

314. Loser play

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ K106
♥ 432
♦ A6
♣ J10952

South
♠ AQJ432
♥ K98
♦ 84
♣ AK

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Do you agree with South's 4♠ bid?

South has 17 HCP plus 1 point for each doubleton. Total 19. North should have 6-9 points. Your combined total figures to be 25+ points and so bidding game is recommended.

A better approach: North has 6-9 points. That will usually produce two tricks, occasionally three. South has five losers. Five losers minus two winners = three losers and 13 tricks minus three losers = 10 tricks expected and so the 4♠ bid is fine.

West leads the ♦Q. Plan the play.

What is the first thing to do when dummy appears?

Count dummy's HCP (8) and add your own (17), total 25. That means the opponents hold 15 HCP. As the opposition have not bid, there is no evidence where most of the points lie. You expect East to have fewer than 12 points, as East passed initially

How many tricks do you have on top?

Nine, six spades, one diamond and two clubs.

What other potential for extra tricks do you have?

The ♥K can become a trick if East has the ♥A. You might also be able to make use of the clubs.

Should you duck in dummy at trick 1 or go up with the ♦A? Does it matter? Who has the ♦K?

West led the ♦Q, possibly top of a sequence. That places the ♦K with East. The heart layout might be like this:

	North	
	♥ 432	
West		East
♥ AQ65		♥ J107
	South	
	♥ K98	

If you play low on the ♦Q, East could overtake with the ♦K and switch to the ♥J. Whether South plays low or plays the king, the defence could take three heart tricks, which, together with the ♦K, takes 4♠ one down.

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West leads the ♦Q against 4♠. South should take the ♦A at once. *What next?*

There is no rush for the heart finesse. The only high card missing in clubs is the ♣Q. You should aim to set up the clubs. After ♦A, cross to the ♠A and cash the ♣A, ♣K. If the ♣Q has dropped doubleton, cash the ♠Q, cross to the ♠K and run the clubs to discard three losers. You make 11 tricks.

If the ♣Q has not dropped, play a low spade to the ♠10 and play ♣J (or 10 or 9). If East produces the ♣Q, you ruff high, cross to the ♠K and cash two club winners. You make 10 tricks. What if East shows out on this club? This is the layout for which you are catering:

	North	
	♠ K106	
	♥ 432	
	♦ A6	
	♣ J10952	
West		East
♠ 87		♠ 95
♥ A105		♥ QJ76
♦ QJ102		♦ K9753
♣ Q873		♣ 64
	South	
	♠ AQJ432	
	♥ K98	
	♦ 84	
	♣ AK	

If you ducked the ♦Q in dummy at trick 1, East can overtake with the ♦K and switch to the ♥Q to beat 4♠. After ♦A, ♠A, ♣A, ♣K, ♠2 to the ♠10 and the ♣J, East discards a diamond or a heart. Do NOT ruff this trick. If you do, you can cross to the ♠K, ruff a club to set up a club winner, but you cannot return to dummy to reach the winner you have established.

When you play the ♣J and East discards, you should also discard? *Which card?* The ♦8, NOT a heart. If you discard a heart, West wins with the ♣Q and can play a diamond to East's king. Now a heart shift gives the defence two hearts, a diamond and a club, one down.

On the ♣J, you ditch the ♦8 and this prevents West reaching the East hand. West wins with the ♣Q. If West cashes the ♥A, you make 11 tricks. When you regain the lead, you cross to the ♠K and cash the ♣10 to discard your heart loser. If West plays a diamond after winning with the ♣Q, you ruff, cross to the ♠K and play ♠10 and ♣9 to discard two hearts. You make 11 tricks.

The technical name for the ♣J play, discarding the diamond loser, and allowing West to win with the ♣Q is a 'loser-on-loser' play. The purpose was to protect the ♥K from attack. Setting up winners while keeping an unguarded king protected is a common theme on many bridge deals. It will surface again on tomorrow's deal.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

North

♠ KQ7

♥ A

♦ 109765

♣ J764

South

♠ AJ854

♥ K86

♦ A84

♣ K8

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT ⁽¹⁾
Pass	3♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

(1) 15-17 points

(2) Game-force, 3-1-5-4 or 3-1-4-5

West leads the ♠10. Plan the play.

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

For the first time since 1945, the National Spelling Bee is cancel . . . cancel . . . cancel . . . has been called off because of Covid-19.