

377. Hearts skipping

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	1♠	?	

What would you do as East with:

♠ J52
♥ QJ842
♦ QJ
♣ J106

Made up your mind? Now try this problem:

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	1♠	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ 107
♥ K10963
♦ 1062
♣ AK8

This was yesterday's question:

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

♠ Q93
♥ --
♦ AK98754
♣ Q32

Given partner is a passed hand, it would not be unreasonable to open 3♦. On the other hand, you have the values for a natural 1♦ opening. It is true that the opponents probably have a heart fit, but partner could have a nasty surprise there via a bad trump split. If the bidding starts Pass : Pass : 1♦ : Pass, 1♥ : Pass. You have a comfortable rebid of 2♦ and then 3♦ if partner bids again.

That is not what happened. It began Pass : Pass : 1♦ : 1♠. Take a look at the East hand on Problem 1. You have 8 HCP and a decent 5-card heart suit. Why not double, a negative double, showing 4 hearts or 5 hearts if the hand is below 10 HCP? Strange as it may seem, East elected to pass.

Moving on to the second question above. It has gone Pass : Pass : 1♦ : 1♠, Pass to you. You have 10 HCP, a decent 5-card heart suit, tolerance for spades and you are a passed hand. An advance of 2♥ looks obvious (to me, anyway), especially as it is not forcing, but lo and behold, South bid 1NT. Has the heart suit suddenly caught leprosy? Not only did South not bid 2♥, but South does not even have a stopper in diamonds. On many occasions that would not matter, as you are only in 1NT. This was not one of those occasions.

With an attractive holding against no-trumps, West saw no reason to compete further and 1NT was passed out.

The deal arose in a game on BBO. This was the full deal:

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ AK864	
	♥ A75	
	♦ 3	
	♣ 9754	
West		East
♠ Q93		♠ J52
♥ --		♥ QJ842
♦ AK98754		♦ QJ
♣ Q32		♣ J106
	South	
	♠ 107	
	♥ K10963	
	♦ 1062	
	♣ AK8	

West led the ♦8. East won with the ♦J and returned the ♦Q. West overtook and cashed the rest of the diamonds to take 1NT one down. Meanwhile, if South had bid 2♥, North would have passed that. Despite the bad trump break, South has no trouble making 2♥. South has three A-K combinations for six tricks and can ruff a spade in hand and a diamond in dummy and make an extra heart trick in hand without too much trouble.

If West competes to 3♦, that can be easily defeated via ♠A, ♠K, spade ruff, ♣A, ♣K. What a mysterious auction.

Two Wests made 3♦, +110 and +5.1 Imps. Defeating South's 1NT gave East-West +100 and +5.00 Imps. At another table, 1NT made when West began with the ♦A, North-South +90 but -0.2 Imps. Six Wests were -100 in 3♦ and one was -200. Two opened 3♦, all pass. The others opened 1♦, North bid 1♠, East 2♥ (an overbid) and West rebid 3♦, all pass.

At one table it went Pass : Pass : 1♦ : 1♠, Pass : 1NT : Pass : 2♣, Pass : 2♥, all pass, a circuitous route but ending in the best spot. South made 9 tricks, +140, North-South +1.1 Imps.

Top score and 12 Imps for North-South came after this auction:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	1♠	1NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	2♥
Pass	Pass	Dble	Pass
3♦	Pass	Pass	3♥?
Pass	Pass	Dble?	All Pass

(1) No spade stopper and 5 hearts. Why no negative double?

Except that North and South were robots, one might think that South was peeking at all the hands. As for East, partner is a third-seat opener and runs from your penalty double of 2♥. It is not a good idea then to double 3♥ on the next round. Declarer had no trouble coming to 9 tricks for +730.

The Living-Beyond-Your-Means Award goes to East's effort in this auction:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
3♦	Pass	5♦??	All Pass

West was three down, mercifully not doubled, North-South +300 and +4.9 Imps.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♠
2♥	2♠	?	

What would you do as East with:

♠ 64
♥ Q3
♦ KQ1095
♣ 9876

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

The worst part of working for the Department of Unemployment is that even if you are fired, you still have to show up the next day.