## 342. A glass stopper

## By Ron Klinger

Dealer East: Both vulnerable

```
West North East South
Pass 1♣
Pass 1♠
Pass 2♠
Pass 2♠
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
v 1094
                      ♥ 8653
♦ K542
                      ♦ A1086

★ K984

         South
         ♠ 10

▼ AKQ7

         OJ
         ♣ AJ10765
```

## **DIAMOND** North-South:

```
West North East South
Pass 1♣

Pass 1♥<sup>(1)</sup> Pass 2♥

Pass 3♦<sup>(2)</sup> Pass 3NT

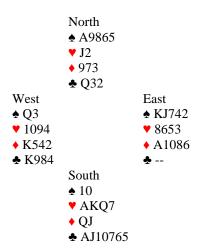
Pass Pass Pass
(1) 4+ spades
(2) Asking for a diamond stopper for 3NT
```

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  $\bullet$ K-J or  $\bullet$ Q-J. There was no need to unblock and so the  $\bullet$ 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  $\bullet 8$ . West now placed East with an original holding of A-8-6 (the  $\bullet 8$  would be the standard return from the remaining 8-6 doubleton) and South with  $\bullet Q$ -J-10 initially. West ducked South's  $\bullet Q$ , although if the layout was as West imagined, it would have been safe to take the  $\bullet K$  and play a third diamond as West had an entry later via the  $\bullet K$ .

Board 34: Dealer East: Both vulnerable



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
                          1.
                  Pass
                         2.
 Pass
         1♠
                  Pass
         2♠<sup>(1)</sup>
 Pass
                  Pass
                          3♣
         3♦<sup>(2)</sup>
                          3NT
                  Pass
 Pass
                  Dble All Pass
 Pass
         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  $\Delta$ Q. Declarer took the  $\Delta$ A and ran the  $\Delta$ Q to the  $\Delta$ K. (Note that had the  $\Delta$ K been onside, 3NT would make.) West returned the  $\Delta$ 3.

East won with the  $\Delta J$  and switched to the  $\Delta G$ , jack, king. Back came the  $\Delta G$  to the  $\Delta G$ . East cashed  $\Delta G$  and the  $\Delta G$  for three down, East-West +800.

## **Problem for Tomorrow:**

Dealer West: Nil vulnerable

West North East South 4♦ Dble<sup>(1)</sup> 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.