

# 318. Length before strength

*By Ron Klinger*

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

North  
♠ 32  
♥ AK76  
♦ KQ1062  
♣ 65

South  
♠ AK95  
♥ J943  
♦ --  
♣ Q8742

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT <sup>(1)</sup>
Pass	4♣ <sup>(2)</sup>	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Game-force, asking about heart length

(2) 4 hearts, 5 diamonds

In reply to the 2NT ask, many would play 4♣ as showing club shortage. West leads the ♠J. Plan the play.

The deal is from the 2017 Spingold (USA K-O Open Teams) semi-final between [LAVAZZA](#) and [SCHWARTZ](#).

Board 3: Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 32	
	♥ AK76	
	♦ KQ1062	
	♣ 65	
West		East
♠ J1087		♠ Q64
♥ Q2		♥ 1085
♦ 8753		♦ AJ94
♣ A103		♣ KJ9
	South	
	♠ AK95	
	♥ J943	
	♦ --	
	♣ Q8742	

This was yesterday's question:

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	?

What would you do as South with

♠ AK95  
♥ J943  
♦ --  
♣ Q8742

With [SCHWARTZ](#) North-South, 2♥ was passed out. With South having a 6½ loser hand facing a 6-7 loser hand, that was a very conservative action by South. Recommended is a 2NT rebid to ask North about the heart length and the hand strength. In reply 3♥ = 4 trumps, minimum, 3-other-suit = 3 hearts only and 4-level = 4 trumps, maximum. West led the ♠J. Declarer made eight tricks (to justify the pass), North-South +110.

Board 3: Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

<p>North</p> <p>♠ 32</p> <p>♥ AK76</p> <p>♦ KQ1062</p> <p>♣ 65</p>	<p>East</p> <p>♠ Q64</p> <p>♥ 1085</p> <p>♦ AJ94</p> <p>♣ KJ9</p>
<p>West</p> <p>♠ J1087</p> <p>♥ Q2</p> <p>♦ 8753</p> <p>♣ A103</p>	<p>South</p> <p>♠ AK95</p> <p>♥ J943</p> <p>♦ --</p> <p>♣ Q8742</p>

**LAVAZZA** North-South had the auction to 4♥ at the top of page 1. North has only 12 HCP, but with the two doubletons and the excellent location of the high cards (in the long suits), North has a 6-loser hand and that justifies insisting on game.

West led the ♠J: two – six – king. The recommended approach for situations like this is to set up your long suit. You can deal with the spade losers by setting up a diamond winner and, if need be, ruffing a spade in dummy.

At trick 2, Alejandro Bianchedi, South, played the ♣7: ten – six – nine. West switched to the ♥2: ace – five – three. South continued with the ♣5: jack – two – three. East returned the ♥8: nine – queen – king. After ♦K, ace, ruffed, and a club ruffed in dummy, South played diamonds and had ten tricks, losing two clubs and a heart. That was worth +420 and 6 Imps to **LAVAZZA**.

This was the auction when the deal was replayed in a game on BBO:

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

If partner is allowed to raise 1♥ to 2♥ with three trumps and a suitable hand, it is risky to jump to 4♥. It cannot hurt to check on partner's heart length via 2NT. It could go:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	4♥ <sup>(1)</sup>	All Pass	

(1) 4 hearts and maximum values

West led the ♠J; South took the ♠A, ♠K and went off track, ruffing the ♣5 with the ♥6. Next came the ♦K, ace, ruffed, and the ♠9: ten – ♥K – ♣9. Declarer discarded a club on the ♦Q and ruffed a diamond in hand. After ♣4: three – five – jack, West switched to the ♥5: nine – queen – ace. Down to a trump in each hand, declarer played the ♥7 to the ♥J and lost the last three tricks for one down, –50.

Notice that declarer did not touch the long suit until much too late and never enjoyed the benefit of the 3-3 split in clubs.

## Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♣	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ K765  
♥ Q64  
♦ A42  
♣ KQJ

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

*I used to eat a lot of natural foods, until I found out that most people die of natural causes.*