

227. Looking for an opening

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|----------|
| | Pass | Pass | 1♦ |
| Dble | 1♥ | Pass | Pass |
| 1NT | Pass | 2NT | All Pass |

What would you lead as North from:

♠ AJ54
♥ 6432
♦ K6
♣ 1084

Make up your mind before reading further.

This was yesterday's problem:

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| | Pass | Pass | 1♦ |
| Dble | 1♥ | Pass | ? |

Do you agree with South's 1♦ opening? What would you do now as South with:

♠ 932
♥ Q
♦ AQ983
♣ J532

Opening light in third seat to indicate a good lead to partner is a good idea, but the deal is that you do not take another bid if you have opened light. If you open 1♦, the danger here is a 1♥ response from partner. Are you going to pass that? If not, then you should pass in third seat rather than promise a proper opening hand via your rebid. South's 2♣ rebid above should show a decent hand.

Today's deal come from Session 2 of the 2017 Spingold (USA Open Teams) quarter-final match between [DIAMOND](#) and [PIEDRA](#).

Board 23: Dealer North : Both vulnerable

| | | |
|---------|---------|--------|
| | North | |
| | ♠ AJ54 | |
| | ♥ 6432 | |
| | ♦ K6 | |
| | ♣ 1084 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ KQ10 | | ♠ 876 |
| ♥ AKJ10 | | ♥ 9875 |
| ♦ J105 | | ♦ 742 |
| ♣ A76 | | ♣ KQ9 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ 932 | |
| | ♥ Q | |
| | ♦ AQ983 | |
| | ♣ J532 | |

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|----------|-------|
| | Pass | Pass | 1♦ |
| Dble | 1♥ | Pass | 2♣ |
| Pass | 2♦ | All Pass | |

West had enough strength for a 1NT overcall, but with no diamond stopper elected to double. When South rebid 2♣, West passed as it seemed that East would have very little. When North bid 2♦ : Pass : Pass, West should / might have balanced with another takeout double. That would have seen East bid 2♥. That figures to make via 1 spade, 4 hearts and 3 clubs to give East-West +110.

West led the ♦5: six – seven – nine. Embarking on spades would work well as the cards lie, but South returned a trump to the king. Then came the ♣4: nine – two – six. East switched to the ♥9 (high-hate), queen, ace. West returned the ♥K, ruffed. The ♦A drew the missing trumps.

Playing a spade now would have made the contract. If West plays an honour, declarer ducks in dummy and finesses the ♠J later. If West plays the ♠10, the ♠J wins and declarer continues with a low spade. South was not to know the spade layout was so favourable, except that West had unwisely telegraphed the position with the ♥A first, ♥K second as suit-preference for spades. Defenders normally win with the cheapest card. Winning abnormal order is commonly played to send a suit-preference message.

After ♦A, South played the ♣3: seven – eight – queen. East returned the ♥7 and South ruffed with the ♦Q. The ♣A won the club exit and West cashed the ♥J. West then played the ♠Q. Declarer could have escaped for one down by ducking, but winning with the ♠A gave West the last two tricks for two down, East-West +200. As it turned out, the loss was not so much in the bidding as in the play.

In the Spingold:

| West | North | East | South |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| <i>Lindqvist</i> | <i>Fergani</i> | <i>Brogeland</i> | <i>Pollack</i> |
| | Pass | Pass | 1♦ |
| Dble | 1♥ | Pass | Pass |
| 1NT | Pass | 2NT | All Pass |

Note South's Pass. There was no calamity yet. If West had doubled 1♥ for takeout and East had passed for penalties, South would redouble. That would be an SOS redouble, for rescue. North would bid 1♠, a fine spot for North-South.

If West had passed out 1♥, East-West can take eight tricks for +200. Despite the lack of a diamond stopper, West rebid 1NT, showing a strong, balanced hand. East invited game with 2NT, but West subsided.

Board 23: Dealer North : Both vulnerable

| | | |
|---------|---------|--------|
| | North | |
| | ♠ AJ54 | |
| | ♥ 6432 | |
| | ♦ K6 | |
| | ♣ 1084 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ KQ10 | | ♠ 876 |
| ♥ AKJ10 | | ♥ 9875 |
| ♦ J105 | | ♦ 742 |
| ♣ A76 | | ♣ KQ9 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ 932 | |
| | ♥ Q | |
| | ♦ AQ983 | |
| | ♣ J532 | |

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Lindqvist</i> | <i>Fergani</i> | <i>Brogeland</i> | <i>Pollack</i> |
| | Pass | Pass | 1♦ |
| Dble | 1♥ | Pass | Pass |
| 1NT | Pass | 2NT | All Pass |

As in today's problem on page 1, it was now up to North to find the best lead. As a light third-hand opening aims to indicate a good lead to partner, it should be based on a good suit. As North had 8 HCP and East-West had bid to 2NT, usually showing a combined 23-24 points, it was clear that South had indeed opened light. That should suggest a strong diamond suit.

If North had led the ♦K and the ♦6, that would have given the defence six tricks. North chose the ♠4. West won with the ♠10 and cashed the ♥A. The ♥Q dropped and West cashed the rest of the hearts. South threw two spades and the ♦8. Figuring the contract was now safe if South had started with 5 diamonds, West played the ♠Q: ace – seven – ♣2. The ♦K and ♦6 would have held West to eight tricks, but North persisted with the ♠J (suit-preference for diamonds) and West had nine tricks +150. You can imagine the post-mortem.

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| West | North | East | South |
| <i>Igla</i> | <i>Diamond</i> | <i>Piedra</i> | <i>Platnick</i> |
| | Pass | Pass | Pass! |
| 1♣ | Pass | 1♦ ⁽¹⁾ | Pass |
| 3♦ ⁽²⁾ | Pass | 3♥ | All Pass |

(1) 4+ hearts

(2) 17-18 points with 4 hearts

South led the ♣2, ace. Declarer played the ♥A, the ♣6 to the ♣K and the ♠8: two – king – ace. North switched to the ♦K, followed by the ♦6 to the ♦Q. South cashed ♦A, North discarding his last club, and played ♣5: seven – ♥2 – ♣Q. North exited with the ♥4 and East lost another trick later when the ♠J did not fall under the ♠Q.

After 1♣ : 1♥, most pairs are likely to end in 3♥, which is bound to fail on normal defence. However, 2♥ can always be made (win the club lead, play ♥A and then ♠K). There are methods which allow you to stop in 2♥ if you are playing transfer responses. You can play 1♣ : 1♦ (4+ hearts), and then 1♥ = 3 hearts, wide-ranging, or 4 hearts, minimum opening, and 1♣ : 1♦ (4+ hearts) and then 2♥ as 18-19 balanced with 4 hearts. That would have worked here.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|
| | | Pass | 1♣ ⁽¹⁾ |
| Pass | 2♦ ⁽²⁾ | Pass | 2♠ |
| Pass | 3♠ | Pass | 4NT |
| Pass | 5♥ ⁽³⁾ | Pass | 7♠ |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |

(1) Artificial, 16+ points

(2) 5+ diamonds, 11+ points

(3) Two key cards, no ♠Q

What would you lead as West from:

- ♠ 76
- ♥ 943
- ♦ J854
- ♣ K742

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

Grammar humour: The subjunctive would have walked into a bar, had it only known.