

316. Taking the fourth

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

North

♦ Q1063
♥ Q5
♦ Q742
♣ KQ6

East

♦ J2
♥ A84
♦ A65
♣ A9743

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♦
Pass	2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♦ ⁽²⁾
Pass	3♦ ⁽³⁾	Pass	4♦ ⁽⁴⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Strong raise to 2♦

(2) Not keen on going further.

(3) I have a really, really good passed-hand.

(4) Oh, all right then.

West leads the ♣J: king – ace – five. What do you play at trick 2?

Make your decision before you move on your next decision?

This was yesterday's problem:

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North

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♥ Q5
♦ Q742
♣ KQ6

East

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♣ A9743

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥ ⁽¹⁾	Dble	4♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 10-14 points, 4+ spades, not 4 hearts

West leads the ♣J: king – ace – five. What do you play at trick 2?

This is not an easy problem. You have three tricks (almost certainly – South is unlikely to have a red-suit void), but where is the fourth?

There are two possible approaches. One is a passive approach, on the basis that South is full value in high cards for the jump to 4♦. As you have 13 HCP, if the opponents have about 25-26-27 points, that leaves very little or nothing for partner. You have taken one trick and intend to sit back and wait for the other to arrive. You hope the full deal is something like one of these or similar:

(a)	North	(b)	North
	♠ Q1063		♠ Q1063
	♥ Q5		♥ Q5
	♦ Q742		♦ Q742
	♣ KQ6		♣ KQ6
West	East	West	East
♠ 54	♠ J2	♠ 54	♠ J2
♥ 107632	♥ A84	♥ 107632	♥ A84
♦ J103	♦ A65	♦ J983	♦ A65
♣ J108	♣ A9743	♣ J10	♣ A9743
South		South	
♠ AK987		♠ AK987	
♥ KJ9		♥ KJ9	
♦ K98		♦ K10	
♣ 52		♣ 852	

West leads the ♣J: king – ace - five. If East returns a club, South can win, draw trumps, ruff the ♣6, knock out the ♥A, but in the end, declarer has to lose two diamonds, as long as the defenders do not do anything silly.

In diagram (a), you can see that if East switches to say ♥A and ♦A, or vice versa, after winning trick 1, that allows South to make the rest of the tricks. There are other ways that the ♣A and a club return can win. Maybe West has led a singleton club, perhaps with a 2-5-5-1 pattern. Still, it would work to cash ♥A, ♦A and revert to a club if West discourages both red suits. An excellent outcome for the club return is if West began with ♣J-10 doubleton, as in diagram (b). The ♣10 knocks out the ♣Q and East's ♣9 is now high to capture South's third club as soon as East gains the lead.

The second approach is to hope South has bid on good shape and that West has a red-suit king. After ♣A, cash ♥A. If partner encourages, play another heart. If partner discourages, try the ♦A and watch partner's signal.

Today's deal arose in the final of the 2020 Australian Mixed Teams Playoff:

Board 40: Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

North	
♠ Q1063	
♥ Q5	
♦ Q742	
♣ KQ6	
West	East
♠ 75	♠ J2
♥ 1093	♥ A84
♦ KJ103	♦ A65
♣ J1082	♣ A9743
South	
♠ AK984	
♥ KJ762	
♦ 98	
♣ 5	

After the second auction on page 1 (Pass : 1♥ – spades, not hearts – : Double : 4♣, all pass), which was yesterday's problem, Julian Foster (W) led the ♣J: king – ace – five. Giselle Mundell (E) returned the ♣7 and Leone Fuller (S) discarded the ♦9. She drew trumps in two rounds, knocked out the ♥A and had ten tricks for +420. I am full of sympathy for Mundell's decision to return a club. She had very little information and the club return could easily have been the winning defence. I think the BBO commentators who chided East were focusing only on the actual deal and not what other layouts there might have been.

Board 40: Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ Q1063	
	♥ Q5	
	♦ Q742	
	♣ KQ6	
West		East
♠ 75		♠ J2
♥ 1093		♥ A84
♦ KJ103		♦ A65
♣ J1082		♣ A9743
	South	
	♠ AK984	
	♥ KJ762	
	♦ 98	
	♣ 5	

At the other table, the North-South auction was more telling:

West	North	East	South
Rankin	Geromboux	Fischer	Yuen
Pass	Pass	1♣	1♠
Pass	2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Maximum pass and spade support

West led the ♣J: king – ace – five. East switched to the ♥A: seven – ten (high-hate, low-like) – five. East now tried the ♦A: nine – three (low-like) – two. East played a second diamond. West won and that was one down, East-West +50 and +10 Imps.

It is so good when you have a suitable card with which to signal. Imagine if West's diamonds were K-J-10-9. That might have given East a headache.

North's 2♣, 10-11 points and spade support would usually be based on an 8-loser hand (it is 7.5 losers here). With 6 losers, South could have bid 4♣ at once over 2♣. That would have made East's later defensive decision tougher. After 2♣, another choice for South would have been 2♥, a long-suit (3+ hearts) trial bid to seek help in hearts. North does have help in hearts with Q-5, but with more than half her values in the minors, with some probable wastage there, Christy Geromboux (N) might have rebid 2♣. The 2♣ response had already shown all of North's values.

How did East come up with the winning defence? South 2♣ rebid was very helpful. If South had A-K in spades, the ♥K and the ♦K, plus maybe a jack or two, South would either have bid game or tried for game. From the attempted sign-off in 2♣, East could judge that West figured to have a king somewhere. It could not hurt to cash ♥A and ♦A if West had the ♣K. If West discouraged both, East could revert to clubs and hope that the ♣J lead was a singleton.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			4♠
Pass	Pass	?	

What would you do as East with:

- ♠ A106
- ♥ KQ1042
- ♦ A5
- ♣ A108

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

Never underestimate the power of stupid people in large groups. (George Carlin)