

170. Slip up

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

North
♠ Q83
♥ A52
♦ KQJ85
♣ AQ

West
♠ A75
♥ QJ87
♦ A62
♣ J98

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	Dble	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West leads the ♥Q: ace – four (low-discouraging) – three. Declarer plays the ♦K: seven from partner, three from declarer. Plan the defence.

Today's deal is from the quarter-final match between [NICKELL](#) (Daniel Korbel – Richard Coren, Viktor Aronov – Jerry Stamatov) and [TULIN](#) (Mike Levine – Eddie Wold, Geir Helgemo – Tor Helness, Jeff Meckstroth – Eric Rodwell) in the 2020 North America Online Bridge Championships).

This was yesterday's question:

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

(1) 2+ diamonds, playing a strong 1♣ system

What would you do as North with:

♠ Q83
♥ A52
♦ KQJ85
♣ AQ

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	North	
	♠ Q83	
	♥ A52	
	♦ KQJ85	
	♣ AQ	
West		East
♠ A75		♠ 10942
♥ QJ87		♥ 964
♦ A62		♦ 7
♣ J98		♣ K10764
	South	
	♠ KJ6	
	♥ K103	
	♦ 10943	
	♣ 532	

At one table, South passed, West bid 1♦ and North overcalled 1NT, all pass. The 1NT overcall is generally played as 15-18 points (some play 16-18). North does have 18 HCP, but what should you make of the strong 5-card diamond suit?

If West had opened 1♣, you would upgrade North to a 19 or 20 count because of the good diamonds. After West's 1♦ opening, it is still worth upgrading North, especially when the 1♦ opening might be just 2-3 diamonds. Of course, West could have 5 diamonds, but with 1♦ including all the weak 1NT hands with no 5-major, North's diamond length will often be an asset. If you do upgrade, you would double as North and rebid 1NT if South bids 1♥ or 1♠ or jump to 3NT if South bids 1NT (6-9 points) as on page 1.

Here North did not upgrade and East led the ♣6 against 1NT. North captured the ♣J with the ♣Q and played the ♦K, winning, followed by the ♦5: ♥6 – ♦10 – ♦A. West returned the ♣9, ace. Declarer had two hearts, four diamonds and two clubs, eight tricks, +120.

At the other table, Eric Rodwell (N) did upgrade the North hand and doubled 1♦. Jeff Meckstroth (S) bid 1NT and North jumped to 3NT. The defence could have taken the contract down, but they slipped up.

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	♥ K103	
	♦ 10943	
	♣ 532	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	Dble	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West led the ♥Q, taken by the ♥A in dummy. What would you play as East?

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	♦ KQJ85	
	♣ AQ	
West		East
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♣ J98		♣ K10764
	South	
	♠ KJ6	
	♥ K103	
	♦ 10943	
	♣ 532	

Against South's 3NT, West led the ♥Q, taken by the ♥A in dummy. If playing count, East should play the ♥4 (standard count) or the ♥9 (reverse count). West would take that as 3 hearts, not five, as South would probably not have bid 1NT with a singleton heart (not certain as yesterday's deal illustrated). The ♥9, reverse count would deny the ♥10 and then West would definitely know that East had three hearts, not five.

Of course, the number of hearts East holds does not help West very much. What West needs to know is whether East has anything useful in hearts and whether hearts should be continued. Playing attitude, East would play the ♥4 (normal attitude, discouraging) or the ♥9 (reverse attitude, high-hate). The ♥9 as discouraging is especially useful as it denies the ♥10 and places South with K-10-3. When in with the ♦A, West will then avoid playing another heart.

That is not what happened. Trick 1 went ♥Q: ace – six?? – three. I have no idea what the ♥6 meant, but it was of no use to West at all. Declarer played the ♦K. West took the ♦A and played the ♥7: two – nine – ten. Just as well this was not being played at a bridge table without screens. It would have been very hard for West not to look daggers at East.

South knocked out the ♠A and had 2 spades, 3 hearts, 4 diamonds and the ♣A, ten tricks, +630 and 11 Imps to [LEVINE](#). It would be unwise of West to make a comment about East's ♥6 at trick 1, because East would have an excellent retort: "OK, sure, I did not have to play the ♥6, but why, oh why did you take the ♦A at once. You could have ducked the first diamond. When the next diamond is played I will be able to signal for a club shift."

Playing reverse attitude, East plays the ♥9 (dislike hearts, denies ♥10) at trick 1. West ducks the first diamond and wins the second diamond. On this, depending on methods East might discard the ♠2 (standard attitude: don't like spades either) or the ♠10 (reverse attitude: don't like spades) or ♠2 (don't like spades and definitely like clubs). A club switch: ♣8 – queen – king and a club return, West unblocking the ♣J, can defeat 3NT.

'So,' you are thinking, '3NT can be defeated. Why then should North upgrade and double, reaching 3NT and failing, instead of playing in 1NT successfully?'

If you are thinking that, you are guilty of 'double-dummy analysis', because you can see where the cards actually lie. On the bidding, the ♣K will usually be with West. If so and South is in 3NT on the ♥Q lead, 3NT will be fine. Declarer wins the heart lead and knocks out the ♦A. Now a club switch will not hurt with the ♣K with West. The ♣Q wins and declarer knocks out the ♠A, making ten tricks.

[LEVINE](#) won the match by 101-76.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
3♦	Dble ⁽¹⁾	4♦	4♣
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

(1) Takeout

(2) Two key cards, no ♠Q

What would you lead as West with:

♠ 7

♥ QJ98

♦ J987654

♣ 7

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

How do turtles communicate with each other? They use shell phones.

New book: *The Power of Pass* (by Harold Schogger and Ron Klinger). \$A25.00 Available from Suzie Klinger, post free until 2021: email suzie@ronklingerbridge.com or telephone 0411 229 705.