

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
♥ 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

	North	
	♠ KJ9	
	♥ AQJ92	
	♦ J2	
	♣ KJ2	
West		East
♠ 108763		♠ 52
♥ 103		♥ K7654
♦ A1095		♦ 843
♣ 64		♣ 1075
	South	
	♠ AQ4	
	♥ 8	
	♦ KQ76	
	♣ AQ983	

West	North	East	South
<i>P'mann</i>	<i>Meckstroth</i>	<i>Zatorski</i>	<i>Rodwell</i>
	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.

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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
<i>Weinstein</i>	<i>Amoils</i>	<i>Levin</i>	<i>Hanlon</i>
	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, club support

(5) Two key cards, no ♣Q

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 ♣J, back to the ♠A, draw the last trump, play ♠Q to ♠K and lead the ♥Q, discarding the diamond loser if East played low. If East covered the ♥Q with the ♥K, South would ruff, cash ♦K, ♦Q and play ♠4 to ♠J to reach the ♥J.

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

This was yesterday's problem:

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

	North	
	♠ KJ9	
	♥ AQJ92	
	♦ J2	
	♣ KJ2	
West		East
♠ 108763		♠ 52
♥ 103		♥ K7654
♦ A1095		♦ 843
♣ 64		♣ 1075
	South	
	♠ AQ4	
	♥ 8	
	♦ KQ76	
	♣ AQ983	

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
♥ 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: <i>The Power of Pass</i> (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.
