

196. Tangled web sight

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
3♣	Pass	?	Pass

What would you do as East with:

♠ AJ7
♥ AKQJ4
♦ AKQJ
♣ Q

Decide before reading further.

At the end of 13 qualifying rounds in the Yeh Cup Online Open Teams, organized by the Taiwan Contract Bridge League, Australia II (Renee Cooper – Ben Thompson, Andy Braithwaite – Arjuna De Livera, Matt Mullamphy – Ian Thomson – Ron Klinger) finished fourth. In the 12-board quarter-finals, they faced New Horizon Health, who had come third in Section B

This was yesterday's question:

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	?		2♠ ⁽¹⁾

(1) 5 spades, 0-6 points or 6 spades, 0-2 points

What would you do as North with:

♠ 109842
♥ 10753
♦ 87
♣ K8

It is pretty clear that the opponents can make a game somewhere and are very likely to have at least a small slam available. What can you do to try to talk them out of it?

North could simply jump to 4♠ and let the opponents try to sort it out from there. With a really weak hand, I dislike doing that, because such a jump raise may alert an opponent to the benefit of a shortage in our suit and a hand that has 3+ cards in our suit can pretty much place partner with shortage in our suit. I am also no fan of a jump to 5♠. As a sacrifice, this tells the opponents that you think they have a slam available. They are quite likely to trust you and bid a slam.

As I mentioned in the ABF Daily Column 190, I am not averse to a 'psyche' (a bluff bid, a subterfuge) to try to mislead the opposition. There are all sorts of things you could try here, bid a new suit, jump-bid in a new suit as a splinter, bid 3NT or even bid 4NT, asking for key cards. I elected to try something more subtle. I responded 2NT, showing a hand which was interested in game opposite a maximum very-weak two.

That did not work. The next hand had 27 HCP. It is hard to talk a player out of believing what they can see in front of them. We will never know whether some other action might have worked better, but my 2NT did not impede their advance to slam. Here is the full deal:

Board 3: Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 109842	
	♥ 10753	
	♦ 87	
	♣ K8	
West		East
♠ --		♠ AJ7
♥ 982		♥ AKQJ4
♦ 963		♦ AKQJ
♣ AJ109543		♣ Q
	South	
	♠ KQ653	
	♥ 6	
	♦ 10542	
	♣ 762	

West	North	East	South
	<i>Klinger</i>		<i>Mullamphy</i>
			2♠ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾	Dble ⁽³⁾	3♦ ⁽⁴⁾
4♣	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	6♥!	Pass
Pass	6♠ ⁽⁶⁾	Pass ⁽⁷⁾	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

- (1) 5 spades, 0-6 points or 6 spades, 0-2 points
- (2) Asking for opener's strength and any second suit
- (3) Takeout of spades
- (4) 4+ diamonds
- (5) One key card for clubs
- (6) Taking the sacrifice
- (7) Inviting a grand slam

West led the ♥2. East won with the ♥J and switched to the ♣Q. West took that with the ♣A and returned the ♣9. East ruffed the ♣K, cashed ♦A, ♦K, ♠A and played the ♥A. South ruffed, drew the missing trump and had the rest of the tricks. That was five down, -1100.

At slam level, our agreements when we have a known trump fit and are much weaker than the opponents are that partner in the direct seat would double with two defensive tricks. Pass in the direct seat shows 0 or 1 defensive trick. I was not sure whether this applied here, as I had not overtly supported spades. Nevertheless, I knew South could not have two defensive tricks. As I had only a dubious possibility of one trick, I took the save in 6♠.

After East passed this, it looks as though West has a strong case for bidding 7♥. East is known to have the ♠A or a spade void and West has three trumps, when West might not have had any. As you can see, 7♥ can always be made. If they had bid 7♥, would we have found the 7♠ save for -1400? We should. If West bids 7♥, North passes (no defensive trick) and South then has an easy 7♠ bid.

I was mentally chalking up +8 Imps if our team-mates bid 6♥ and 15 Imps would be ours if our team-mates could find 7♥. Ah, it is so dangerous counting chickens before they hatch. At the other table, East-West did get to six, but then something very unlucky happened.

Board 3: Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 109842	
	♥ 10753	
	♦ 87	
	♣ K8	
West		East
♠ --		♠ AJ7
♥ 982		♥ AKQJ4
♦ 963		♦ AKQJ
♣ AJ109543		♣ Q
	South	
	♠ KQ653	
	♥ 6	
	♦ 10542	
	♣ 762	

West	North	East	South
<i>De Livera</i>		<i>Braithwaite</i>	
3♣	Pass	4♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
4♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	4♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass
4NT ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	6♣	All Pass

(1) Slam values, asking

(2) Poor hand for the 3♣ opening

(3) Key-card ask

(4) 1 or 4, obviously one

The club slam is very respectable. Most of the time you would win the lead and finesse in clubs or bang down the ♣A and play a high club next. Had North led a spade or a diamond, all would have been well, but North chose the ♥5 lead. West won in dummy and played the ♣Q: seven – ace – eight and the ♣9. North won and played a second heart. South ruffed and that was –100 and 15 Imps out instead of the 15 Imps in, which I had in my dreams. “In your dreams,” you might well say.

Had I been North or South, I would have done the wrong thing for the defence. I would have led the ♠10 as North and now 6♣ makes. Also, if I were South, I would have doubled East’s 4♠ for a spade lead. That would not have helped us either.

Still, East might have saved the day by bidding 3♥ initially over 3♣. West will support hearts, perhaps with 4♥ or, as some play, with 3♠, showing heart support and spade shortage. Now 6♥ will be reached and maybe even 7♥ is feasible.

Fortunately, the rest of the session was fine and Australia II won the match, albeit narrowly, by 28 Imps to 26.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Dble	4♠	?

(1) Weak two, can be very weak

What would you do as South with:

♠ Q
♥ 763
♦ J1082
♣ KQ987

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

Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive. (Sir Walter Scott)

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.