

155. The right strain and the right level

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♥	Dble
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ 7
♥ K54
♦ QJ64
♣ AQ732

You have a strong hand and can support either minor. Which minor should you choose? How high should you bid? How about 3NT? Can you ask partner to choose a minor?

In the first semi-final in The Major Alt, organized by bid72 and netbridgeonline, together with BBO (Bridge Base Online), [GOLDBERG](#) (Connie Goldberg – Hua Poon, Vesa Fagerlund – Kauko Koistinen, Arttu Karhulahti – Clas Nyberg, USA) chose [LAVAZZA](#) (Dennis Bilde, Norberto Bocchi, Philippe Cronier, Massimiliano Di Franco, Giorgio Duboin, Agustin Madala, Andrea Manno, Antonio Sementa, Italy). [LAVAZZA](#) won by 85-21.1

In the problem above, you probably have only one stopper in hearts. After a heart lead, you would need to run another eight tricks at once. That is not very likely. You are better off to head for game in a minor. Your best bet is 4NT, asking partner to bid the longer minor.

Board 4: Dealer West : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
♠ AJ106	♠ 7	♠ KQ3	♠ 98542
♥ AJ932	♥ K54	♥ 10876	♥ Q
♦ --	♦ QJ64	♦ 9872	♦ AK1053
♣ J1085	♣ AQ732	♣ 94	♣ K6

I was mistaken. After a heart lead, you can make 3NT if West takes the ♥A and returns a heart. Given the poor quality of South's spades, West might take ♥A and switch to ♠6. The defence can then take four spade tricks.

[GOLDBERG](#) North-South:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Mixed raise, 4+ hearts, 6-9 points

North led the ♠7. West lost a heart, two clubs and suffered a spade ruff, one light, North-South +100.

Board 4: Dealer West : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 7	
	♥ K54	
	♦ QJ64	
	♣ AQ732	
West		East
♠ AJ106		♠ KQ3
♥ AJ932		♥ 10876
♦ --		♦ 9872
♣ J1085		♣ 94
	South	
	♠ 98542	
	♥ Q	
	♦ AK1053	
	♣ K6	

After the problem auction on page 1, Giorgio Duboin (North for [LAVAZZA](#)) bid 4NT (minors). Philippe Cronier (S) bid 5♦, all pass. West led the ♥A, followed by the ♥3: king – seven – ♠2. After ♦4: two – ace – ♥2, South played ♣K and the ♣6 to the ♣A. Then came the ♣Q: ♦7 – ♦10 – ♠10 and the ♠9: six – seven – queen. East could now have defeated 5♦ with a trump return, but played the ♥10 instead. South ruffed with the ♦3, ruffed a spade with dummy's ♦6 and played a club. If East, with ♦9-8 left, ruffs, South over-ruffs and plays a diamond to dummy, draws East's last trump and dummy's fifth club is a winner. In practice, East discarded the ♠K. South ruffed cheaply, ruffed a spade, ruffed the last club and had 11 tricks, North-South +600.

After ♥A and a second heart, taken by the ♥K, South can make 5♦ legitimately by playing ♦Q or ♦J and then a spade or not touching trumps yet and just playing a spade or ruffing a heart and then playing a spade.

In the other semi-final:

[BIANCHI](#) North-South:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	3♥	Dble ⁽¹⁾
Pass	4NT ⁽²⁾	Pass	5♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Takeout

(2) Minors

West led the ♥A and switched to the ♣J: two – four – king. South needed to play a spade or a club to dummy, but cashed the ♦A (a reasonable move). Then came the ♠2: six – seven – queen. East returned the ♦7 to cut down dummy's ruffing potential. Declarer won in dummy, cashed the ♥K, ♣A and played the ♣Q, ♦8, ♦10. After spade ruff, club ruff, spade ruff, declarer played dummy's fifth club. East ruffed. South over-ruffed and was left with the ♠9, losing to West's ♠A, one down, East-West +100.

[GUPTA](#) North-South:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	3♣ ⁽¹⁾	3♦
4♥	5♦	Dble	All Pass

(1) 4+ hearts, 6-9 points

West led the ♥A and the ♥9, taken by the ♥K. East's double was a warning that trumps might not be breaking. Declarer might have played a spade next in order to ruff spades in dummy, using the ♣K and the heart ruff as entries, since the auction marked East with 3+ spades. South would then be able to score three spade ruffs in dummy, the ♥K and five trumps in hand.

Instead, South played the ♦4 to the ♦A and then played the ♠9: six – seven – queen. East played the ♦7 and declarer was a trick short, just as at the other table, East-West +200, 3 Imps to [BIANCHI](#).

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
2♠	Pass	?	

What would you do as East with:

♠ 10853
♥ K9
♦ Q6
♣ AJ985

Suppose that the bidding had been:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass
2♠	Pass	?	

What would you do this time as East?

Board 20: Dealer West : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 7	
	♥ AQJ853	
	♦ J85	
	♣ K72	
West		East
♠ KJ942		♠ 10853
♥ 10642		♥ K9
♦ A9		♦ Q6
♣ Q3		♣ AJ985
	South	
	♠ AQ6	
	♥ 7	
	♦ K107432	
	♣ 1064	

This was yesterday's second question, part 1:

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
?			

What would you do as West with:

♠ KJ942
♥ 10642
♦ A9
♣ Q3

GOLDBERG North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

West was not tempted to bid over 1NT or balance with 2♠ after 2♥ : Pass : Pass. Declarer took East's ♠5 lead with the ♠A and finessed the ♥Q. East won and returned the ♠10: queen – king – ♥3. Declarer cashed ♥A, ♥J and played the ♦J: six – two – nine and the ♦5: queen – king – ace. West switched to the ♣Q, king, ace. The defence took 2 hearts, 1 diamond and 2 clubs, but North had 8 tricks, +110.

Board 20: West : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 7	
	♥ AQJ853	
	♦ J85	
	♣ K72	
West		East
♠ KJ942		♠ 10853
♥ 10642		♥ K9
♦ A9		♦ Q6
♣ Q3		♣ AJ985
	South	
	♠ AQ6	
	♥ 7	
	♦ K107432	
	♣ 1064	

At the other table, with [LAVAZZA](#) North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
2♠	Pass	4♠??	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West's 2♠ was a big decision, especially with 4 hearts. North might easily have had a strong hand with 4 spades. Still, that does not compare with East's jump-raise to 4♠. Had East forgotten that West was a passed hand?

North led the ♦5: queen – king – ace. Declarer played the ♣Q, king, ace and the ♠3. South rose with the ♠A and switched to the ♥7. North took the ♥A and returned the ♥Q, suit-preference for diamonds. South ruffed dummy's ♥K and shifted to the ♦7: nine – jack – six. North returned the ♥3, ruffed by South with the ♠Q. That was five tricks for the defence, taking 4♠ doubled two down, North-South +500 and 9 Imps to [LAVAZZA](#).

East does have good spade support, but also has 8 losers. West, a passed hand, figures to have more than 7 losers. For the 2♠ bid, you can place West with about 10-12 points and 8 losers. Applying the Losing Trick Count formula would have prevented this East-West debacle: $8 + 8 = 16$ and $24 - 16 = 8$ tricks expected.

In the other semi-final

[BIANCHI](#) North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥?	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

East's 3♥ showed a strong spade raise. It should have been at least an ace better than the actual East hand. When I saw this auction, I had to check again that West was indeed a passed hand. The play began with the same way as the previous table: ♦5 lead: queen – king – ace, ♣Q: king – ace – six and the ♠3. Here South ducked the ♠3 and collected only one heart ruff later, North-South +100.

[GUPTA](#) North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass!	Pass

Finally, a sensible East. West's 2♠ is still risky – North could still have four spades – but not as risky as 2♠ at once over 1NT. The defence was identical – card for card - to the [LAVAZZA](#) North-South defence above. West made 8 tricks, +110 and 5 Imps to [BIANCHI](#).

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ 74
♥ A65
♦ KJ10973
♣ 73

South
♠ AQ
♥ KQJ108
♦ Q42
♣ K92

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	2♠	2NT
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

West leads the ♥4: five – two – eight. What do you play at trick 2?

Suppose you play the ♦2: six . . . Which diamond do you play from dummy?

Dummy's card wins the trick. How would you continue?

2. Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ A63
♥ K92
♦ K10852
♣ 106

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

It's bad to keep things bottled up. Drink more wine.