

# 157. Diamonds are not for ever(yone)

By Ron Klinger

With only North-South vulnerable, East deals and passes. What would you do as South with:

♠ A8  
♥ K92  
♦ 98643  
♣ KQ5

The 32-board final of The Major Alt, organized by bid72 and netbridgeonline, together with BBO (Bridge Base Online) was between **GUPTA** (Naren Gupta, Huub Bertens, Bauke Muller, Simon de Wijs, Thomas Bessis, Curtis Cheek, Cedric Lorenzini, USA) and **LAVAZZA** (Dennis Bilde, Norberto Bocchi, Philippe Cronier, Massimiliano Di Franco, Giorgio Duboin, Agustin Madala, Andrea Manno, Antonio Sementa, Italy). In a low-scoring final, **GUPTA** lost Session 1 by 14-24, won Session 2 by 28-6 and the match by 42.1-30. **LAVAZZA** conceded 1.3 Imps per board and **GUPTA** less than 1 Imp per board.

A style of bidding has developed where balanced hands open 1♣ if the hand is outside the ranges for a 1NT or a 2NT opening. Thus, a 1♣ opening might have only 2 clubs and could have 5 diamonds in a 5-3-3-2 pattern. With a 5-card major and a 5-3-3-2 pattern, 1-Major is the opening bid if the hand does not fall within a 1NT or 2NT opening. The corollary is that a 1♦ opening will always be unbalanced or semi-balanced.

I am sure that these methods must generate good results, otherwise players would have given them up by now. Today's deals from The Major Alt final are not good advertisements for this style.

Board 2: Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

|            |          |           |
|------------|----------|-----------|
|            | North    |           |
|            | ♠ KJ54   |           |
|            | ♥ 8      |           |
|            | ♦ AJ1052 |           |
|            | ♣ AJ8    |           |
| West       |          | East      |
| ♠ 6        |          | ♠ Q109732 |
| ♥ AQ106    |          | ♥ J7543   |
| ♦ K        |          | ♦ Q7      |
| ♣ 10976432 |          | ♣ --      |
|            | South    |           |
|            | ♠ A8     |           |
|            | ♥ K92    |           |
|            | ♦ 98643  |           |
|            | ♣ KQ5    |           |

**LAVAZZA** North-South

| West | North               | East     | South             |
|------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
|      |                     | Pass     | 1♣ <sup>(1)</sup> |
| 1♥   | Dble <sup>(2)</sup> | 4♥       | Pass              |
| Pass | Dble                | All Pass |                   |

(1) 2+ clubs, could have 5 diamonds if balanced

(2) 4+ spades

Note that North-South never located their 10-card diamond fit. This does seem an unattractive byproduct of the approach chosen.

North led the ♥8: three – two – ten. Declarer ruffed a club and played the ♦7 to the ♦K and ♦A. North switched to the ♠5. South took the ♠A and played the ♥9. West won with the ♥Q and ruffed another club. After cashing ♦Q, declarer played ♥J, king, ace, and a third club. When clubs proved to be 3-3, declarer had ten tricks and +590. West lost a spade, a diamond and a club.

Board 2: Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

|            |          |           |
|------------|----------|-----------|
|            | North    |           |
|            | ♠ KJ54   |           |
|            | ♥ 8      |           |
|            | ♦ AJ1052 |           |
|            | ♣ AJ8    |           |
| West       |          | East      |
| ♠ 6        |          | ♠ Q109732 |
| ♥ AQ106    |          | ♥ J7543   |
| ♦ K        |          | ♦ Q7      |
| ♣ 10976432 |          | ♣ --      |
|            | South    |           |
|            | ♠ A8     |           |
|            | ♥ K92    |           |
|            | ♦ 98643  |           |
|            | ♣ KQ5    |           |

GUPTA North-South

| West | North             | East | South             |
|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|
|      |                   | Pass | 1♦                |
| 2♣   | Dble              | 2♠   | Pass              |
| Pass | 3♣ <sup>(1)</sup> | Pass | 3NT               |
| Pass | 4♦                | Pass | 4♥ <sup>(2)</sup> |
| Pass | 5♣ <sup>(2)</sup> | Dble | 5♦                |
| Pass | Pass              | Pass |                   |

(1) Strong hand, ostensibly a stopper ask

(2) Cue-bid

West led the ♣2, suit-preference for hearts. East ruffed and switched to the ♥5, king, ace. West played another club, ruffed by East. South had the rest. That was one down, North-South -100, but 10 Imps to [GUPTA](#).

Curious feature: At the other table, North-South never mentioned diamonds, their 10-card fit. At this table, East-West never mentioned their 9-card heart fit.

This was yesterday's second problem:

With only East-West vulnerable, East deals and passes. What would you do as South with:

♠ Q107  
 ♥ J86  
 ♦ AJ943  
 ♣ A5

Natural bidders playing a strong 1NT opening would open 1♦. Those who open 1♦ only with unbalanced or semi-balanced hands open 1♣. As with the previous deal, one side opened 1♣, the other began with 1♦.

Board 22: Dealer East : East-West vulnerable

|         |         |           |
|---------|---------|-----------|
|         | North   |           |
|         | ♠ AK64  |           |
|         | ♥ Q43   |           |
|         | ♦ Q1082 |           |
|         | ♣ 104   |           |
| West    |         | East      |
| ♠ J9532 |         | ♠ 8       |
| ♥ AK75  |         | ♥ 1092    |
| ♦ K5    |         | ♦ 76      |
| ♣ K3    |         | ♣ QJ98762 |
|         | South   |           |
|         | ♠ Q107  |           |
|         | ♥ J86   |           |
|         | ♦ AJ943 |           |
|         | ♣ A5    |           |

LAVAZZA North-South:

| West              | North              | East | South |
|-------------------|--------------------|------|-------|
|                   |                    | Pass | 1♣    |
| 1♠ <sup>(1)</sup> | 1NT <sup>(2)</sup> | Pass | Pass  |
| 2♥                | Pass               | Pass | Pass  |

(1) Based on high-card strength rather than suit quality  
(2) Natural bidders might choose 2NT, 11-12

North's choice of 1NT is an indication of how light South's 1♣ opening might be at favourable vulnerability. With both opponents bidding, West's 2♥ at unfavourable vulnerability was a risky venture. Passing 1NT is a safer option.

To reduce the ruffing potential in dummy and so protect the likely spade winners, North led the ♥3!: nine – jack – ace. West played the ♠2: four – eight – ten and South returned the ♥6: king! – four – two. West did well to rise with the ♥K rather than play South for ♥Q-J-x(-x). West ruffed a spade and played the ♣6: ace – king – four (reverse count, showing an even number). With ♣10-4-3, North would have played the ♣10, showing an odd number.

To nullify the clubs, South returned the ♣5, won in dummy. Then came the ♦7. South rose with the ♦A and continued with the ♦3, taken by the ♦K. West played a spade. North won, cashed the ♥Q and played the ♦Q. West ruffed and that was West's last trick. West made 3 hearts, a spade ruff, a diamond and a club, six tricks, North-South +200. I guess you have to give credit to South's 1♣ opening this time. It inhibited East from bidding 3♣, which is unbeatable.

GUPTA North-South:

| West              | North             | East     | South |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------|-------|
|                   |                   | Pass     | 1♦    |
| 1♠ <sup>(1)</sup> | 2♠ <sup>(2)</sup> | Pass     | 2NT   |
| Pass              | 3NT               | All Pass |       |

(1) Real men don't need suit quality for overcalls  
(2) Limit raise or stronger for diamonds

West began with ♥A, ♥K and the ♥5 to dummy's ♥Q. The ♦Q went to West's ♦K. West cashed the ♥7 and South claimed the rest of the tricks, making 3NT, +400 and +5 Imps. Note North's raise to 3NT with only 11 HCP. North chose to upgrade the hand because of the fit with partner's known diamond suit for the 1♦ opening. North at the other table had no such inkling. If North at the other table had bid 2NT over 1♠, South might well have passed that anyway. Neither North nor South was aware of the 9-card diamond fit.

As mentioned on page 1, opening 1♣ with two clubs and five diamonds must produce some good results. Until I come across a few of them, I'll stick with opening 1♦ with that much disparity in the minors.

## Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

| West              | North | East | South |
|-------------------|-------|------|-------|
|                   |       | 1♣   | Pass  |
| 2♠ <sup>(1)</sup> | 3♦    | ?    |       |

(1) Weak, 6+ spades, 0-7points

What would you do now as East with:

♠ J987  
♥ QJ9  
♦ J10  
♣ AQ32

2. Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      | 1♦    | Pass | 1♥    |
| 3♠   | 4♥    | Pass | ?     |

What would you do as South with:

♠ 865  
♥ AJ652  
♦ Q3  
♣ K42

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

*Huge fight at seafood diner. Battered fish everywhere.*