

387. A shunning of spades

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

North

♠ 53
♥ AKQ1082
♦ K973
♣ 7

East

♠ AQJ
♥ 74
♦ A1062
♣ Q983

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Dble	1♠
2♣	2♥	3♣	All Pass

Trick 1: ♥A – four – jack – nine.

Trick 2: ♥K – seven – six – five.

You play high-encouraging and, given the auction and South's carding, you can be confident that South began with ♥J-6 doubleton. You intend to play a heart and hope that South can over-ruff dummy, but which heart will you choose?

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

Dealer West : Both vulnerable

North
♠ 53
♥ AKQ1082
♦ K973
♣ 7

West
♠ K92
♥ 953
♦ Q5
♣ J6542

East
♠ AQJ
♥ 74
♦ A1062
♣ Q983

South
♠ 108764
♥ J6
♦ J84
♣ AK10

At both tables, it began Pass : 1♥ : Double . . . and I would have thought it automatic for South to show the spade suit. Who can say that North does not have 3-4 spades? In the Vanderbilt, neither South bid 1♠. One passed and one showed a weak raise to 2♥. These guys are world champions, so who am I to argue with their decisions? Perhaps they were hoping for East-West to end in a spade contract?

[LAVAZZA](#) North-South:

West	North	East	South
Auken	Zia	Welland	Duboin
Pass	1♥	Dble	Pass
2♣	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

East led the ♥4: six – nine – ten. After drawing trumps, North pitched a spade on dummy's second club winner and led the ♦J: queen – king – ace. North lost a spade and two diamonds, 10 tricks, North-South +170

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	North	
	♠ 53	
	♥ AKQ1082	
	♦ K973	
	♣ 7	
West		East
♠ K92		♠ AQJ
♥ 953		♥ 74
♦ Q5		♦ A1062
♣ J6542		♣ Q983
	South	
	♠ 108764	
	♥ J6	
	♦ J84	
	♣ AK10	

FLEISHER North-South:

West	North	East	South
<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Grue</i>	<i>Brenner</i>	<i>Moss</i>
Pass	1♥	Dble	2♦ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass
3♣	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Dble	All Pass

(1) Weak raise to 2♥

Exactly why South is raising hearts is too tough for me to fathom. West led the ♠2: three – jack – six. East switched to the ♣8: ace – two – seven. After ♦4: five – nine – ten, East switched to the ♥4: jack – three – two. South quite rightly thought it too risky to play another diamond and claimed 8 tricks, one light, –200 and 9 Imps to [LAVAZZA](#).

When the deal was replayed in a game on BBO, it went:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Dble	1♠
2♣	2♥	3♣	All Pass

In general, at teams, it is not attractive to bid 3-over-3. Here 3♥ would have worked – declarer can always hold the losers to 2 spades and 2 diamonds, but might make 10 tricks (no spade lead) – but defending 3♣ was even better. North led the ♥A, ♥K, South following with the ♥J, ♥6, encouraging. To trick 3, North played the ♥Q, in theory suit-preference for spades. North knew that if South had the ♠K, South would not switch to a spade and if South did not have the ♠K, a spade shift would not hurt. What North was trying to let South know was that a diamond switch was not appealing. As you can see, a diamond switch from South can eliminate West's diamond loser.

Declarer ruffed the ♥Q with the ♣9. South over-ruffed with the ♣10 and switched to the ♠10. Playing ♣A, ♣K, and then a spade would be better. That would kill any hope for West to avoid a diamond loser. Hoping to produce an endplay, declarer played ♠J, ♠A and the ♠Q to the ♠K. Had the North-South spades been 4-3, that would have worked, but North ruffed the third spade for the fourth trick for the defence. South had two trump winners to come for +200 to North-South. Defending at the 3-level can be rewarding.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

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

What would you do as South with:

♠ 7
♥ AKJ832
♦ A10652
♣ 8

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

Police car loses wheels to thief. Police are working tirelessly to nab the culprit.