

Trigger Finger

By

Neil Kimelman

Here are a couple of Matchpoint bidding problems:

Problem 1: You are South, and hold ♠85 ♥AKJ63 ♦J984 ♣J4

West North East South

1♠ Pass 1NT

Pass 3♣¹ Pass ?

1. Game forcing.

Problem 2: You are South and hold ♠A1075 ♥1093 ♦KJ103 ♣Q4

West North East South

Pass

1♠ 2♦ Pass 2♠

Pass 3♥ Pass ?

Solutions

Problem 1: You are South and hold ♠85 ♥AKJ63 ♦J984 ♣J4

West North East South

1♠ Pass 1NT

Pass 3♣ Pass ?

You have the red suits stopped and plenty of values on this auction. Just bid 3NT? No. For two reasons:

- 1) If partner has a heart fragment, you may be close to slam. Consider partner holding ♠AKxxx ♥Qxx ♦x ♣AKQx, and that is a minimum 3♣ bid.

2) If partner has a diamond card they will bid 3NT, and now you are confident you are in the best spot.

At the table, the actual South bid a direct, 3NT and the defense led a diamond, taking the first five tricks. Partner's hand was ♠AKxxx ♥Qx ♦x ♣AKQxx, with 4xHx being an impregnable contract.

Problem 2: You are South and hold ♠A1075 ♥1093 ♦KJ103 ♣Q4

West North East South

Pass

1♠ 2♦ Pass 2♠

Pass 3♥ Pass ?

Again 3NT is an option. Is it a good one? Yes. Is there a better one? YES. Bid 3♠. This shows one of two hands:

1. A spade stopper with no club stopper.
2. An advance cue bid, trying for a heart slam.

The actual South again bid premature 3NT, which fetches the ♣10 lead and partner had this time ♠42 ♥AQJ5 ♦AQ9872 ♣2. With the heart finesse working, 5♦ is cold and 3NT went down two.

A definition of Trigger Finger is:

Trigger finger occurs when the tendon in your finger becomes inflamed, making it difficult for the finger to move smoothly. This condition often causes the finger to lock or catch when bent or straightened.

The name "trigger finger" comes from the way the finger may snap straight after being stuck in a bent position, mimicking the motion of pulling a trigger.

Quite often, especially at matchpoints, we have an all-consuming focus on bidding 3NT, instead of investigating other games. While we want to play in 3NT when reasonable, we do

have a partner, hopefully intelligent. In these hands we could have elicited their cooperation in finding the best contract, instead having our finger locked on the 3NT bidding box card.

Thanks to Bill Treble for sharing these hands.