

247. Limit bet

By Ron Klinger

This was yesterday's problem:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♣
1♥	Dble ⁽¹⁾	3♥	?
(1) 4 spades, 6+ points			

What would you do as South with:

♠ A102
♥ 8
♦ AK94
♣ KJ432

To make 4♥ or 4♣, you need about 26 points or more in the partnership. The same amount is required to make a contract of 4♣ or 4♦. You have 15 points, plus, say, 3 for the singleton heart, total 18. Partner has promised you 6+ points. If partner is minimum, you do not have enough to make 4♣ or 4♦. You have three defensive tricks (♠A, ♦A, ♦K) and potential for a fourth trick from the clubs. Partner might have a trick or two. That suggests defending against 3♥.

Even if you can make a part-score your way – and there is no guarantee of that – you might do better against 3♥.
General principle: It does not pay to compete a part-score hand to the 4-level.

Many years ago, we tested that principle. Every time we sold out at the 3-level after a competitive auction, we checked what would have happened if we had competed to the 4-level. The test run was over one year, playing two sessions a week – perhaps not enough. We found that competing to four would have worked about 20% of the time, but 80% of the time we did better by defending at the 3-level. You could carry out a similar experiment yourself.

This was the full deal:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North			
♠ J973			
♥ KJ5			
♦ 752			
♣ Q96			
West		East	
♠ Q864		♠ K5	
♥ AQ964		♥ 10732	
♦ QJ		♦ 10863	
♣ 108		♣ A75	
South			
♠ A102			
♥ 8			
♦ AK94			
♣ KJ432			

West led the ♥A – like yesterday's deal, leading the ace helped declarer more than the defence. West switched to the ♣4: three – king – ace. Declarer cashed ♦A, ♦K, and played the ♣2 to the ♣Q and ♣A. East returned ♣5 to ♣Q and ruffed the spade return. That was four tricks for the defence and, with the ♦10 to come, the defence took 4♦ two down, East-West +200.

Meanwhile, what would have happened to 3♥? The defence can come to a club, two diamonds, two hearts and a spade. That would be North-South +200 instead of -200.

West	North	East	South
			1♣
1♥	Dble ⁽¹⁾	3♥	4♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	
(1) 4 spades, 6+ points			

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North	
♠ J973	
♥ KJ5	
♦ 752	
♣ Q96	
West	East
♠ Q864	♠ K5
♥ AQ964	♥ 10732
♦ QJ	♦ 10863
♣ 108	♣ A75
South	
♠ A102	
♥ 8	
♦ AK94	
♣ KJ432	

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
		1♣	
1♥	1NT	2♥	Dble ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♣ ⁽²⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) For takeout

(2) Offering the choice between 3♣ and 3♦

Because of the 1NT response (no negative double) South did not expect North to have four spades, hence the removal to 3♣. Given the choice of 1NT or a negative double, I find that the negative double is usually better. Here, however, there are good reasons for 1NT: (a) the 4-3-3-3 pattern, (b) the strong heart holding, potentially two tricks, and (c) the weakness of the spade suit.

West led the ♦Q against 3♣. South won and played the ♥8. West rose with the ♥A and shifted to the ♣A: three – king – ace. South played the ♣K. East took the ♣A and returned the ♣5. West won with the ♣Q and gave East a spade ruff. Declarer had the rest, winning the ♦3 with the ♦K, cashing the ♦J, crossing to the ♦Q and ditching the two diamond losers on the ♦J and ♥K. That was nine tricks for North-South +110 and +7 Imps.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Pairs: Dealer West : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	2NT ⁽¹⁾	Dble ⁽²⁾	3♦ ⁽³⁾
Pass	Pass	?	
(1) Weak, clubs + hearts OR diamonds + spades			
(2) Strong hand			
(3) Pass or correct			

What would you do now as East with:

♠ AKJ32
♥ 4
♦ K4
♣ AKJ97

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

I shot a man with a paintball gun . . . just to watch him dye.