

A passing glance

by Ron Klinger

With only North-South vulnerable, West opens 1♠. What do you as North with:

♠ 105
♥ QJ10865
♦ 6
♣ AJ63

West dealer : North-South vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 105	
	♥ QJ10865	
	♦ 6	
	♣ AJ63	
West		East
♠ AKQ743		♠ --
♥ A9		♥ K732
♦ KQ		♦ AJ10972
♣ 1084		♣ KQ2
	South	
	♠ J9862	
	♥ 4	
	♦ 8543	
	♣ 975	

With humans North-South and robots East-West:

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥!	3♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

North led ♦6: two - five - king. West should play ♠A, ♠K, ♠Q and then run diamonds, discarding clubs. That brings in 11 tricks. Instead, robot West cashed ♠A and ♥A (?), followed by ♦Q. North ruffed and played the ♣A: two – nine (high-hate) – four, followed by the ♥Q, king, ruffed. West could not avoid losing another trump trick. That was one down, North-South +50.

As you can see, there are twelve easy tricks in 6♦ or 6NT, but North's 2♥ makes it very difficult for East-West. What should West have done over 3♦ if not 4♠? Those who count points only will be quick to chastise North for the 2♥ overcall with only 8 HCP. However, North took into account the good shape (6-4 pattern) and the solid sequence in hearts. The North hand has seven losers and hence six playing tricks. That is enough to justify a 2♥ overcall, even at unfavourable vulnerability.

In the semi-finals of the 2017 Gold Coast Open Teams, every West opened 1♠ and every North passed. Every East responded 2♦ (natural, forcing to game). In one match, both E-W pairs reached 6♦, +920, no swing. In the other match, one E-W pair played 6♦, +920; the other was in 6NT +990, +2 Imps.

Realist: Someone who knows the pessimist is right.