

342. A glass stopper

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

- ♠ A9865
- ♥ J2
- ♦ 973
- ♣ Q32

The deal arose in the 2017 Spingold (USA Open Teams) semi-final match between [DIAMOND](#) and [MITTELMAN](#).

Board 34: Dealer East : Both vulnerable

North		
♠ A9865		
♥ J2		
♦ 973		
♣ Q32		
West		East
♠ Q3		♠ KJ742
♥ 1094		♥ 8653
♦ K542		♦ A1086
♣ K984		♣ --
South		
♠ 10		
♥ AKQ7		
♦ QJ		
♣ AJ10765		

[DIAMOND](#) North-South:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
Pass	1♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) 4+ spades

(2) Asking for a diamond stopper for 3NT

West led the ♦2: three – ace – jack. Which diamond would you return as East at trick 2?

With three cards remaining, it is standard to return the card that was your original fourth-highest (unless there is a need to unblock). Here East could place South with ♦K-J or ♦Q-J. There was no need to unblock and so the ♦6 at trick 2 would be the normal return. West can win and the defence can take four diamonds, one spade after a spade switch at trick 5 and a club.

That is not what happened. East returned the ♦8. West now placed East with an original holding of A-8-6 (the ♦8 would be the standard return from the remaining 8-6 doubleton) and South with ♦Q-J-10 initially. West ducked South's ♦Q, although if the layout was as West imagined, it would have been safe to take the ♦K and play a third diamond as West had an entry later via the ♣K.

Board 34: Dealer East : Both vulnerable

<p>North</p> <p>♠ A9865</p> <p>♥ J2</p> <p>♦ 973</p> <p>♣ Q32</p>	<p>East</p> <p>♠ KJ742</p> <p>♥ 8653</p> <p>♦ A1086</p> <p>♣ --</p>
<p>West</p> <p>♠ Q3</p> <p>♥ 1094</p> <p>♦ K542</p> <p>♣ K984</p>	<p>South</p> <p>♠ 10</p> <p>♥ AKQ7</p> <p>♦ QJ</p> <p>♣ AJ10765</p>

After the ♦2 lead against South's 3NT and the ♦8 return: queen – four – seven, South played the ♥7 to the ♥J and ran the ♣Q to West's ♣K. West cashed the ♦K. The defence made three diamonds and the ♣K, but South had a spade, 4 hearts and 4 clubs, North-South +600.

At the other table, after the auction at the top of page 1, North raised 3♣ to 4♣ and South bid 5♣, all pass. The defence took their two diamond tricks and declarer could not avoid one down because of the trump loser. However, declarer misjudged the play and went two down –200 and –13 Imps.

After 3♣, North could have passed. If wanting to push on to game, there is a strong case for North bidding 3♦, asking for a stopper for 3NT. With Q-J in diamonds, bidding 3NT is certainly reasonable. That would work opposite ♦K-x-x ♦A-x-x and even ♦10-x-x with North. Some, my partners and I included, would bid 3NT with a holding of ♦Q-x in the stopper-ask suit.

This was yesterday's problem, which arose when the deal was replayed in a BBO game:

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass

(1) 5+ spades

(2) Fourth-suit, asking for a diamond stopper for 3NT.

What would you lead as West from:

♠ Q3

♥ 1094

♦ K542

♣ K984

I certainly approve of South's 3NT, despite the outcome. Figuring that clubs were not breaking well for declarer and keen to receive a spade lead, as South was likely to be short in spades on the bidding, Avi Kanetkar (E) doubled 3NT. As the double called for the lead of dummy's first-bid suit, West led the ♣Q. Declarer took the ♠A and ran the ♣Q to the ♣K. (Note that had the ♣K been onside, 3NT would make.) West returned the ♣3.

East won with the ♠J and switched to the ♦6, jack, king. Back came the ♦2 to the ♦A. East cashed ♦10, ♦8 and the ♠K for three down, East-West +800.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer West : Nil vulnerable

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

(1) Primarily for takeout

What would you do as South with:

♠ AQ10874
♥ QJ82
♦ K6
♣ 4

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

Bought some rocket salad yesterday, but it went off before I could eat it.