

# 351. Top spot

*By Ron Klinger*

This was yesterday's problem:

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
|      |       | Pass | 2♣    |
| Pass | 3♦    | Pass | ?     |

*What would you do now as South with:*

♠ AKQJ1086  
♥ AK  
♦ 98  
♣ K6

Partner has shown positive values with 5+ diamonds. There should be good chances for slam, but it is no certainty. Partner could have ♦K-Q-J-x-x and ♣Q-J-x, for example. Some would jump straight to 4NT, but there is no rush for that. It is better to indicate your strong suit first. Then, if partner later shows no key cards, you can sign off in 5♠.

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
|      |       | Pass | 2♣    |
| Pass | 3♦    | Pass | 3♠    |
| Pass | 4♣    | Pass | ?     |

*What should South do now?*

North has shown 5+ diamonds and 4+ clubs and has denied 3+ spades. Still, with your solid suit, you do not need support for spades to be trumps. With your self-sufficient suit, you are much too good to bid just 4♠, even though partner will likely push on, given the positive reply to 2♣. On the other hand, you should not jump to 6♣ either. North's bidding has a wide range. It cannot hurt to bid 4NT now.

*What does 4NT mean here?*

Nowadays, 4NT here is generally played as asking for key cards, based on the last suit mentioned. Thus, 4NT is asking for key cards if clubs are trumps. That cannot hurt you as you can always revert to spades later.

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
|      |       | Pass | 2♣    |
| Pass | 3♦    | Pass | 3♠    |
| Pass | 4♣    | Pass | 4NT   |
| Pass | 5♠    | Pass | ?     |

*What does 5♠ show?*

Two key cards plus the ♣Q.

*What would you do now?*

*What would you do if partner had replied 5♥, showing two key cards and no ♣Q?*

The full deal arose in a club duplicate pairs:

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

|         |            |         |
|---------|------------|---------|
|         | North      |         |
|         | ♠ --       |         |
|         | ♥ 743      |         |
|         | ♦ A7432    |         |
|         | ♣ AQJ93    |         |
| West    |            | East    |
| ♠ 972   |            | ♠ 543   |
| ♥ 9865  |            | ♥ QJ102 |
| ♦ J5    |            | ♦ KQ106 |
| ♣ 10872 |            | ♣ 54    |
|         | South      |         |
|         | ♠ AKQJ1086 |         |
|         | ♥ AK       |         |
|         | ♦ 98       |         |
|         | ♣ K6       |         |

You can see that North-South can make all the tricks, even though holding only 31 HCP. Where possible, counting tricks beats counting points. When North bids 5♠ over 4NT, South can count on 7 spade tricks, 2 hearts, 1 diamond as North has shown the ♦A and 3 clubs, as North has shown 4+ clubs including the A-Q, total 13 tricks.

Whether you are playing pairs or teams, you should now bid 7NT. You could bid 7♠, but there could be a tiny possibility of the opening lead being ruffed. At teams, 7NT or 7♠ will score the same when they make, but at pairs, 7NT will produce a better score than 7♠.

If North had replied 5♥ to 4NT, South knows North has the two minor-suit aces. South should then continue with 5NT, asking for kings / specific kings. If North bids 6♣ (no kings), you settle for 6NT. If North bids 6♦, one king / the ♦K, you can bid 7NT. You would be happy to be in 7NT opposite:

♠ --  
♥ 743  
♦ AK432  
♣ A9842

6NT is quite enough opposite:

♠ --  
♥ 743  
♦ AJ432  
♣ A9842

The actual results were not quite as impressive as 7NT. Top score went to 7♠, +2210. Others were 6♠, 70%, 3NT, 40%, and 4♠, 10%.

## Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : North-South vulnerable

North

♠ A874

♥ AQ972

♦ 94

♣ K4

South

♠ Q5

♥ K1043

♦ AK

♣ A8752

| West | North             | East | South             |
|------|-------------------|------|-------------------|
|      |                   |      | 1NT               |
| Pass | 2♣                | Pass | 2♥                |
| Pass | 4♦ <sup>(1)</sup> | Pass | 4♠ <sup>(2)</sup> |
| Pass | 5♥ <sup>(3)</sup> | Pass | 6♥ <sup>(4)</sup> |
| Pass | Pass              | Pass |                   |

(1) Sets hearts, asks for key cards

(2) 0 or 3 key cards

(3) In case it is zero

(4) No, it is three.

West leads the ♣J. Plan the play.

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

*A hole has been found in the wall around a nudist camp. The police are deciding whether to look into it.*