

363. Zhang zings again

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North
♠ J84
♥ 64
♦ K73
♣ AJ1076

South
♠ AQ103
♥ A92
♦ A8654
♣ K

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	5♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Too strong for just 3♦

West leads the ♥K. You take the ♥A and play the ♦4: queen – king – three. Plan the play.

This deal also arose in the same high-stakes rubber bridge game that was the setting for yesterday's puzzle. It features very neat timing by William Zhang. You are bound to lose at least one diamond. You can unblock the ♣K and pitch one of your hearts on the ♣A, but that still leaves you with a heart loser. If trumps are 4-1 (the ♦Q on your left looks ominous), you cannot afford to lose two diamonds and a heart. You certainly need the ♠K onside even if trumps are 3-2. How do you go about the play? You can assume trumps are 4-1.

This was the full deal:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ J84	
	♥ 64	
	♦ K73	
	♣ AJ1076	
West		East
♠ 762		♠ K95
♥ KQ87		♥ J1053
♦ Q		♦ J1092
♣ Q8432		♣ 95
	South	
	♠ AQ103	
	♥ A92	
	♦ A8654	
	♣ K	

Zhang won the ♥K lead, crossed to the ♦K and played the ♠J, low, low, low. He repeated the spade finesse and cashed the ♠A. These cards remained:

	North	
	♠	
	♥ 6	
	♦ 73	
	♣ AJ1076	
West		East
♠		♠
♥ Q87		♥ J105
♦		♦ J109
♣ Q8432		♣ 95
	South	
	♠ Q	
	♥ 92	
	♦ A865	
	♣ K	

Next came the 13th spade, discarding the ♥6 from dummy. What could East do?

East ruffed and returned the ♦J. South took the ♦A, cashed the ♣K, ruffed a heart in dummy, discarded the remaining heart loser on the ♣A and conceded a trump trick to East. South lost just two trump tricks.

Note that with the 4-1 break, South would have failed if South had won ♥A and played ♦A, ♦K, followed by the spades. Now dummy has only one trump left. When South plays the 13th spade and pitches the ♥6, East ruffs and plays another round of trumps, eliminating not only the heart ruff, but the potential to discard a heart on the ♣A.

Note also that it would not have mattered if trumps had been 3-2 and the deal looked like this:

	North	
	♠ J84	
	♥ 64	
	♦ K73	
	♣ AJ1076	
West		East
♠ 762		♠ K95
♥ KQ87		♥ J1053
♦ QJ		♦ 1092
♣ Q843		♣ 952
	South	
	♠ AQ103	
	♥ A92	
	♦ A8654	
	♣ K	

Now when South plays the 13th spade, West can ruff and dummy discards the ♥6. The defence cannot prevent South from playing ♣K, heart ruff, ♣A and again South loses just two trump tricks. This is an excellent example of sound technique.

Problem for Tomorrow:

You are the dealer, neither side vulnerable. What would you do with:

♠ K108764
♥ A9643
♦ --
♣ 76

You do not have a weak 2♦ or 2♥ available to show both majors.

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

Drink wine. My psychiatrist told me it isn't good to keep things bottled up.