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

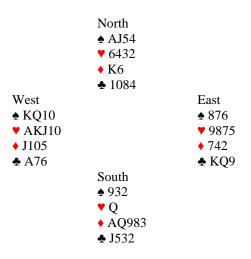
West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♦
Dble	1♥	Pass	?

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 \diamond , the danger here is a 1 \forall 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 \Rightarrow 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.



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 $2\clubsuit$, West passed as it seemed that East would have very little. When North bid $2\blacklozenge$: Pass : Pass, West should / might have balanced with another takeout double. That would have seen East bid $2\heartsuit$. That figures to make via 1 spade, 4 hearts and 3 clubs to give East-West +110.

West led the 45: 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 $\bigstar J$ later. If West plays the $\bigstar 10$, the $\bigstar J$ 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 $\blacktriangleleft A$ first, $\P K$ 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.

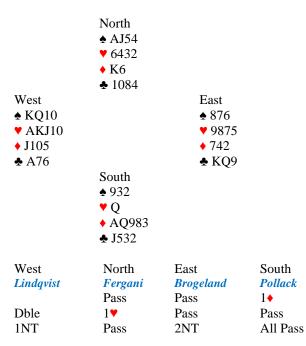
In the Spingold:

West	North	East	South
Lindqvist	Fergani	Brogeland	Pollack
	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



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

West	North	East	South
Igla	Diamond	Piedra	Platnick
	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 $\bigstar 2$, ace. Declarer played the $\forall A$, the $\bigstar 6$ to the $\bigstar K$ and the $\bigstar 8$: two – king – ace. North switched to the $\blacklozenge K$, followed by the $\blacklozenge 6$ to the $\blacklozenge Q$. South cashed $\blacklozenge A$, North discarding his last club, and played $\bigstar 5$: seven – $\forall 2 - \bigstar Q$. North exited with the $\forall 4$ and East lost another trick later when the $\bigstar J$ did not fall under the $\bigstar Q$.

After $1 \ge 1 \lor$, most pairs are likely to end in $3 \lor$, which is bound to fail on normal defence. However, $2 \lor$ can always be made (win the club lead, play \lor A and then \bigstar K). There are methods which allow you to stop in $2 \lor$ if you are playing transfer responses. You can play $1 \ge 1 \lor (4+$ hearts), and then $1 \lor = 3$ hearts, wide-ranging, or 4 hearts, minimum opening, and $1 \ge 1 \lor (4+$ hearts) and then $2 \lor$ 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) Artificia	l, 16+ points		
(2) 5+ diam	onds, 11+ point	S	

(3) Two key cards, no $\blacklozenge Q$

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.