

150. Exotica

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♠	?

What would you do now as South with:

♠ 64
♥ QJ
♦ AK73
♣ AQJ43

You have a strong hand with 17 HCP, although you could take a point off for the Q-J doubleton. If you double and partner bids 1♥ or 2♥ you can remove that to clubs. If partner responds 1NT, you are worth 2NT. On the other hand, you are within range for a 2♣ overall, which is certainly reasonable. At the table South did bid 2♣ and it went Pass : Pass : Pass.

Here is the full deal:

	North	
	♠ Q1053	
	♥ 109743	
	♦ Q	
	♣ 1076	
West		East
♠ J8		♠ AK972
♥ K85		♥ A62
♦ 108654		♦ J92
♣ K82		♣ 95
	South	
	♠ 64	
	♥ QJ	
	♦ AK73	
	♣ AQJ43	

West led the ♠J: queen – king – four. East switched to the ♣5: three – king – six. West returned the ♣2: seven – nine – queen. South would have liked to ruff a diamond in dummy, but after ♦3 to the ♦Q, South had no quick entry to hand to ruff the ♦7.

South played the ♥Q: eight – three – ace. East shifted to the ♠A: six – eight – three, followed by the ♠2: ♣A – ♦4 – ♠5. South could now make eight tricks: Cross to the ♣10, cash ♦Q and discard a loser on the ♠10 for one spade, three diamonds and four clubs. How did South produce the ninth trick?

South played the ♣4 to the ♣10, leaving this position, with dummy to play:

	North	
	♠ 10	
	♥ 10974	
	♦ Q	
	♣	
West		East
♠		♠ 9
♥ K5		♥ 62
♦ 10865		♦ J92
♣		♣
	South	
	♠	
	♥ J	
	♦ AK73	
	♣ J	

Declarer played the ♠10 and ditched the ♥J. What was West to discard? If West threw a diamond, declarer would cash the ♦Q, ruff a heart and ♦A, ♦K and ♦7 would give South the last three tricks. In practice, West pitched the ♥5. Declarer ruffed the ♥4, dropping West's ♥K. The ♦3 to the ♦Q put the lead in dummy to cash ♥10, ♥9, ♥7. It was unexpected at the beginning of the deal, that South would make only one trick in diamonds.

The deal comes from a game on BBO (Bridge Base Online) and was sent to me by Allan Richardson of Queensland. The declarer was Hany Dagher of Egypt.

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

(1) 12-14 points

What would you lead as West from:

(a)

♠ 43
♥ 54
♦ 9642
♣ KQ832

(b)

♠ Q6
♥ K5
♦ 10873
♣ J10432

The conclusions reached by David Bird and Taf Anthias in Chapter 1 of *Winning Notrump Leads* include: 'On average after an auction of 1NT : 3NT, the defenders hold 7.2 cards between them in each major suit. Declarer and dummy hold only 5.8. This creates a significant bias towards major-suit opening leads.'

For (a) at teams, the percentages for 'Beats contract' were ♠4: 10.2%, ♥5: 10.3%, ♦6/4/2 6.3%, ♣K: 10.1% and ♣3: 6.6%. Thus there was little to choose between a doubleton major and top of the 5-card club suit.

For (b), where the major suit doubletons became strong: ♠Q: 14.3%, ♥K: 14.6%, ♦3: 11%; ♣3: 11.7%.

Yesterday's second problem, with both sides vulnerable, East the dealer and South opening 1NT (12-14 points) and North raising to 3NT was 'What would you lead as West from:

♠ A95
♥ 62
♦ J10543
♣ 1063

The Bird-Anthias analysis might persuade you to lead the ♥6 or the ♠5. The actual lead was the ♦4.

This deal also comes from Allan Richardson, who spotted it on BBO from a match between a United Arab Emirates Team (who played in 3NT – see below) and a USA Team (who played in 6♦, down two).

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

	North	
	<i>Timur Edis</i>	
	♠ KJ3	
	♥ J93	
	♦ KQ82	
	♣ AK2	
West		East
♠ A95		♠ 862
♥ 62		♥ Q108754
♦ J10543		♦ --
♣ 1063		♣ Q754
	South	
	<i>Elvan Edis</i>	
	♠ Q1074	
	♥ AK	
	♦ A976	
	♣ J98	

South has no trouble making 3NT, of course. Note that a heart lead happens to be best for the defence. A spade lead does not advance the defence's cause, but it also does no damage. The ♦4 lead, on the other hand, gave South a cheap trick with the ♦9.

South can always adopt a safety play in diamonds to guard against West's holding five diamonds by playing the ♦A first. Suppose West leads the ♥6. South wins with the ♥A and cashes the ♦A, discovering the bad news. South can play the ♦6 next, jack, king, but the only way back to hand to pick up West's ♦10 would be via a heart to South's ♥K. To leave the heart suit wide open would be unpalatable for South.

In fact, if West leads a heart, South would not tackle diamonds, but would set about the spades. Spade to the king, ♠J ducked and a third spade. Now West plays another heart and the safety play in diamonds is no longer available.

After winning trick 1 with the ♦9, South knocked out the ♠A. She now had 11 tricks via 4 diamonds, 3 spades, 2 clubs and 2 hearts. In fact, declarer came to 12 tricks via a criss-cross squeeze, a very rare creature, especially in a no-trumps contract. West won the third round of spades and switched to the ♥6. South won and played off the three diamond winners, ending hand. This was the position, with South to play:

	North	
	♠	
	♥ J9	
	♦	
	♣ AK2	
West		East
♠		♠
♥ 2		♥ Q10
♦ 10		♦ --
♣ 1063		♣ Q75
	South	
	♠ Q	
	♥ K	
	♦	
	♣ J98	

South played the ♠Q and discarded dummy's ♣2. What could East do? If East throws the ♥10, South cashes the ♥K and dummy is high. In practice, East pitched the ♣5. Now South, played ♣A, ♣K, crossed to the ♥K and the ♣J was South's 12th trick for +690 and +13 Imps.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

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

(1) 3+ clubs, seeking help in clubs

What would you do as North with:

♠ 754
♥ 96
♦ AKQ8
♣ 8743

2. Dealer West : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾	?

(1) Weak two in hearts or in spades
(2) Pass or correct

What would you do as South with:

♠ Q
♥ AQ98643
♦ AQ64
♣ K

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

I might wake up and go running. I might wake up and win the lottery. The odds are about the same.