

379. Shape up or ship out

By Ron Klinger

This was yesterday's puzzle:

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♦	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ AQJ74
♥ KQ6542
♦ 2
♣ J

You have only 13 HCP, of which the ♣J figures to be useless, but you have an excellent playing hand with only four losers. The hand is ideal for a Michaels 2♦ bid, showing at least 5-5 in the majors. If partner replies with 2♥ or 2♠, you are entitled to jump to four in the major. Yes, you have four losers, but any decent partner should be able to provide you with one trick.

If partner happens to bid 3♣, I would bid 3♥ to show the 6-card suit and a strong playing hand.

The auction continues:

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	?		

What now?

Partner has jumped to 4♥ opposite a possible 8-9-point hand and 6-7 losers. You are at least two tricks better than you might be for the Michaels 2♦. You should head for slam and since you have control in every suit, a bid of 4NT is appropriate.

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥ – 2 key cards, no ♥Q
Pass	?		

And now?

You are missing an ace and slam will depend on bringing in the spade suit. What are the chances that you have no spade loser?

If partner has the ♠K, all is well. If West has the ♠K, you should make 6♥. That is already two-thirds of the time. As you have 12 HCP and partner has about the same and opener figures to have 12 points or better, that leaves very little in hard-card strength for East. The odds of no spade loser should be about 90% or better. You should therefore bid 6♥ over 5♥. The full auction:

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥ – 2 key cards, no ♥Q
Pass	6♥	All Pass	

The deal comes from a game on BBO:

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ AQJ74	
	♥ KQ6542	
	♦ 2	
	♣ J	
West		East
♠ K10		♠ 863
♥ 73		♥ 10
♦ AQJ10643		♦ 97
♣ Q10		♣ K975432
	South	
	♠ 952	
	♥ AJ98	
	♦ K85	
	♣ A86	

After the auction given, West led the ♦A and switched to the ♣10. South won, drew trumps with ♥Q, ♥J and played the ♠2: ten – queen – three. After a heart to hand, South played another spade and had 12 tricks, +1430. That was worth +11.5 Imps.

Two other pairs reached 6♥. Most of the field was in 4♥, making 12 tricks +680, but –1.3 Imps. Two tables played in 2♥ for –10.3 Imps. One bid 2♥ over 1♦, all pass. At the other table:

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

This is not a pair you would ever want to double for penalties.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
1NT	Pass	2♣	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ 52
♥ 74
♦ K9
♣ AKQ9832

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

Many people have already made up their minds. You don't want to confuse them with facts.