126. Down to the wire

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	2♦	2♥
5♦	5♥	Pass	6♥
Pass	Pass	?	

What would you do now as East with:

♠ K3
♥ Q54
♦ AKQ542
♣ 94

After 35 boards in the 36-board final of Alt-Mixed II between PEPSI (Dominic Filipowicz, Andrei Gromov, Anna Gulevich, Danuta Kazmucha, Jacek Pszczola, May Sakr) and RED SEA (Cathy Baldysz, Daniela Birman, David Birman, Sabina Grzejdziak, Igor Grzejdziak, Przemek Janiszewski, Matilda Poplilov Lilo Poplilov), RED SEA led by 84 Imps to 82.1. This was the last deal:

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

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                  North
                  ♠ AJ1072
                  ♥ A106
                  ♦ --
                  ♣ QJ765
West                            East
♠ Q864                          ♠ K3
♥ 3                             ♥ Q54
♦ J98763                        ♦ AKQ542
♣ 103                           ♣ 94
                  South
                  ♠ 95
                  ♥ KJ9872
                  ♦ 10
                  ♣ AK82
```

After the auction above, with RED SEA East-West, 6♥ was passed out.

A spade lead would require declarer to pick the heart position. Declarer would probably cash the ♥A and finessed against East for the ♥Q, given West's jump to 5♦. Still, you would like to put declarer under pressure. West led the ♣10 and there was no pressure on South, who won with the ♣A and cashed the ♥K. Then came the ♥A and the clubs. South could discard the spade loser on the fifth club, no matter when East chose to ruff in. There was still a trump in dummy to ruff the ♦10. That was North-South, +1430 to PEPSI.

At the other table, with PEPSI East-West, it went:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	2♦	2♥
5♦	6♥	Pass	Pass
7♦	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Declarer lost a spade, a heart and two clubs, four down, –800 but 12 Imps to PEPSI who won by 94.1-84.

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

```
                        North
                        ♠ AJ1072
                        ♥ A106
                        ♦ --
                        ♣ QJ765
        West                            East
        ♠ Q864                          ♠ K3
        ♥ 3                             ♥ Q54
        ♦ J98763                        ♦ AKQ542
        ♣ 103                           ♣ 94
                        South
                        ♠ 95
                        ♥ KJ9872
                        ♦ 10
                        ♣ AK82
```

How did one side find the sacrifice while the other did not? When you have an excellent trump fit and you are clearly the weaker side, there are methods to determine whether you should defend or whether you should sacrifice if the opponents bid a slam.

After the slam is bid, the next defender ('in the direct seat') doubles with two defensive tricks and passes with 0 or 1 defensive trick.
If partner doubles in the direct seat, you pass in the pass-out seat. If partner passes in the direct seat, then in the pass-out seat, you pass with two tricks, double with one trick and take the sacrifice with no defensive trick (since the partnership has only one trick). After Slam Bid : Pass : Pass : Double (one trick), Pass : ?, you pass with one trick and sacrifice with no trick (since the partnership has only one defensive trick.)

That is what happened in the second auction if East-West were using this approach:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	2♦	2♥
5♦	6♥	Pass(1)	Pass
7♦(2)	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) One defensive trick
(2) No defensive trick

It is not easy for East to judge the defensive potential. Given the jump to 6♥, North is quite likely to have a diamond void, so count nothing for the ♦A, ♦K. The ♠K might be a trick, might not. Same for the ♥Q. You certainly cannot count them as two tricks. Assessing one trick in defence for East is a reasonable estimate.

At the other table, it went:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	2♦	2♥
5♦	5♥	Pass	6♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

If using this method, East would have taken the hand to be worth two tricks (if using the above method). If East took the hand as worth one trick, it could have gone:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	2♦	2♥
5♦	5♥	Pass	6♥
Pass	Pass	Dble(1)	Pass
7♦(2)	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) One defensive trick
(2) No defensive trick

Now the board would have been tied.

So RED SEA lost the final by 10.1 (11) Imps. There were several opportunities to pick that up. There was a slam off two cashing aces bid by RED SEA while the opponents stopped in game. RED SEA and PEPSI both bid to 4♠ off the first four tricks. PEPSI took their tricks via ♣A, ♣K (partner encouraged) and a third club to partner's queen. Partner cashed the ♦A for one off.

This is the dreaded position for those who play count:

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                    North (dummy)
                    865
West                                East
AK7                                 Q92
                    South
                    J104
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West leads the ♣A. Playing attitude (encourage / discourage) East plays the 9 if playing high-like or the 2 if playing low-like. West then continues with the king and the 7 and the defence has three tricks. After West leads the ace, if playing count, East plays the 2 (natural count) or the 9 (reverse count). West cannot tell whether East or South has the queen.

RED SEA began with ♣A, ♣K but then found a fatal switch to hearts and declarer made 4♠. This is one of the downsides of playing count (showing how many cards you have in the suit led, without showing whether you want the suit continued).

Then there was this problem:

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

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

(1) 5+ clubs, 11-15 points
(2) Artificial, 5+ hearts

What would you lead as West from:

♠ J652
♥ QJ1086
♦ --
♣ AQ109

This was another chance to pick up 10+ Imps. You are almost certain to have three trump tricks. You need one more to beat 4♥. You have an ace. Maybe it is a good idea to play it. Yes, declarer could be void in clubs and you might set up the ♣K in dummy, but there is no evidence that South is void in clubs. The great danger is that South has a singleton club and dummy has ♠A-K-Q and South ditches the club loser. The North-South hands:

♠ AK83
♥ 3
♦ KQ5
♣ K8652

South
♠ 7
♥ AK7542
♦ AJ873
♣ 4

Play ♣A and you beat 4♥. RED SEA West led the ♥Q. South played ♥A, ♥K, ♠A, ♠K, ditching ♣5, and made 10 tricks, North-South +420, when East erred and pitched the ♦9 on the ♥K. Lead the ♣A and you can afford East to err. At the other table, RED SEA North-South were in 3NT, which is unbeatable for +400. With +400 and –420, RED SEA lost 1 Imp. Had West led ♣A (or East retained all five diamonds), RED SEA would be +10 Imps instead of –1 Imp, a total swing of 11 Imps, just enough to win the match.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer North : Both vulnerable

        North
        ♠ A654
        ♥ J9853
        ♦ 1043
        ♣ 10

West
♠ 10832
♥ 6
♦ A985
♣ 9742

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

West leads the ♥6: nine – ten – four. East plays the ♥Q: ♣5 – ♣7 – ♥5. What do you play to trick 3?

2. West dealer : North-South vulnerable

North
♠ AQ
♥ A10982
♦ KQ106
♣ K2

        East
        ♠ 1095
        ♥ K53
        ♦ 5432
        ♣ AQ7

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

West leads the ♣J: king – ace – four. How do you continue as East?

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

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