

# 359. The seekers

*By Ron Klinger*

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1NT (15-17)
Pass	?		

What is your plan of bidding as North with

♠ A964  
♥ 8  
♦ K107654  
♣ 108

The first question you need to ask yourself is, 'Could we have a game?'. If you think not, you should sign off in diamonds. Depending on your methods, you could bid 1NT : 2NT (transfer to diamonds) and then pass 3♦ or rebid 3♦ over 3♣ or perhaps you bid 1NT : 2♣ and pass if partner bids 2♦. If it starts 1NT : 2♣, 2♥, you can bid 3♦ as a sign-off or 2♠ to invite game.

Of course, if it starts 1NT : 2♣, 2♠, you would be entitled to jump to 4♠. In support of spades, your hand is worth 11 points (7 HCP + 3 for the singleton and 1 for the doubleton). Another way of reaching the same conclusion is that the 15-17 1NT will usually be a 6-loser hand. You have a 7-loser hand. Once the spade fit comes to light, you can apply the Losing Trick Count formula: 7 (your losers) + 6 (partner's expected losers) = 13 and 24 - 13 = 11 tricks are likely. Thus, whether you use points or count losers, game is feasible and so you should be trying for game.

If you start with 1NT : 2♣ and partner bids 2♥, you and your partner will need to agree whether 2♠ now is an offer to play or game inviting. With the use of 1NT : 2NT as a transfer to diamonds, the 1NT : 2♣, 2♥ : 2NT sequence does not guarantee four spades, since that is merely a path to invite game, given 1NT : 2NT is not available. However, 1NT : 2♣, 2♥ : 3NT does promise four spades. Opener is expected to bid 4♠ if holding four spades, otherwise pass 3NT.

The deal arose in a club duplicate pairs:

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	North	
	♠ A964	
	♥ 8	
	♦ K107654	
	♣ 108	
West		East
♠ 8		♠ 10732
♥ KJ62		♥ Q1094
♦ J982		♦ Q
♣ Q964		♣ AJ73
	South	
	♠ KQJ5	
	♥ A753	
	♦ A3	
	♣ K52	

With the ♣A onside, you can make 11 tricks in spades, despite the 4-1 breaks in spades and in diamonds. Suppose West leads the ♣4 to the ace and South wins the club return. South plays ♠K, ♠Q, ♦A and finesses the ♦10 (restricted choice theory). East can ruff and return a club, ruffed in dummy. South ruffs a low diamond, crosses to the ♠A to draw East's last trump and loses just the ♣A and a diamond ruff.

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♥ KJ62		♥ Q1094
♦ J982		♦ Q
♣ Q964		♣ AJ73
	South	
	♠ KQJ5	
	♥ A753	
	♦ A3	
	♣ K52	

Whether played by North or South, 11 tricks are also available in diamonds as long as South plays ♦A and finesses the ♦10 next. Via the same play in diamonds, 3NT is also a lucky make. Say, West leads the ♣4 against 3NT. East wins and returns a club or switches to a heart. South wins, plays ♦A, finesses the ♦10 and has 4 spades, a heart, a club and 3 diamonds.

Top score (86%) was for East-West +100 when declarers went one down in 4♠, 5♦ and 3NT. North-South +110 in 2♦ was worth 38%, while 3♠ +140 was average. North-South +150 in 3♦ scored 63% and +170 in 3♠ was worth 74%. One pair made 3NT, +600, after the ♣4 lead and via ♦A and a finesse of the ♦10. Had clubs been 5-3, 3NT might have been defeated. Top score, and deservedly so, was North-South +650 in 4♠ on the ♦Q lead.

If it starts 1NT : 2♣, 2♥ : 2♠, South has support and a maximum hand and should jump to 4♠. If you have a copy of *A Good Game of Modern Bridge*, page 179, you can find another way to reach game on the North-South cards. Playing splinters, you can bid 1NT : 3♥ (0-1 heart) and South would bid 3♠, which North would raise to 4♠. Similarly, playing 'submarine splinters', it would go 1NT : 3♦ (0-1 heart), 3♠ : 4♠. If South bid 3NT after the splinter (denying 4 spades), North can risk a pass. You would be happy to be in 3NT opposite:

♠ K5  
♥ A753  
♦ AQ2  
♣ QJ32

or similar holdings with a diamond fit. If South does not have 4 spades and does not have an adequate heart stopper, South will probably bid 4♣. North should then jump to 5♦, a sign-off. That should be OK opposite something like this:

♠ K8  
♥ 976  
♦ A85  
♣ AKQ62

## Problem for Tomorrow:

As dealer, both sides vulnerable, what would you do with:

♠ Q9876432  
♥ 62  
♦ A7  
♣ 6

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

*My ex-partner at bridge still misses me, but his aim is improving.*