220. The right strain

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North: East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1 ♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	$2^{(2)}$
Pass	$2NT^{(3)}$	Pass	?

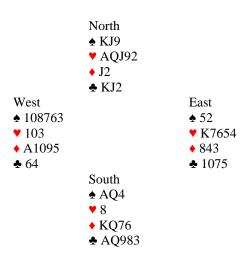
- (1) 5+ hearts; 1NT, 15-17, would deny a 5-card major
- (2) Natural, forcing for one round
- (3) Natural, 15-17, usually balanced

What would you rebid as South with:

- **♠** AQ4
- **y** 8
- ♦ KQ76
- ♣ AQ983

Today's deal comes from Session 4 of the 2017 Spingold (USA Open Teams) Round of 16 match between MITTELMAN and NICKELL.

Board 50: Dealer North: East-West vulnerable

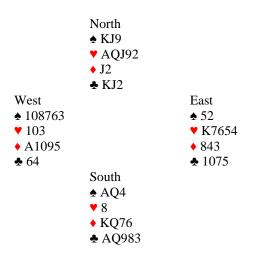


West	North	East	South
P'mann	Meckstroth	Zatorski	Rodwell
	1 ♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	$1NT^{(2)}$
Pass	$2^{(3)}$	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♣	Pass	4 ♦ ⁽⁴⁾
Pass	$4NT^{(5)}$	Pass	5NT ⁽⁶⁾
Pass	6NT	All Pass	

- (1) Artificial, 16+ points
- (2) 5+ clubs, game-force
- (3) 5+ hearts
- (4) Key card ask, clubs set as trumps
- (5) Two, no **♣**Q
- (6) Shall we play 6♣ or 6NT?

After 5NT, North would be declarer if he chose 6♣. North was concerned that South might have K-x-x-x in diamonds and now a diamond lead could lay 6♣ low. South would be declarer in 6NT and the ♦K would be protected. As it happened, South's diamonds were stronger and did not need any protection.

Board 50: Dealer North: East-West vulnerable



Against South's 6NT, West led the ♠8: nine – two – ace. After ♦6: five – jack – eight, declarer played the ♠K and the ♠J, overtaking with the ♠A when East followed to the second club. Then came the ♥8: three – queen – king. East returned a diamond. West took the ♦A and that was one down, East-West +50.

West	North	East	South
Weinstein	Amoils	Levin	Hanlon
	$1NT^{(1)}$	Pass	3♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣ ⁽³⁾
Pass	4♥ ⁽⁴⁾	Dble	Pass
Pass	4 ♠ ⁽⁴⁾	Pass	4NT
Pass	5 ♥ ⁽⁵⁾	Pass	6♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	
(1) 15-17			
(2) 3-1-5-4 or	3-1-4-5		
(3) 5 clubs			
(4) Cue-bid, c	lub support		

The club slam is much better than 6NT. Unless the ◆A is led, 6NT needs the heart finesse. In 6♣, you could play East or West for the ♥K, but you do not need a second trick from hearts if you can ruff a diamond in the North hand.

West led the ▼10, ace. After ◆J to the ◆A, West returned the ◆9. South won, played ♣3 to the ♠K and the ♠2 to the ♠Q. With clubs 3-2, South ruffed a low diamond with the ♣J, returned to hand with the ♠9 to the ♠A, drew the last trump and claimed 12 tricks, +920 and 14 Imps to MITTELMAN.

Had clubs been 4-1, declarer would cross to the $\clubsuit J$, back to the $\spadesuit A$, draw the last trump, play $\spadesuit Q$ to $\spadesuit K$ and lead the $\blacktriangledown Q$, discarding the diamond loser if East played low. If East covered the $\blacktriangledown Q$ with the $\blacktriangledown K$, South would ruff, cash $\spadesuit K$, $\spadesuit Q$ and play $\spadesuit 4$ to $\spadesuit J$ to reach the $\blacktriangledown J$.

How would you and partner bid the North-South hands?

This was yesterday's problem:

(5) Two key cards, no ♣Q

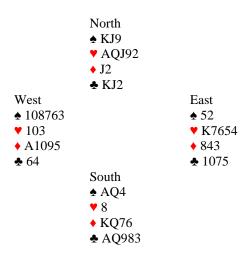
Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1 ♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♣ ⁽²⁾
Pass	?		

- (1) 5+ hearts; 1NT, 15-17, would deny a 5-card major
- (2) Natural, forcing

What would you rebid with the North hand?

Board 50: Dealer North: East-West vulnerable



This is what happened when the deal was replayed in a BBO game:

West	North	East	South
	1 ♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2 ♣ ⁽²⁾
Pass	$2NT^{(3)}$	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	4NT ⁽⁴⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

- (1) 5+ hearts; 1NT, 15-17, would deny a 5-card major
- (2) Natural, forcing for one round
- (3) Natural, 15-17, usually balanced,
- (4) Inviting slam

Many partnerships prefer to open 1NT with the right strength even when the hand includes a 5-card major. I am not advocating regarding the auction above, just reporting.

After 1♥: 2♣, North had to choose between 2NT or 3♣. The downside for 2NT was the diamond holding, but it did capture North's strength. The plus for 3♣ was showing the club support. The negatives for 3♣ were that North had only three clubs and South's 2♣ could be a 4-card suit and the 3♣ raise could be based on a minimum opening.

After 2NT, South with 17 HCP facing 15-17 might have chosen 5NT, pick a slam. North would then bid 6♣. The 3♦ was aimed at eliciting 3-card club support.

North might have bid 4♣ over 3♠, but it sounded like South was worried about the spades for a 3NT contract. With the spades stopped, North chose 3NT.

South might have bid 5NT now, but 4NT to invite slam was reasonable, albeit a mite conservative.

North might finally have shown club support via 5♣, but with four jacks and no tens and seven losers, the hand looked like a minimum for the 2NT rebid.

There was good news and bad news. The good news was that North-South avoided 6NT. The bad news was that via a series of close, conservative decisions, North missed a very good 6♣ contract.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South: Both vulnerable

West North East South $2^{(1)}$

?

(1) Weak two, 6 spades, 6-10 points

What would you do as West with:

- **♦** 5
- **y** 92
- ◆ AK7532
- **♣** K864

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

Descriptive definition humour: A mixed metaphor walks into a bar, seeing the handwriting on the wall, but hoping to nip it in the bud.

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.