# 285. Partner shows the way

## By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

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North
         ★ 87
         96
         ♦ KJ108
         ♣ KJ1043
West
◆ J9643
♥ A
♦ 9654
♣ 972
West North East South
Pass
      Pass
             1♠
                   4♥
             Pass
                   5♥
4♠
      Pass
Pass
      Pass
             Pass
```

- 1. West leads the  $\clubsuit 4$ : seven ace  $\checkmark 2$ .
- 2. South plays the  $\forall$ K: ace six five.

What do you play next as West?

Your side has no spade tricks and almost certainly only one heart trick. If partner has both minor-suit aces, you figure to take two tricks there, but what if partner has two tricks (A-Q) in one minor? Which one will you play?

Have you noticed anything unusual so far?

Yes, partner's play in the spade suit.

What did partner play at trick 1?

The ♠A.

What did partner have in spades?

AKQ1052

#### Why is the $\triangle A$ unusual?

When playing third-hand-high, a defenders wins with or plays the cheapest of equally-high cards. Partner's normal card, after ♠4 lead and ♠7 from dummy, would have been the ♠Q.

Why did partner choose the  $\triangle A$  instead?

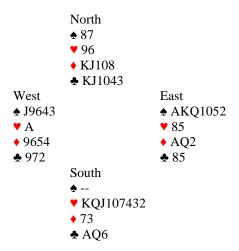
As a suit-preference signal.

#### Asking for what?

High card = asking for the high suit. Diamonds high, clubs low here. You should therefore switch to a diamond.

Here is the full deal (see next page):

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A pre-emptive bidder does not usually bid twice, but that does not apply to a pre-emptive bidder in third or fourth seat who might have pre-empted with a strong hand. That accounts for South's  $4 \checkmark$  and later  $5 \checkmark$ .

You can see what will happen if West continues with a spade or switches to a club after taking the ♥A. South will win, draw trumps and run the clubs, discarding the diamond losers. That gives South 12 tricks. If West switches to a diamond at trick 3, East can take two diamonds and defeat 5♥ by one trick.

It is also important that East does not play the ♠Q trick 1 as 'an automatic' cheapest high card when playing third-hand-high. Playing equally-high cards in abnormal order is commonly used as a suit-preference signal. When you do something like that, you just hope partner is paying attention.

### **Problem for Tomorrow:**

Dealer North: Both vulnerable

West North East South

1 Pass  $2 \stackrel{(1)}{\bullet}$ Pass  $3 \stackrel{\bullet}{\bullet}$ Pass  $5 \stackrel{(2)}{\bullet}$ Pass  $6 \stackrel{\bullet}{\bullet}$ Pass Pass Dble All Pass

(1) 5 + spades, strong hand

(2) Two key cards, no  $\stackrel{\bullet}{\bullet}$ Q

What do you lead as West from:

- **★** 76
- **y** 94
- ♦ J10952
- **♣** AK42

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

In filling out an application, where it says, 'In case of an emergency, notify . . . you should write 'a doctor'.