

286. Show time

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|
| | 1♦ | Pass | 2♠ ⁽¹⁾ |
| Pass | 3♠ | Pass | 4NT |
| Pass | 5♥ ⁽²⁾ | Pass | 6♣ |
| Pass | Pass | Dble | All Pass |

(1) 5+ spades, strong hand

(2) Two key cards, no ♠Q

What do you lead as West from:

♠ 76
♥ 94
♦ J10952
♣ AK42

What would you lead without East's double?

The normal start would be a top club.

If the opponents are competent, why are you unlikely to collect two club tricks?

A strong South player would not bid 4NT if holding two or more losing clubs. South would embark on a cue-bidding sequence to ensure that North has club control. Some would use 3NT over 3♠ to ask for club control.

What did partner's double mean?

If the player not on lead doubles a slam, that player either has the slam defeated for sure *OR* the double asks for an unusual lead. First priority is the first suit bid by dummy. Here East's double asks you to lead a diamond. This double is known as a 'Lightner Double' after Theodore Lightner who conceived of the idea.

Why would partner want a diamond lead?

Partner might hold ♦A-K or ♦A-Q and hopes for the ♦K to appear in dummy. Given your values and the fact that the opponents have bid to a slam make it highly unlikely that either of those situations exist. The most likely explanation is that that partner is void in diamonds.

Which diamond do you lead?

The normal lead from J-10-9-5-2 is the jack. That would be a bad idea here.

Why?

As you expect partner to be void in diamonds, the card you lead will be taken as a suit-preference signal, high card for high suit (here a heart). You want to show partner that a club return is wanted. Therefore you should lead the ♦2, low card for the lowest suit.

Suppose partner has a void in diamonds and no high card values. A diamond ruff will produce only one trick for the defence. *Why does partner think that the diamond ruff will be enough to defeat the contract?*

Partner places you with an ace or perhaps the ♠K over declarer's ace. South bid 4NT, asking for key cards, and signed off in 6♣ when North bid 5♥, two key cards, no ♠Q. If North-South held all the key cards and the ♠Q, South would almost certainly have continued with 5NT (a) to confirm that all the key cards are held and (b) to look for the grand slam in spades. As South did not bid 5NT, East can judge that West has an ace or the ♠K.

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| | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| | North | |
| | ♠ K85 | |
| | ♥ QJ | |
| | ♦ A8764 | |
| | ♣ QJ53 | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ 76 | | ♠ 32 |
| ♥ 94 | | ♥ 1086532 |
| ♦ J10952 | | ♦ -- |
| ♣ AK42 | | ♣ 10876 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ AQJ1094 | |
| | ♥ AK7 | |
| | ♦ KQ3 | |
| | ♣ 9 | |

If West leads a spade or a heart, declarer can win in dummy, draw trumps, cash the hearts and make 12 tricks easily. In fact, if South cashes the hearts and plays out all the trumps bar one, this will be the position:

| | | |
|---------|--------|---------|
| | North | |
| | ♠ | |
| | ♥ | |
| | ♦ A876 | |
| | ♣ Q | |
| West | | East |
| ♠ | | ♠ |
| ♥ | | ♥ 10 |
| ♦ J1095 | | ♦ -- |
| ♣ A | | ♣ 10876 |
| | South | |
| | ♠ 9 | |
| | ♥ | |
| | ♦ KQ3 | |
| | ♣ 9 | |

When South plays the ♠9, West is squeezed. If West throws a diamond, dummy discards the ♣Q. If West throws the ♣A, dummy pitches a diamond. Either way, South makes all the tricks, North-South +1860.

If West leads the ♣A or the ♣K, West can still beat the contract by switching to a diamond. East ruffs and declarer is one down, East-West +200.

If West leads the ♦J, low from dummy, East ruffs and, taking the ♦J as high-card for high-suit, East might shift to a heart. South takes the ♥A or ♥K, draws trumps, unblocks ♦K, ♦Q, plays the ♥7 to the ♥Q and cashes the ♦A to discard the ♣9, making 6♠ doubled, North-South +1660

If West leads the ♦2, as recommended, East ruffs. Taking the ♦2 as suit-preference for clubs, East returns a club (♣10 or ♣8 as high-hate is best). West wins with the ♣K (cheaper winner) and, resisting the temptation to cash a second club, plays another diamond. Easts ruff and plays another club, but declarer ruffs, draws trumps and claims the rest. Still, that is two down doubled, East-West +500. That is a swing of over 2000 between the best defence and the poor defence.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

North
♠ K43
♥ AJ75
♦ QJ74
♣ Q8

West
♠ J10985
♥ 92
♦ A8
♣ 10432

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| Pass | 1♦ | Pass | 1♥ |
| Pass | 2♥ | Pass | 4♥ |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |

1. West leads the ♠J: three – queen – six.
2. East continues with the ♠A: seven . . .

Which spade do you play?

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

I do not have Alzheimer's. I've told you before. I have 'Some-timers'. Sometimes I remember, sometimes I don't.