

354. Loss leader

By Ron Klinger

This was yesterday's problem:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♥
3♠	Pass	4♠	?

Playing pairs, what would you do as South with:

♠ 7
♥ AQJ10543
♦ Q964
♣ A

Having 11+ cards in two suits gives you a freakish hand, usually better geared to offence (being declarer) than defence. You could double for takeout (and remove 5♣ to 5♥), but that suggests a more powerful hand in defence than the one you have. You have two defensive tricks and possibly one in diamonds, but the ♥A might not stand up. Given the pre-emptive jump to 3♠ and the raise to 4♠, partner is unlikely to have length and strength in spades.

The deal arose in a pairs event on BBO and the majority of the field was in 5♥. The question then was whether the defenders could extract a decent penalty.

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

North		East		South	
♠	QJ10	♠	62	♠	7
♥	986	♥	K72	♥	AQJ10543
♦	J7	♦	AK82	♦	Q964
♣	76532	♣	KQ109	♣	A
West		East		South	
♠	AK98543	♠	62	♠	7
♥	--	♥	K72	♥	AQJ10543
♦	1053	♦	AK82	♦	Q964
♣	J84	♣	KQ109	♣	A

If South did double 4♠, primarily for takeout, North might well choose to pass for penalties, since North has a defensive trick in spades which would be useless in a heart contract. If North chose to bid, North could bid 4NT, playable in 2 or 3 suits, with a plan to pass 5♣ or remove 5♦ to 5♥. If North did bid 4NT, South would very likely choose 5♥ because of the solid suit.

As you can see, in 4♠ there is no heart trick for North-South and declarer makes 11 tricks comfortably. Even if North leads the ♦J, declarer wins, plays ♠K, ♠A, and knocks out the ♣A. The diamond loser goes away on the extra trick in clubs.

There were two Wests in 4♠, +450 and 86.7%, when 4♠ was passed out in the auction above. One pair played in 5♠, +450, after this auction:

West	North	East	South
			1♥
1♠	Pass	3NT	4♥
4♠	Pass	Pass	5♥
5♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

		North		
		♠ QJ10		
		♥ 986		
		♦ J7		
		♣ 76532		
West		East		
♠ AK98543		♠ 62		
♥ --		♥ K72		
♦ 1053		♦ AK82		
♣ J84		♣ KQ109		
		South		
		♠ 7		
		♥ AQJ10543		
		♦ Q964		
		♣ A		

Bidding 5-over-5 paid off for West this time. A void in the opposition suit often justifies your bidding one more than usual.

The popular auction was

West	North	East	South
			1♥
3♠	Pass	4♠	5♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Somewhat surprisingly, only one East thought it was a good idea to double 5♥. At that table, West led the ♣4. South captured East's ♣Q and played ♥A and a low heart to the ♥9 and ♥K. East shifted to ♦A and ♦K. When the ♦Q dropped the ♦10, South lost only a spade, a heart and two diamonds, -300. That gave East-West 73.3%. Had East played a third heart when in with the ♥K, the defence might have taken 5♥ doubled three down, +500 and a top board.

At 4 tables, 5♥ undoubled went two down. West led a top spade and switched to a club. South won and played a diamond to the jack and king. East tried to cash a club. South ruffed and played another diamond. South was able to ruff two diamonds and lose a spade, a heart and two diamonds. That was -100 and North-South 76.7%.

After ♠A, club to the ace, diamond to the jack and king, club ruffed by South, playing the ♦Q next would enable South to make ten tricks. When the low diamond next is ruffed in dummy and the ♦10 comes down, South's ♦9 is high and declarer can run the ♥9, followed by another heart finesse, thus avoiding a trump loser.

At 2 tables, South was three down, -150, North-South 56.7%. After ♠K, club to the ♣A, South played trumps and ultimately lost a spade, a heart and three diamonds (West discarded ♦3 on one of the hearts).

At 3 tables, South went four down, -200, North-South 40%. After ♠K and a club to the ace, South cashed the ♥A and then played a diamond to the jack and king. East cashed the ♥K and played a third heart. Declarer went on to lose four diamond tricks.

Problem for Tomorrow:

You are vulnerable versus not vulnerable. The dealer on your right passes. What would you do with:

♠ KQ97653

♥ 7

♦ J87

♣ K9

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

Pray, v: To ask that the laws of the universe be annulled on behalf of a single petitioner confessedly unworthy. (Ambrose Bierce, 1842-1914.)