West cashed ♠A, ♠K and played a third club, ruffed. Declarer lost two spade tricks, but made nine tricks, +140.

At one table in an international match, South passed, North opened 1♦, South bid 1♠, all pass, North-South +140. How do you account for that? It is highly likely that South's ♥A or ♦K was stuck behind some other card(s) and South thought he had only 9 or 10 points.

At the other table, South 1♠, North 1NT (forcing), South 2♠: North 3♠ (limit raise), South 4♠, all pass. Declarer lost the same four tricks, one off, -100 and -6 Imps.

A game invitational hand of about 10-12 points has 8 losers. The South hand has $7\frac{1}{2}$ losers. $8 + 7\frac{1}{2} = 15\frac{1}{2}$ and $24 - 15\frac{1}{2} = 8\frac{1}{2}$. That means the expectation for North-South in a spade contract is 8 or 9 tricks. For details of the Losing Trick Count methods for hand evaluation when a trump fit exists, see *The Modern Losing Trick Count*. Had South focused on counting losers instead of points, South would have known to pass $3\frac{1}{2}$.

Incidentally, note West's disciplined pass over 1♠. West has enough strength for a 2♠ overcall, but the quality of the club suit is inadequate. For a 2♠ overcall, with adequate strength, the number of clubs plus the honours in the club suit should come to 8 or more (same as the number of tricks for which you are bidding). See *Guide To Better Bridge* for more on the Suit Quality Test for overcalls.

Dealer South: Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

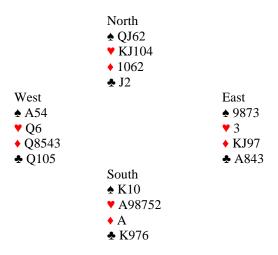
- **★** K10 **★** A98752
- A★ K976

Just as some players bid too much, others do not bid enough. South has 5 losers. For the raise to 2^{\checkmark} , about 6-9 points, North usually has a 9-loser hand, occasionally 8 losers. 5 + 9 = 14 and 24 - 14 = 10 tricks are probable. If North has 8 losers, then 11 tricks are expected.

Another way to look at it is this: The pack has 40 HCP. There are 13 tricks per deal. Each trick is therefore worth 3 points plus a tiny bit (40 divided by 13). Partner's 2 raise of 6-9 points will usually have two winners, sometimes three. If you have 5 losers and partner brings you two winners, you are down to three losers and ten tricks. That means South is worth a 4 bid here.

Some have a natural aptitude for hand valuation. For those of us who do not, the Losing Trick Count for trump contracts is a very useful guide as to the number of tricks expected.

Dealer South: Nil vulnerable



At the table, with robots North-South, humans East-West, robot South passed 2^{\blacktriangledown} . West, unaware of the lurking danger, doubled for takeout. North bid 3^{\blacktriangledown} and South still passed. West also passed and led the ${\clubsuit}4$. With the ${\clubsuit}A$ onside, declarer made 11 tricks, +200. In the same international match, both sides were in ${4\blacktriangledown}$, +450, no swing. One North-South pair bid ${1\blacktriangledown}$: ${2\blacktriangledown}$, ${4\blacktriangledown}$; the other bid ${1\blacktriangledown}$: ${3\blacktriangledown}$, ${4\blacktriangledown}$.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer West: East-West vulnerable

North

- **★** 106
- **♥** AK75
- ♦ K9743
- **♣** K4

South

- **♦** Q53
- ♥ Q9843
- ♦ AQJ
- **♣** Q2

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♣	2♥
3♣	3♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West leads the ♣5: king – ace – two. East is not fooled by the ♣K play and East switches to the ♠8: three – ace – six. West returns the ♠2: ten – king – five. East plays the ♣6 at trick 4: queen – jack – four. Plan the play

2. Dealer South: Nil vulnerable

North

- **♠** A76
- ♥ A53
- ♦ KQJ10
- ♣ AK4

South

- ♠ KQ2
- ♥ K987
- **♦** A3
- **♣** 9876

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♦	Pass	1NT
Pass	6NT	All Pass	

West leads the ♠J. Plan the play.

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

I like cats too. Let's exchange recipes.