

402. Shape beats points (again)

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ Q9754
♥ QJ109
♦ 1042
♣ 10

South
♠ A862
♥ A2
♦ A98
♣ A543

You have reached 4♠ by South after South opened 1NT (15-17 points). West leads the ♦5: two – queen – ace. You play the ♠A: three – four – king. Plan the play.

The deal comes from a quarter-final in the 2020 Spingold (USA Knock-out Open Teams):

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ Q9754	
	♥ QJ109	
	♦ 1042	
	♣ 10	
West		East
♠ J103		♠ K
♥ 8543		♥ K76
♦ J75		♦ KQ63
♣ K82		♣ QJ976
	South	
	♠ A862	
	♥ A2	
	♦ A98	
	♣ A543	

HENNER-WELLAND North-South:

West	North	East	South
			1NT – 15-17
Pass	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2NT – maximum hand, good support for spades
Pass	3♥ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

(1) Transfer to spades
(2) Retransfer to spades

LAVAZZA North-South:

West	North	East	South
			1NT – 15-17
Pass	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

(1) Transfer to spades

The same auction took place when the deal was replayed in a game on BBO. It is impressive that game was reached with only 5 HCP opposite a 1NT opening.

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♦ 1042	
♣ 10	
West	East
♠ J103	♠ K
♥ 8543	♥ K76
♦ J75	♦ KQ63
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South	
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The North hand has 8½ losers initially (2½ losers in spades, headed by the unsupported queen). This drops to 8 when South shows spade support. A strong 1NT opening normally has 6 losers. The South hand has 7 losers, but you should deduct a loser when holding excellent controls (see *The Modern Losing Trick Count* at pages 134-5). That is why each South showed a super-accept after North's 2♥ transfer. Note that each North pushed on to game after South's super-accept.

The 4♠ game is borderline – if West leads a diamond, declarer needs the heart finesse to work – but each declarer succeeded. One West led the ♥5: queen – six – two. South played ♠A, ♥A and the ♦8. West won and returned the ♠J, queen. Declarer continued with the ♥J: king – ♠2 – ♥4. After ♣A, club ruff, South discarded ♦9 on the ♥10. Then came ♦A, club ruff, diamond ruff. South lost only a spade and a diamond.

At the other table West led a diamond and South also made 11 tricks: ♦5 – two – queen – eight. East returned the ♦3. South took the ♦A; ♠A; ♠Q; ♥Q; ♥A; ♣A; club ruff; ♥J – king – ruffed; club ruff; ♥10, discarding the ♦9; diamond ruff . . . +450. Not only did North-South make game with 16 points opposite 5, but each South made an overtrick.

These were yesterday's questions:

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1NT – 15-17
Pass	?		

What would you do with the above North hand if you play:

- (1) Simple Stayman and 1NT : 2♣, 2♦ : 2♠ is not invitational? *Answer:* Bid 1NT : 2♣, 2♠ : 3♠, 4♠, all pass
- (2) Simple Stayman and 1NT : 2♣, 2♦ : 2♠ is invitational? *Answer:* The North hand is not good enough for a game invitation if there is no fit in a major suit. If Stayman followed by 2-major is a game-invitation, then you should simply transfer to spades and possibly miss a fit in hearts. C'est la vie. Here you would produce an auction akin to 1NT : 2♥, 3♠ and then it is up to you whether to bid 4♠ or not. Bidding 4♠ is recommended.
- (3) You play Extended Stayman, where partner might bid 2NT or at the 3-level with a maximum 1NT? As in the answer to (2), you cannot afford to bid 1NT : 2♣ if you might hear 2NT or higher and no major-suit fit exists. As in (2), content yourself with 1NT : 2♥, transfer to spades.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : Both vulnerable

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

What would you do as West with:

♠ --
♥ AQ63
♦ K10832
♣ 10843

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

If you can teach a wolf to meditate, you will have created aware wolf.