397. Curb your enthusiasm

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

WestNorthEastSouthPassPassPass1♥Pass2♥PassPass?

Playing teams or pairs, what would you do as West with:

★ K1097
♥ 1074
♦ 1064

♣ AK3

You have 10 HCP and 9 losers. Partner is a passed hand. In general, when the bidding goes 1X: Pass : 2X: Pass, Pass, one should try to take action. The opponents can usually make 8 tricks in their trump fit. You should try to jostle them out of the safety of the 2-level and try to push them to the 3-level. If you wanted to bid here, you would double for takeout.

Having said that, at teams, the case for taking action in the pass-out seat is not strong when you are vulnerable and your hand pattern is 4-3-3-3. Playing pairs, one should take the risk and double, but you could wind up going two off and –200 will be a terrible score. You know yourself whether you would take the risk.

Suppose the auction has been:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Dble	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	3♥
?			

What would you do now as West?

This was yesterday's puzzle:

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WestNorthEastSouthPassPass1♥Pass2♥?

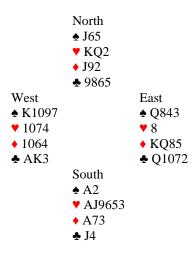
What would you do as East with:

▲ Q843
♥ 8
♦ KQ85
▲ Q1072

You have only 9 HCP, but ideal shape for a takeout double in a $6\frac{1}{2}$ -loser hand. Unless South or North has a very strong holding in the suit partner bids, you figure to escape unscathed. If South has the values for game, South will bid 4Ψ . With potential for 4Ψ , South will make some game-try. If South is minimum, partner will have about 10 points or so and it is unlikely you will be doubled in whatever partner bids.

Of course, a takeout double is not safe. On a bad day, partner will have a 4-3-3-3 pattern with 4 hearts. Still, if you do not take action here, 2♥ will almost certainly be passed out, since West figures to have 3-4 hearts. The saving grace for the takeout double is that you are a passed hand. Add any jack to any suit and no one could complain about your passed-hand takeout double. Whether it is pairs or teams, my vote would go to 'Double'.

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When the deal arose in a quarter-final match in the 2020 Spingold (USA Knock-out Open Teams), the auction at one table was Pass : Pass : $1 \checkmark$: Pass, $2 \checkmark$, all pass. At the other table it went Pass : Pass : $1 \checkmark$: Pass, $1 \land$ (forcing) : Pass : $2 \checkmark$, all pass. It was hard to compete against that sequence, as North-South might not have a trump fit.

One West led a trump. The other began with A, K, A. As you can see, there are no problems in 2. South has six trump tricks and two aces. The defenders did not give declarer anything extra and the board was flat at North-South +110.

When the deal was played in a game on BBO, the auction went this way:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Dble	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	3♥
3♠?	Pass	Pass	Pass

While East's double might be considered bold / rash, West's $3 \bigstar$ is almost a double-cross. East goes out on a limb to try to push the opponents to the 3-level and succeeds. West should pass and hope to defeat $3 \clubsuit$, which can be done. If West bids $3 \bigstar$ and fails, West has undone the good / risky / unwise work by East.

North led the \bigstar 5, queen. Declarer played dummy's \bigstar 3 and South rose with the \bigstar A to return the \bigstar J. West won, drew trumps, cashed the \bigstar K and ran the \bigstar 10: two – five – ace. The defenders could take no more than their three aces and so West had 10 tricks, +170. That result is unlikely to curb West's enthusiasm for bidding three-over-three.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East : Nil vulnerable		able	What would you do as North with:	
West	North	East Pass		▲ Q ▼ A8762
Pass Pass	1NT ?			 ▲ A98543 ▲ 3

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

What's red and really bad for your teeth? A brick.