382. Just for starters

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ A94
♥ 95
♦ KQ7654
♣ 94

South
♠ Q76
♥ 6432
♦ A
♣ AKQ86

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♣
1♠	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West leads the ♠K. Plan the play.

This was yesterday's puzzle:

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

♠ A94
♥ 95
♦ KQ7654
♣ 94

Given the vulnerability, I can imagine North opening 3♦. For some, this hand would be too strong for a pre-empt at favourable vulnerability. If it is in your armoury, a weak 2♦ opening fits the bill. If not, it is not a shameful thing to pass. It can be the most successful action a lot of the time. Finally, there are some who would open a natural 1♦. You pays your money and you makes your choices.

The deal arose in the quarter-final match between FLEISHER and LAVAZZA in the 2016 Vanderbilt (USA Knockout Open Teams):

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ A94
♥ 95
♦ KQ7654
♣ 94

West
♠ KJ1082
♥ AQ
♦ J109
♣ 1052

East
♠ 53
♥ KJ1087
♦ 832
♣ J73

South
♠ Q76
♥ 6432
♦ A
♣ AKQ86

The problem at the top of the page is an important lesson in not playing too quickly, especially at trick 1. A player on autopilot and delighted with the opening lead might grab the ♠A at trick 1. There would be a painful outcome since there is no longer any hope for nine tricks. With the diamonds blocked, the ♠A is the only entry to dummy. You cannot afford to squander it at trick 1.

It is true that a heart switch at trick 2 will also beat you, but why should West find a heart shift, especially from the actual holding?

South for LAVAZZA ducked the opening lead and West continued with the ♠J. South won with the ♠Q, cashed the ♦A, crossed to the ♠A and ran the diamonds. With diamonds and clubs both 3-3, declarer made 12 tricks, LAVAZZA +490.

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

	North ♠ A94 ♥ 95 ♦ KQ7654 ♣ 94	
West ♠ KJ1082 ♥ AQ ♦ J109 ♣ 1052		East ♠ 53 ♥ KJ1087 ♦ 832 ♣ J73
	South ♠ Q76 ♥ 6432 ♦ A ♣ AKQ86	

At the other table, FLEISHER's North-South had an artificial and ultimately unsuccessful auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♦(1)	Pass	1NT(2)
Pass	2NT(3)	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♥(4)	Dble(5)	Pass
Pass	3♠(6)	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Not a universal choice
(2) Artificial, forcing to game
(3) Artificial, 6+ diamonds
(4) Asking for a heart stopper
(5) 'Please lead a heart, partner.'
(6) I have something useful in spades.

Note that East, an exuberant bidder, passed over 1♦. Unfavourable vulnerability does have an inhibiting effect. In bidding 3NT, South was no doubt hoping that East might have only 4 hearts. Not this time. West led the ♥A and ♥Q. East overtook and the defence took the first 5 tricks, +50 and +11 Imps to LAVAZZA.

This is what happened when the deal was replayed on BBO:

West	North	East	South
	2♦(1)	Pass	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Sound weak two opening

North led the ♣9: three – queen – two. South cashed the ♣K and the ♦A and continued with the ♣A. That was mildly surprising, but it did not cost. I would have expected South to play a low club at trick 4 to have North ruff and return a diamond. Of course, North could always ruff the ♣A anyway, but partners can be reluctant to ruff their partner's ace.

North discarded the ♥9 on the ♣A and South switched to the ♥3: queen – five – king. Declarer played the ♠3: seven – ten – ace. North cashed the ♦K, followed by the ♦6: eight – ♠6 – ♦J. South brought back the ♥6, ace, ruffed and that was three down, North-South +300.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♠
?			

What would you do as West with:

♠ 2
♥ QJ953
♦ Q5
♣ AJ1076

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

When I found that my toaster wasn't waterproof, I was shocked.