

376. Upswing

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♥ – 5+ hearts
Pass	4♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	?

(1) 4+ hearts, 0-1 club, sufficient high-card strength for game

What would you do as South with:

♠ KJ7
♥ AK765
♦ K2
♣ A105

Make up your mind before reading further.

This was yesterday's question:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♥ – 5+ hearts
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ AQ102
♥ 9843
♦ A874
♣ 2

You have 10 HCP, 4-card support for opener's major and a singleton club with a 7-loser hand. You are much too strong to bid 1♥ : 4♥, which can be based on a significantly less strength. Because of the singleton, you are also too good for a natural 1♥ : 3♥ limit raise. Partner might pass that and game could be easy.

Some pairs play that a splinter bid will usually have about 11-14 HCP. If better, bid 1♥ / 1♠ : 2NT, the Jacoby 2NT, showing 4+ support and forcing to game. With a good 10 count (your A-Q and A are primary values), a splinter is acceptable.

The splinter makes North's rebid easy. With a singleton or void in clubs opposite there are no clubs losers. Partner could have ♠A, ♥Q-x-x-x and ♦A, making 6♥ easy. As you have control in both non-trump suits outside clubs, you can bid 4NT, Key-Card Blackwood. On the actual hand, partner bids 5♥, two key cards and no ♥Q and so you simply bid 6♥. It would be a challenge to bid 7♥ if partner held:

♠ AQ62
♥ QJ32
♦ A864
♣ 2

or something similar. It is very hard if you bid 4NT and hear 5♠ (two key cards and the ♥Q). There is no convenient way to locate the ♠Q in partner's hand. Some play 4♠ as the Key-Card Blackwood, when hearts is the agreed suit. This is much better and would enable you to find 7♥ opposite the ideal hand above. In reply to 4♠ KCB, North would bid 5♥, two key cards + the ♥Q. Now South can bid 5♠, asking about the spade suit. In reply, partner bids 6♣ (I have the ♠Q) and South bids 7♥. In reply to the 5♠ Ask, the first step, 5NT, would say, 'I do not have the ♠Q' and South would settle for 6♥. It is good to have methods to cope with problem hands.

This was the full deal, which arose in a game on BBO:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ AQ102	
	♥ 9843	
	♦ A874	
	♣ 2	
West		East
♠ 8		♠ 96543
♥ J10		♥ Q2
♦ J963		♦ Q105
♣ KJ9643		♣ Q87
	South	
	♠ KJ7	
	♥ AK765	
	♦ K2	
	♣ A105	

As you can see, 6♥ is an easy make and with trumps 2-2, 13 tricks are there. There were 11 pairs in 4♥. All but one made all the tricks, but -2.8 Imps. One was in 5♥, +510, for the same score. Four pairs made it to 6♥. One made 12 tricks, +980, +7.9 Imps. The others made all the tricks, +8.9 Imps.

At pairs, one should play ♥A, ♥K. At teams or Imps, there is a case for a safety play in hearts: low heart from dummy: two – low from hand. This guards against East having all four trumps. Playing the ace gives you an overtrick when hearts are 2-2 (a 42% chance). Over 100 deals, there will be no difference on 48 deals when trumps are 3-1. On 42 deals, playing the ♥A or ♥K first give you an overtrick, +1 Imp, total +42 Imps. On 5 deals, where West has all four trumps, you are one off whatever you do. On 5 deals where East has 4 trumps, the safety play allows you to make 6♥ (low from dummy, two, five wins the trick). Playing ♥A or ♥K sees you go one down and lose 11 Imps. Times 5 that is +55 Imps for the safety play vs +42 Imps for playing for hearts 2-2.

Auctions by North-South:

- 1♥ : 2♥ (ugh!), 4♥, all pass.
- 1NT (South is too strong for 1NT whether it is 15-17 or 16-18) : 2♣, 2♥ : 4♥, all pass.
- 1♥ : 3♥, 4♥, all pass.
- 1♥ : 4♥ (North is too strong for a 4♥ raise), all pass.
- 1♥ : 1♠ (not recommended), 2NT : 3♥, 4♥, all pass.
- 1♥ : 2♦, 3NT : 4♥, 4NT : 5♥ (2 key cards, no ♥Q), 6♥, all pass.
- 1♥ : 2NT, 3♥ : 4♥, 4NT : 5♥, 6♥, all pass.
- 1♥ : 2NT, 6♥, all pass. South could be missing 7♥ with that rebid.
- 1♥ : 4♣, 4NT : 5♥, 6♥, all pass. That is the auction I like.

Problem for Tomorrow:

With both sides vulnerable, there are two passes to you. What would you do with:

♠ Q93
♥ --
♦ AK98754
♣ Q32

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

Went for a walk because I want to stay healthy. Took along a bar of chocolate, because let's be honest here.