

District 8 Solvers Forum -- April 2002

by Tom Dodd

1. Matchpoints, Both vul ner a ble

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1♦
1NT	2♦	2♠	?

What is your call as South hold ing:
♠K1065 ♥A ♦AJ864 ♣K87

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
3♦	100	12	72
Pass	80	4	13
Double	60	1	8
4♦	40	0	7

My fellow moderator must have had one too many margaritas during his *Wizard of Oz* screening last issue. Sending two sets of an swers can lead to interesting splits, depending on the day.

MERRITT (as Zeke the farm hand): "3♦. I've never found the alternatives so truly lack ing. Are peo ple re ally going to con sider Pass an op tion?"

MERRITT (as the Cowardly Lion): "Pass. I take the low road. Bidding or bringin' wood may be right, but they may go -200 and we may get ham mered."

The ma jor ity thought it wise to take one more push, some in the hopes of push ing EW a level too high.

BERNHARD: "3♦. Double is tempt ing, but I may get a chance at the 3-level."

VONGSVIVUT: "3♦. Shows some ex tras. Will dou ble 3♠ for pen alty."

The other 3♦ bidders were cau tiously op ti mis tic. Af ter all, there are 12 hearts out stand ing and EW rate to have at least 8 of them.

MARSHALL: "Pass. Unless part ner has 4 hearts, they have a better fit. A bid of 3♦ will en sure they find it."

WALKER: "3♦. I don't like our chances defend ing 2♠ (even 3♠). With part ner prob a bly hav ing 5+ dia monds, we could have only 3 de fen sive tricks."

FEILER: "3♦. This should make eas ily. I'm not at all sure about beat ing 2♠."

ATHY: "Pass. This is complex (part of the rea son I pre fer teams to pairs! - TJD). 3♦ is likely to get 3♥ from East, and your -110 or +100 could turn into -140 or worse."

Mayhap they'll find 3♥ and mayhap they won't. My money's on **won't**. West has al ready de scribed his hand and is n't go ing to in tro duce a 4-card suit, red at the 3-level. East might re fuse to go quietly over 3♦, es pe cially with 5-5 in the ma jors, but he was will ing to be dumped in 2♠, so how good can his hand be?

I've never scored well at pairs by de fending 2-level contracts when the strength is even. Here, the pass ers may have the better of the deal. EW seem to be in their second-best fit, and with a hand ful of los ers, I'm not all **that** op ti mis tic about our chances in 3♦, nor about beat ing even 3♠. That's the "fun" of matchpoints. A few in noc uous hands like this are often the difference be tween a sec tion top and the con so la tion.

2. Matchpoints, EW vul ner a ble

West	North	East	South
—	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	?

What is your call as South hold ing:
♠108542 ♥AK ♦5 ♣Q10754

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
2♦	100	7	15
4♣	90	4	18
4♦	90	2	3
3♣	70	3	38
3♦	60	1	3
Other	60	1	23

Oh joy, another 4th-suit problem. Aren't you glad you can make these bids with sin gle tons (and even voids)?

KNIEST: "2♦. 4♦ is tempt ing, but part ner will ex pect spade val ues. Let's get his nat u ral re sponse to 2♦."

Or you can take the di rect route and (try to) show your hand with one bid.

FEILER: "4♦. Prob a bly the light est splin ter I've ever made, but what great cards! The fact that EW aren't bid ding makes me think (hope) part ner has di a mond length or ex tra HCP."

I con fess that at the ta ble I'd choose the splin ter, although I think it's

hardly light. The danger is that it may cause us to miss a higher-scoring game. Just like problem #1, it's the little things that come back to haunt you.

Quite a few Solvers did n't value this hand as worthy of a strong push toward game. Even a few panelists were willing to risk a weak invite:

KESSLER: "3♣. Balk. Call me chicken, but lots of minimums won't produce game opposite this. If partner bids again we should be well-placed."

Many minimums in the style Mark and I favor wouldn't make game, but this is BWS, where an opening bid is fairly sound. In my mis spent youth, I was tempted to open hands like this.

MYERS: "4♠. While I have a terrific fit for partner with every thing working, I don't have enough for a splinter. I'll be content if partner bids 4♥."

The drawback of the invitation (or splinter) is it bypasses the sacred matchpoint cow, 3NT. But with North known to hold 4 or fewer cards in the pointed suits, we'd better have our 9 tricks ready to run. My main concern in raising clubs so strongly is that we'll miss a better heart contract when North holds some thing like QJxxxx.

Playing wait-and-see were the 4th suiters. To quench the notion that this is a full game-force, I am sure you that even BWS 2001 does *not* endorse 4th suit as forcing-to-game unless it's a reverse or at the 3-level.

WILLENKEN: "2♦. Anybody who bids 3♣ deserves to play there opposite x, QJxxx, Axx, AKxx."

Well, it's unlikely you'll play a cold slam in a partscore, as North surely will scrape up an invite with that hand. The hand that concerns me has spread-out strength — Kx, Qxxxx, Ax, AJxx *or* x, Qxxxx, Axx, AJxx.

3. IMPS, none vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♦	Double	Pass	1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	?

What is your call as South holding:
 ♠J975 ♥K9842 ♦J103 ♣4

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
2♠	100	12	41
Pass	90	0	38
3♠	80	1	0
2♥	70	2	10
2♦	60	1	5
2♣	60	1	3
2NT	50	0	2

The majority view is best put by:

WALKER: "2♠. The 'reverse advance' shows a little extra, but I've already limited my hand with 1♥, so it's not forcing to game. Partner's next bid should be a value bid (3NT, 4♥, 4♠). If he bids 2NT, 3♥ or 3♠, I'll pass."

KNIEST: "2♠. We should have enough for a 4-3 fit if partner thinks that's best. If 3NT makes, I've told partner enough to bid it."

Reasonable enough opposite partner's presumed 18-19 HCP. It would be nice if 2♣ or 2♦ were "Staymanesque", as WILLENKEN put it, to increase the chance of North declaring, but wishing does n't make it so.

KESSLER: "2♠. Should be forward going (forcing). Which partscore we make at IMPS is not relevant."

MARSHALL: "2♥. I showed only 3 hearts last time! Partner figures to have good clubs, but this is IMPS, so the safer contract please."

MYERS, the other 2♥ bidder, also stressed the need to show a "real" suit, but aren't you doing so by now bidding 2♠? I'd bid 2♥ if the heart king were the trey, but this hand feels too good to deliver, in essence, a second negative call. At the other end of the spectrum:

FEILER: "3♠. 2♦ would be natural and I'm not sure 2♠ is forcing. I definitely want to be in game."

I've said it before, but one of these days, Kent, we have to have a game.

4. Matchpoints, NS vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	—	3♣	Pass
4♣	4♦	Pass	?

What is your call as South holding:
 ♠AQ1076 ♥109754 ♦63 ♣5

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
5♦	100	5	10
Pass	90	6	52
4♥	80	4	14
4♠	80	2	21
5♣	50	0	3

Just another demonstration of the effectiveness of preempts. The pass was downgraded because the majority pressed forward. Frankly, anything you do here is fraught with danger, but at least it's "only matchpoints."

KESSLER "5♦. I'm a simple person and a bad guesser. Even if we guess which suit partner has 3 of, bad breaks will cause problems. If the winning action is 4♥, we should be fine, because I don't know any one who would bid it."

RABIDEAU "5♦. Partner is expecting a trick or so from me and on a bad day, that's all my hand offers. But the potential for either club ruffs and/or spade tricks is too great to pass."

Amen to that. No body sounded very confident of any action, particularly the folks who bid their weaker major.

MERRITT "4♥. I have to take my life into my own hands. This may well be the wrong bid at the wrong time, but I feel it's the most flexible. Odds are partner will merely sit this, but if it's way wrong, maybe the opponents will come to the rescue and double me into the correct spot."

Don't know about the rest of you, but if I'm taking my life in my hands, I like to have a better suit to introduce at the 4-level than 10xxxx. MARSHALL points out that you have one guess to determine the fate of this hand. I don't like 4♥ because North will never pull this to 4♠, and unless North has a miracle fit, 4♥ could easily be the only non-making contract of the bunch.

WILLENKEN: "Pass. We have about the dummy partner expects — 6 pts. and xx of trumps. 5♦ might make if the stiff club is big, but it seems too hungry."

MYERS: "Pass. If partner was interested in the majors, he would have taken some other action."

KNIEST: "Pass. Going plus is too important to make a wild guess. Since

partner did not double, even though he could pull the wrong major to 5♦, it hints that there is not a right major."

The problem is that any action South takes is a guess. As an academic exercise, passing will be "right" if 4♦ makes on the nose or if 4 of a major goes set more than 4♦. Bidding on is fraught with danger, but after EW have taken up this much bidding space, when is it not dangerous?

BERNHARD "4♠. Partner might have spade support. If not, he should know I have a few diamonds. He did come in by himself vul. at the 4 level."

5. IMPs, Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	1♣	1NT	Pass
Pass	Double	Pass	?

What is your call as South holding:

♠J9743 ♥65 ♦QJ953 ♣5

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
2♦	100	8	33
Pass	90	7	21
2♠	80	2	44
2♣	50	0	2

I expected a 3-way split on this little annoyance, but the panel surprised me by making it a two-horse race, perhaps in the hope of landing in the "right" contract. The minority view:

CURTIS: "2♠. North is likely 4-4-2-3 with 18-19 HCP. We should have an 8+-card fit in spades."

While North might bid that way with both majors, it's far more likely that this is a standard penalty double. Most knew this and pulled anyway:

KESSLER: "2♦. The problem with defending is no entries. Bidding 2♦ leaves us well placed for 2♠ over 2♥."

BERNHARD: "2♦. Might get spades in later, might be right to leave it in, but I am a coward."

Since when? Have you gotten soft since we left Indiana for warmer climes? Say it ain't so, buddy!

WALKER: "2♦. Even if partner has a 19-count, with everything outside (and lots of doubt about the best open-

ing lead), there are too many chances for them to wrap up 7 easy tricks.”

But when and how is East ever getting to the point-less dummy to lead through anything? South’s cards and North’s double should tell us East doesn’t have a long suit to run, and that the hand will be a nightmare.

An ancient (1977) and oft-read beginner book reveals that North’s double is penalty, and suggests a club lead. To day, it’s more fashionable to treat many re-opening doubles as take-out or “action”. My overriding observation: this is IMPs, where you don’t often win matches by outscrambling the opponents for partscores.

MERRITT “Pass. I have a little something and -180 is n’t the worst score in the world. Bid ding would be a crapshoot, and I have an easy di a mond lead.”

Why are there no comments from the passers about blood letting? At first, I thought this was the easiest problem of the set, that the panel would see visions of +500 or more dancing in their heads, with comments about winning the match before it even started. The strongest I found were:

RABIDEAU “Pass. East won’t have fun playing this, even though we may be endplayed a few times.”

FEILER: “Pass. I probably have more HCP than my LHO and a good suit to lead. Why would I bid?”

If I only expected a one-trick set, I might bid, but the real bonus comes from sets of 2 or 3 (4 anyone?) where your gains leap to double digits. Then again, I always have been a stargazer.

6. Matchpoints, NS vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1♦
3♣	3♦	4♣	?

What is your call as South holding:
 ♠10654 ♥AQ3 ♦AK1084 ♣A

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
5♦	100	4	30
4♥	90	3	11
4♠	90	1	3
5♣	90	2	16

4NT	90	0	5
Double	80	4	8
6♣	80	1	0
6♦	80	1	3
4♦	70	1	21
Pass	70	0	3

Wow, look at the spread-out vote here! As always, I try to group scores according to the nature of the votes. The “obvious” jump to game garnered the top score because it’s so straightforward and leaves options open.

WALKER: “5♦. Partner needs very little for 11 tricks, and there are many reasons to be optimistic. Add in the edge that 5♦ may stam pede EW into 6♣.”

WILLENKEN: “5♦. It would be nice if double were a game try. Without that, 5♦ seems my best guess.”

MARSHALL: “Double. Forward going, co-operative, whatever. If partner bids hearts, we can sub side in 5♦. If he passes, I’ve indicated a solid lead.”

The meaning of a double as a gametry or “cooperative” isn’t obvious here, so it’s likely to confuse.

MERRITT (as the Cow ardy Lion): “Double. The 5-level belongs to the opponents, and I wouldn’t be caught dead duking for a partscore with this hand. The opponents may have done well to bid past our 3NT, but there’s nothing I can do to get that back.”

What does a bid 4H or 4S mean here?

MERRITT (as Zeke): 4♠. Hope fully, partner can oblige and we’ll land here. Otherwise we’re in 5D, like it or not.”

I don’t see how 4♠ can be natural, but even if it is, do we really want to suggest this ragged suit? The 4♥ bidders at least **knew** their advance was a cuebid.

KESSLER: “4♥. Let’s tell partner we have a real hand.”

ATHY: “4♥, certain that partner can’t pass. He can’t, can he? The weak 3♣ bid me speaks favorably of the ♥K placement. There could be two spade losers and that’s a real concern.”

If you’re not sure about 4 of a major being a cuebid, this certainly is:

FEILER: “5♣. I think 4 of a major would be natural here (Told you we’d be

an interesting pair to kibitz!- TJD) although I wouldn't bet the farm on it. I'll stick with the unequivocal cuebid."

Should we even push to game?

VONGSVIVUT: "4♦. Try to get a positive score, and show extra. If partner has a maximum raise, he might be able to further raise to 5♦."

The other end of the spectrum:

CURTIS: "6♦. Yow. Again, vive la preempt, but a slam is definitely possible. North should have at least 4 diamonds and 8+ HCP. If he holds the ♦QJ, this leaves 5+ points for him in ♠ and ♥. All sorts of combos will work."

The preempts have killed your space. You must decide now if you're going to stop in 5♦ or 6♦. A 4♥ cuebid may be reasonable, but what are you going to do if partner shows or denies the ♠A? I like an immediate decision to bid 6♦ rather than a wimpy 5♦.

Finally, a self-proclaimed coward last problem becomes a brave soul:

BERNHARD: "6♣. Partner has a top spade, does n't he? And they might not lead them."

I don't know where you'll dump all those spades if they don't lead them, but at least I knew I did n't believe all that coward stuff! Welcome to the panel, Bob, it should be a fun year!

Thanks to all who sent answers for this set, which drew the highest scores in my tenure here (I must be going soft in my old age!). Congratulations to **Bob Carteaux, Charles Fisher & Manuel Paulo** (Lis bon), who topped all Solvers and are invited to join the June panel.

I hope you'll all try the June problems on the next page. Please submit answers by April 24 on the web:

<http://www.prairienet.org/bridge/forum.htm>
or by mail or email to:

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Email: kniest@swbell.net

♠ How the Panel Voted (Panel/Staff average: 541)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Score
Norm Athy, St. Louis	Pass	2D	2S	5D	2D	4H	570
Bob Bernhard, Longwood FL	3D	2D	2D	4S	2D	6C	560
Tony Curtis, Chicago	3D	3C	2C	4H	2S	6D	470
Kent Feiler, Harvard IL	3D	4D	3S	5D	Pass	5C	550
Mark Kessler, Springfield IL	3D	3C	2S	5D	2D	4H	560
Finlay Marshall, Edinburgh UK	Pass	4C	2H	4S	2D	Dbl	490
Larry Matheny, Bloomington IL	Pass	4C	2S	Pass	Pass	Dbl	530
Mason Myers, Chesterfield MO	Dbl	4C	2H	Pass	2D	5C	500
Larry Rabideau, St. Anne IL	3D	3D	2S	5D	Pass	5D	550
Arbha Vongvivut, Godfrey IL	3D	4C	2S	Pass	2S	4D	530
Don Wertheimer, South Bend IN	3D	2D	2S	5D	Pass	4H	580
Chris Willenken, New York NY	3D	2D	2D	Pass	Pass	5D	540

♠ How the Staff Voted

Tom Dodd, Boerne TX	3D	4D	2S	4S	Pass	5D	560
Tom Kniest, Clayton MO	3D	2D	2S	Pass	2D	Dbl	560
Scott Merritt, Champaign IL	3D/P	2D	2S	4H	Pass	4S/Dbl	560/530
Karen Walker, Champaign IL	3D	3C	2S	Pass	2D	5D	560

♠ Solvers' Honor Roll (Solvers' average: 513)

Bob Carteaux, Fort Wayne IN	580	Len Vishnevsky, San Francisco	560
Micah Fogel, Aurora IL	570	Lisa Sievers, Champaign IL	550
Manuel Paulo, Lisbon, Portugal	570	Allan Shephard, St. Louis	550
Charles Fisher, St. Louis	560	Jim Hudson, DeKalb IL	550
Don Mathis, Florissant MO	560	Ed Rauch, Montgomery IL	540

Solvers Forum June Problems

1. IMPs, none vulnerable

West	North	East	South
--	--	2D*	Pass
Pass	2S	Pass	?

* (weak 2-bid)

What is your call as South holding:

S-AK3 H-62 D-KJ93 C-J942 ?

2. Matchpoints, both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
--	--	--	1C
Pass	1S	Pass	?

What is your call as South holding:

S-Q H-AKQ D-Q102 C-KQ9754?

3. Matchpoints, none vulnerable

West	North	East	South
--	--	--	Pass
Pass	1H	1S	2H
Pass	3H	3S	?

What is your call as South holding:

S-AQ7 H-742 D-J4 C-Q10953 ?

4. Matchpoints, none vulnerable

West	North	East	South
--	1C	Pass	1S
2H	Pass	Pass	?

What is your call as South holding:

S-AJ10654 H-4 D-532 C-AQ9 ?

5. IMPs, both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
--	--	1S	Pass
1NT*	2NT**	Pass	3D
Pass	4C	Pass	?

* (forcing NT) ** (minors)

What is your call as South holding:

S-A10643 H-AJ1032 D-J3 C-6 ?

6. Matchpoints, NS vulnerable

West	North	East	South
--	--	--	1D
2C	DBL	3C	?

What is your call as South holding:

S-K H-J1083 D-AKQ106 C-AJ3 ?
