366. Take the strain

By Ron Klinger

This was yesterday's puzzle:

Dealer East: North-South vulnerable

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West North East South
Pass 1NT - 15-17
Pass 2 \bullet^{(1)} Pass 2 \checkmark
Pass 3NT Pass ?

(1) Transfer to hearts
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What would you do as South with:

- **♠** AKQ3
- ♥ K43
- ♦ K93
- ♣ Q72
- (a) If you are playing teams?
- (b) If you are playing pairs?

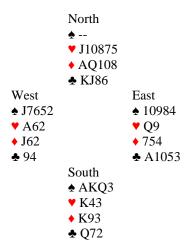
A 5-3-3-2 pattern facing a 4-3-3-3 will usually make as many tricks in no-trumps as in the 5-3 fit. Here you have a 4-3-3-3 and partner has shown 5 hearts. Partner might have a 5-3-3-2 pattern, but of course, partner could have different patterns perhaps 2-5-4-2 or even 3-5-4-1 with a hand that does not justify introducing the minor suit, as that would suggest slam potential.

At teams, the safer path is to remove 3NT to 4♥. It would look silly to bid 3NT and lose the first five club tricks when partner has a low doubleton club, while 4♥ is an easy make.

At pairs, it is worth taking the chance and passing 3NT. After all, why can't partner have 3 or even 4 clubs. You should not always look at the worst scenario.

The deal arose in a club pairs' duplicate. One South did very well by choosing to pass 3NT.

Dealer East: North-South vulnerable



Look at the North hand. You can see why one cannot be sure that partner has a 5-3-3-2 pattern. With the actual cards, both 4♥ and 3NT will succeed. Half the field was in 3NT. Making only 9 tricks was a bottom score. Making 10 tricks, +630, scored 64% and 11 tricks, +660, was a top for North-South. The other half of the field played in 4♥. Most made just 10 tricks, +420, a shared second-bottom for 29%. Making 11 tricks, +650, was second best, 85%.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East: North-South vulnerable

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West North East South
Pass 1 \checkmark - 5 + \text{ hearts}
2 \spadesuit^{(1)} ?

(1) Weak jump-overcall
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What would you do as North with:

- ♠ AQ2
- **♥** K82
- ♦ A92
- **♣** 10754

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

I hate this snow...no wait... I love this this snow... (signed) Bi-Polar Bear