

209. Pitching woe

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

North

♠ J104

♥ 54

♦ 1086

♣ AK754

East

♠ 872

♥ AKJ63

♦ J

♣ 8632

West

North

East

South

Pass

Pass

1NT

Pass

3♣⁽¹⁾

Pass

3♦⁽²⁾

Pass

3NT⁽³⁾

All Pass

(1) Asking for a 5-card major

(2) No 5-card major

(3) No interest in a 4-card major

1. West leads the ♦4 (fourth-highest): ten – jack – king.

2. South plays the ♣3: five (natural count) – jack – two.

3. ♣4 from dummy: six – jack – queen.

4. West reverts to the ♦5: six – ♠8 – ♦3.

5. ♠4: from dummy: seven – king – six.

This is the position:

North

♠ 10

♥ 54

♦ 8

♣ AK75

East

♠

♥ AKJ63

♦

♣ 832

6. South plays the ♠Q: ace – ten . . . What would you play as East?

[GUPTA](#) (Thomas Bessis, Simon de Wijs, Nareng Gupta, Cedric Lorenzini, Zia Mahmood, Bauke Muller), the leader at the end of the qualifying rounds in the MontreALT, organized by bid72 and netbridge.online, won their quarter-final match by 91.1 to 54. In the semi-finals, they met [KOEPPPEL](#) (Lynne Greenberg Koeppel, Agustin Nicolas Madala, Antonio Sementa, Mustafa Cem Tokay, Alfredo Versace) who had come fourth in the qualifying and had won their quarter-final by 77.1 to 49.

Board 8: Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ J104	
	♥ 54	
	♦ 1086	
	♣ AK754	
West		East
♠ A65		♠ 872
♥ 982		♥ AKJ63
♦ Q7542		♦ J
♣ Q10		♣ 8632
	South	
	♠ KQ93	
	♥ Q107	
	♦ AK93	
	♣ J9	

After the auction on the previous page, South for **GUPTA** was in 3NT after the auction on the previous page. West leads ♦4. Without turning back to page 1, which diamond would you play from dummy? Does it matter?

As you can see, East is about the play the ♦J. Your ♦10, ♦9, ♦8 are equals. If you play the ♦6 or the ♦8 from dummy and East plays the jack, West will know that you hold the ♦9. With ♦J-9 or ♦J-9-x, East would have played the ♦9 on the ♦6 or ♦8.

You should play the ♦10 on the ♦4. When this is covered by the ♦J, West cannot tell whether East has the ♦9 or whether South has it. The more doubt you create for the defenders, the better your chance of success.

After the first five tricks as reported on page 1, this was the position:

	North	
	♠ 10	
	♥ 54	
	♦ 8	
	♣ AK75	
West		East
♠ A		♠
♥ 982		♥ AKJ63
♦ Q72		♦
♣ 10		♣ 832
	South	
	♠ Q9	
	♥ Q107	
	♦ A9	
	♣ 9	

South played the ♠Q: ace – ten . . . and East erred seriously by discarding a club, the ♣8 in fact. Like the ♣8 earlier, the ♣8 was probably intended as suit-preference for hearts. Had West switched to a heart, East could have collected the ♥K and ♥A. South would have made the rest, a total of 9 tricks, +400.

When West played the ♣10, declarer made 10 tricks, +430, via 3 spades, 3 diamonds and 4 clubs.

There is an important principle in defence: Keep length with dummy. As long as one of your cards can prevent dummy running the suit, do not discard from that suit to shorten yourself below dummy's length. In the diagram position, East has three clubs and the ♣8 can beat dummy's third club the ♣7. This is similar:

	AK87	
J104	9532	
	Q6	

Declarer can make only three tricks, but if East discards a card from the seemingly worthless holding, South makes four tricks. If East's clubs were 6-5-3-2, they would be useless against dummy's holding and it would be safe to discard one.

Suppose East had thrown a heart (♥3, odd-encouraging or low-like) on the ♠A at trick 6. This would be the position:

	North	
	♠	
	♥ 54	
	♦ 8	
	♣ AK75	
West		East
♠		♠
♥ 982		♥ AKJ6
♦ Q72		♦
♣ 10		♣ 863
	South	
	♠ 9	
	♥ Q107	
	♦ A9	
	♣ 9	

What can declarer do? If declarer plays ♣A, ♠K, declarer makes only 3 spades, 3 diamonds and 2 clubs. If declarer plays a heart, East wins and plays a low club: nine – ten – king. Again, declarer will be one down. If declarer cashes the ♠K and plays a heart, East wins and the ♣8 is the fifth trick for the defence. The club discard by East at trick 6 was a strange mistake at top level.

Board 8: Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

	North	
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	♦ 1086	
	♣ AK754	
West		East
♠ A65		♠ 872
♥ 982		♥ AKJ63
♦ Q7542		♦ J
♣ Q10		♣ 8632
	South	
	♠ KQ93	
	♥ Q107	
	♦ AK93	
	♣ J9	

There was another interesting feature in the play. After ♦4: ten – jack – king and the ♠3: five – jack – two, declarer played the ♣4: six – jack – queen. If East had the ♣Q, East would certainly have played it holding Q-x or Q-x-x. With Q-x-x-x, East might have played the queen, too. On that basis, one might place the ♣Q with West and insert the ♣9 from hand. Not that it makes any difference on the actual layout, but it would gain when East began with 10-x-x-x and West with Q-x.

The auction was identical at the other table and West led the ♦2 against GUPTA's South in 3NT. A heart lead, ducked by East, would defeat 3NT speedily, but as South had not denied a 4-card major, there was no strong reason to lead a heart. After ♦2: ten – jack – ace, South played three rounds of spades, West winning the third round, East following with the ♠2 (odd number), then ♠8, ♠7 (suit-preference for hearts).

West shifted to ♥9 (high-hate). East won with ♥K and played ♣3: nine – ten – king. Declarer played ♦6 to ♦K. South made 3 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds, 2 clubs, one off, –50, 10 Imps to GUPTA who won the match 77-63.

In the other semi-final, North-South for RED DEVILS played in 1NT after Pass : 1♦, 1NT, all pass. East led the ♥A and North made 8 tricks, +120. At the other table, SWEICE North-South, it went Pass : Pass : 1NT : Pass, 3NT : Double (find my strong suit) : Pass : Pass, 4♣, all pass. East led the ♥K and switched to the ♦J, ace. Declarer played ♣9: ten – ace – two and the ♥5, king. After ♠2 to ♠A, West returned a diamond. East ruffed for one down and had another trump trick later for two down, East-West +100 and 6 Imps to RED DEVILS.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Dble	4♥
4♠	?		Pass

What would you do as North with:

♠ J87
♥ J7
♦ AQ32
♣ 9865

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

Grammar humour: A bar was walked into by the passive voice.

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.