

364. Major dilemma

By Ron Klinger

This was yesterday's puzzle:

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.

The hand would be fine for a bid showing a weak two-suiter with both majors. Failing that, it makes sense to pass. If partner opens, you have a comfortable path to show your majors. If not, you are still very likely to be able to show your two-suiter on the next round of bidding. If one of the opponents bids one of your suits, you are probably best to be out of the auction and defending.

South dealer : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♦ ⁽²⁾	?

(1) Weak two in diamonds

(2) Not forcing, not inviting game

What would you do now with the hand above?

West has opened with a weak two. East has made a pre-emptive jump to 4♦. Clearly partner must have a decent hand, but not suitable for action over 2♦. Is it too much to hope partner might have a major suit? (To be continued later).

The deal comes from a quarter-final in the 2016 Vanderbilt (USA Knockout Open Teams). At one table, South opened 1♠. It is true that South has a 6-loser hand, but that becomes relevant only if a trump fit exists. With 7 HCP, that must be close to a record for a genuine 1-opening with the lowest number of HCP.

South dealer : Nil vulnerable

	North		East
	♠ A93		♠ Q2
	♥ J85		♥ KQ2
	♦ KJ9		♦ 10762
	♣ K1094		♣ AJ82
West		South	
♠ J5		♠ K108764	
♥ 107		♥ A9643	
♦ AQ8543		♦ --	
♣ Q53		♣ 76	

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♦	3♣ ⁽¹⁾	3♣ ⁽²⁾	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
(1) Artificial, game invitation in spades			
(2) Strong hand with diamond support			

West led the ♥10: jack – queen – ace. South cashed ♠A and ♠K (fortune favours the brave) and played the ♥8. East took the ♥K and South had 10 tricks, 6 spades and 4 hearts. Had the ♣A been onside, South would have made an overtrick. *Points, schmoints*

At the other table:

South dealer : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A93	
	♥ J85	
	♦ KJ9	
	♣ K1094	
West		East
♠ J5		♠ Q2
♥ 107		♥ KQ2
♦ AQ8543		♦ 10762
♣ Q53		♣ AJ82
	South	
	♠ K108764	
	♥ A9643	
	♦ --	
	♣ 76	

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	Pass
2♦	Pass ⁽²⁾	3♦	1♥ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	4♠	All Pass	4♥

(1) Artificial, 4+ spades

(2) A support double is not obligatory to show 3 spades when you have a minimum opening, especially not when you have a 4-3-3-3 pattern.

East led ♦6, ruffed. North played ♠A, ♠K and the ♥3: ten – jack – king. East returned a diamond, ruffed. To succeed, North now needed to cross to his ♠9 and play the ♥8 or ♥5 to the ♥9. That would give North four heart tricks to go with six spade tricks. Instead, North played ♣6 to ♣K, losing to the ♣A. Back came a diamond, ruffed. Dummy was now down to one trump and declarer thought it too risky to cross to ♠9 to play a heart. He cashed the ♥A and played another heart. He thus lost two hearts and two clubs, –50 and 10 Imps away.

West had shown up with the ♠J. If North places West with the ♦A-Q for the 2♦ overcall, West is most unlikely to have the ♣A as well. For many, 11 HCP and long, decent diamonds would be enough for a 1♦ opening. When East played a second diamond at trick 5, North could have discarded a club from dummy. West wins and switches to the ♣3: ten – jack – seven. Now North will not have dummy's trumps shortened.

When the deal was replayed in a game on BBO, the auction went:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4♦ ⁽²⁾	Dble ⁽³⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Weak two in diamonds

(2) Not forcing, not inviting game

(3) For takeout

South's double had risk attached. A 5♣ bid by North would not have been welcome. That was unlikely as North had not bid 2♣ over 1♦. If North could not bid a major, the penalty pass by North was certainly a possibility.

North led the ♥5: king – ace – seven. South returned the ♥9 (suit-preference for spades), ten – jack – queen. Declarer lost a heart, two spades, two diamonds and a club. That was three down and +500 to North-South.

Problem for Tomorrow:

You are the dealer at favourable vulnerability. What would you do with:

♠ K10653
♥ KQJ863
♦ 9
♣ 6

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

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

Cows have hooves because they lactose.