

307. Out for the count

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ 8765
♥ 64
♦ AKJ
♣ J762

East
♠ QJ
♥ KQ10
♦ Q10954
♣ Q93

West	North	East	South
			1NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

(1) 15-17 points

West led the ♥5: four – queen – three. East switched to the ♠Q: ace – three – five. South cashed the ♥A and ruffed the ♥J with the ♠6. Next came the ♠7: jack – nine – two. What would you play as East at trick 6?

What have you noticed in the play of the trump suit?

Partner West followed with the ♠3 first and the ♠2 next.

What does that tell you?

It shows an odd number of trumps, obviously three.

What do you know about South's heart holding?

South has shown up with the ♥A-J-3.

Will South have any more hearts?

With four hearts and four spades, South would bid 2♥ in reply to 2♣ Stayman. Further, if West's ♥5 was fourth-highest, West would / should have followed with the ♥2 on the second round of hearts to show five hearts.

You know South is 4-3 in the majors. What about the minors?

South could be 4-3-3-3, 4-3-4-2 or 4-3-2-4.

What about the location of South's values?

South has shown up with the ♠A and the ♥A, ♥J. South almost certainly has the ♠K as well (it would be very risky to take the first spade with the ♠A from A-x-x-x). That comes to 12 points. South has no points in diamonds. Therefore South will have the ♣K or the ♣A, but not both (that would give South 19 points).

You have taken two tricks so far (♥Q and ♠J). Where can you hope to find two more tricks?

You might be hoping for a diamond trick and a club trick. In that case you might think to switch to a club. However, that is highly dangerous. The club position could be like this:

(a)		(b)
K8	J762 A1054	Q93
or		
K85	J762 A104	Q93

If you play a club, declarer plays low and West wins with the ♣K. If West now switched to a diamond, declarer can win in dummy and finesse the ♣10. The ♣A drops the ♣Q and declarer with 4-3-2-4 for situation (a) has no more losers. In situation (b), where South is 4-3-3-3, when the ♣A captures the ♣Q, dummy's ♣J is high for a diamond discard.

This analysis shows that a club switch has great risk and East should switch to a diamond at trick 6. Even if South is 4-3-2-4 and the diamond switch gives South an extra diamond trick to discard a club, South will still have three clubs left and you can hope for two club tricks.

The full deal:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

North	
♠ 8765	
♥ 64	
♦ AKJ	
♣ J762	
West	East
♠ 1032	♠ QJ
♥ 98752	♥ KQ10
♦ 83	♦ Q10954
♣ A84	♣ Q93
South	
♠ AK94	
♥ AJ3	
♦ 762	
♣ K105	

If East switches to the ♣3 (or ♣9), South plays low. If West takes the ♣A and switches to a diamond, declarer takes the ♦A, finesses the ♣10, cashes the ♠K and the ♣K, crosses to the ♦K and pitches the diamond loser on the ♣J. If East switches to the ♣Q (a strange choice), South covers with the ♣K. If West takes the ♣A, South can win any return, cash the ♠K, ♣10, ♣J and pitch a diamond on the 13th club. If West ducks the ♣K, South continues clubs and eventually can set up a club winner for a diamond discard.

If East switches to the ♣3 (or ♣9) and South plays low, if West also plays low, dummy wins and declarer finesses the ♣10 for the same outcome.

When East switches to a diamond at trick 6, it eliminates South's potential diamond loser, but it allows the defenders to come to two club tricks, no matter how declarer tackles the clubs. Declarer can win with the ♦J, cross to the ♠K to draw the last trump, return to the ♦A and play a club.

If declarer plays the ♣2 (or ♣6 or ♣7), East plays the ♣3. Then if declarer plays the ♣K, the defenders collect the ♣A and ♣Q. If declarer plays low, West wins cheaply and takes the ♣A. If declarer plays the ♣10, the most likely case, West wins the ♣A and returns the ♣4. If declarer plays the ♣J from dummy, East plays the ♣Q, South the ♣K and East's ♣9 is high. If declarer plays the ♣7 or ♣6 from dummy, East plays the ♣9. South wins with the ♣K and East's ♣Q is high.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ J105
♥ AK102
♦ --
♣ KQJ1095

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

Don't you hate it when people answer their own questions? I do.