

The game is spades

by Ron Klinger

Today's deal is based on a replay on BBO of a deal played in a major event.

East dealer : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ QJ8732
♥ A7
♦ A8
♣ K107

You have 14 HCP plus 2 points for the doubletons. Partner's range is 6-9 points. The combined total cannot come to 26 and that means game is odds against. On the other hand, your hand has six losers (2 in spades, 1 in hearts, 1 in diamonds and 2 in clubs). A 1♠ : 2♣ raise usually has 9 losers, but can be as good as 8 losers. With 6 losers opposite 8 losers, total 14 losers, deducted from 24 = 10 tricks are probable. That means you should invite game, either via 3♣ (long suit trial) or via 3♠ (simple invitation). It is true that if you try for game and end in 3♠, the contract might fail. On the other hand, if you do not try for game, ten tricks might be there. It is worse to play in 2♣ making four than 3♠ going one off.

There is no guarantee whether you choose to pass or whether you decide to try for game. Sometimes the risk-takers will rule. On other days, the cautious will win out. Here is the full deal:

	North	
	♠ AK9	
	♥ J642	
	♦ 97543	
	♣ 8	
West		East
♠ 5		♠ 1064
♥ K10985		♥ Q3
♦ KQ102		♦ J6
♣ Q52		♣ AJ9643
	South	
	♠ QJ8732	
	♥ A7	
	♦ A8	
	♣ K107	

With humans N-S and robots E-W:

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

West led the ♠5, ace. Declarer played the ♣8, ace from East. South could ruff a club in dummy for ten tricks and +170. Without a trump lead, declarer could ruff two clubs in dummy, regardless of the location of the ♣A.

The deal arose in a Polish teams' championship. At one table, it went Pass : 1♠ : Pass : 2♣, all pass, North-South +170. At the other table: Pass : 1♠ : Pass : 2♣, Pass : 3♣ : Pass : 4♠, all pass, N-S +620, +10 Imps.

Note that North has 8 losers, South has 6 losers, total losers 14 and 24-14 = 10 tricks likely, as given above.

Understanding bridge journalese: 'The team can do better' = 'It could hardly do worse'