

District 8 Solvers Forum

by Scott Merritt

1. Matchpoints, both vul ner a ble

West	North	East	South
—	1H	1S	?

What is your call as South hold ing:
S-AKQ3 H-1087 D-764 C-Q92?

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
2NT	100	8	33
1NT	90	6	14
2H	80	1	11
2S	80	0	24
Pass	70	1	5
2C	60	0	2
3H	60	0	5

I had trouble analyzing this set. The problems are mundane, yet they managed to evoke more bids than any of the recent forum sets. Usually, 31 or 32 to tal answers for six problems is the standard, but this set elicited 37 different answers. Were anyone silly enough to pay me for writing this column, I would demand a raise!

Then a funny thing happened. I turned on Turner Classic Movies and watched 'The Wizard of Oz' for the 20th time. Maybe it was the margaritas, or maybe the cast did actually show up to lend their bridge expertise. We'll never know, but I'd like to thank them for their support.

If there are any tried-and-true rules of partnership bidding, one is "Support with support, you'll always win the postmortem". As you can see, we have a panel of renegades! Only MARSHALL and this panelist show their partners any love, and, only mildly:

Glenda the Good Witch: "2H. Partner is always so happy when we raise his suit. May a house drop on the NT hogs!"

So, what is it about this hand that makes the rest of us break the "support" rule? As a dedicated investigator, I wanted to know, but unbeliev-

ably, the concept of raising partner was almost completely ignored by most of the panel, and replaced with conjecture and "experience".

ATHY: "1NT. What do I have? A 4333 eleven count with no points in partner's suit."

KESSLER: "2NT. Right on values, and the bid everyone would make if one of the hearts was a diamond. With no ruffing values, these hands frequently make nine, but not ten tricks."

WALKER: "2NT. With the fit in partner's suit, this is a pretty good 11 pts., but 2S is dangerous. If partner is minimum, 3H may be too high."

The panel makes good points, especially about the value of the third heart. This hand *is* flat and has misplaced honors, yet for all the negatives, the heart fit is surely a positive that can't be overlooked. Ultimately, though, this is matchpoints, where underbidding is n't always punished:

KNIEST: "1NT. This is enough since the spades have no positional value. RHO will get his spade lead and probably has the entries to score his long spades even if you have 9 slow tricks. Partner may bid again and provide a clear road for the next round."

It's best to remember that our opponents are (usually) sane. Overcalling a jack-high suit is of ten a sign they have some power on the side.

2. IMPs, Both vul ner a ble

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1NT
Pass	2C	Pass	2H
Pass	4C *	Pass	?

* Single ton club with heart support

What is your call as South hold ing:
S-A65 H-KJ95 D-84 C-AKQ10?

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
4S	100	9	41
4D	90	2	4
4H	90	5	53
4NT	70	0	2

This hand is the very reason couples should n't play bridge together! This is not a judgment hand. This is not a

hand where there's a right answer (unless you ask Karen and you know about the "Last Train"). This is merely a hand where, whatever you bid, guys like my friends Denis and Adam will swear you're wrong, and only the traveling score slip will bear this out. So here are the facts:

- You have a good hand, yet you've already said that by opening 1NT.
- You're control-heavy, but a whole heap of those honors are opposite partner's short clubs.
- Partner has taken up more room than you'd like with his splinter.
- You are about to make a mistake.

As the advancers lead the decliners, we will start with downside first:

FEILER: "4H, Too many wasted clubs for me to advance."

DODD: "4H. My maximum NT is offset by the superfluous club values. Am I really supposed to push to the 5-level with four pointed-suit losers?"

The Cowardly Lion: "4H. Is there a problem here? The 5-level belongs to the opponents, even in our uncontested auctions. I hope we make this."

WILLIAMS: "4H. My maximum just lost 5+ points. For us to have a play for slam, partner needs a magic hand – spade king, heart AQ, diamond ace. In addition, he'd better have the right shortness so I can toss losers from dummy, and if he has only 4 hearts, the suit had better break 3-2."

So, can the advancers top the arguments made above?

ATHY: "4S. I don't like to venture to the 5 level when it could be dangerous, but partner surely has values that should n't make 5H that frightful."

WERTHEIMER: "4S. Those who have paranoia from past bad experiences with slam bidding will only bid 4H, which doesn't do justice to this fine hand. The 5-level should be totally safe (famous last words)."

KNIEST: "4S. There's a duplication of controls in clubs, but you can't call them 'wasted' values. 4C was a slam try and I certainly have a max – good

trumps, controls, tricks, and a ruffing value. I'll show the spade control."

The Scarecrow: "6H. If I only had a brain, I'd know how to cuebid like these other guys and get that sure diamond lead!"

The decliners know they've given up chances on a close slam, while the advancers – other than Mr. Scarecrow – know they've dictated the lead, and may be too high. Usually in this column, I come to believe that one camp has the "right" bid (even though there are usually some people in that camp for the wrong reasons). On this hand, though, I'm far from sold. So finally, I would be remiss if I didn't add Karen's comments about an expert treatment that many of us are unfamiliar with:

WALKER: "4D. This is an obvious 'last-train' situation, which is in force when there's only one suit between partner's slamtry and game level. The 'last-train' cuebid does *not* promise a specific stopper in that suit – it tells partner you have interest in slam, but not enough power to go to the 5 level."

She then proceeded to try to use her editorial power to influence me to give her a better score. But I will not be brought down by "the man", who in this case is female, probably correct, and twice the player I will ever be. It's the thought that counts, and I avoided editorial tyranny for the love of all three of my readers!

3. Matchpoints, none vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1D	Pass	1S
Pass	2H	Pass	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-AQJ764 H-Q94 D-J1073 C-Void?

Action	Score	Votes	Solvers
3D	100	8	25
4D	90	2	14
3S	80	5	33
2S	80	0	14
3C	50	1	5

I must confess, I cheated here! I had absolutely no clue what to bid in a forum. You don't know your partner, you

can't get a sign from the opponents, you can't sneak a peek at your convention card. I was at my wits' end, when finally that bastion of everythingness saved me; I looked it up on the Internet!

Some may not call this cheating, as a vast majority of Solvers submitted their answers via the web, but I felt a little guilty. Here's what's in Bridge World Standard's section on reverses:

Opener's suit-over-suit reverse promises rebid

I was gonna ignore this little blurb, until I read the rest:

This refers to auctions such as 1D-1S-2H, where the 2H bidder promises to bid again (so 3D by responder is strong, for example).

Now, I'm a pea-brain, but the aptness of this – and the obvious call of 3D – could not be lost even on me!

All the non-cheaters were lumped into two camps: spades or diamonds.

RABIDEAU: "3S. This is my only chance to show my fine spade suit."

KNIEST: "3S. At matchpoints, it may be important to play in the major, so let's emphasize our fine suit for now. At IMPs, I'd bid 3D to leave the maximum room to explore for 7D."

All the 3S bidders said they would bid 4D over partner's expected 3NT. At least they have a plan. But will partner ever guess you hold 4 trumps in this sequence? The diamond bidders make this point better than I can.

The Mighty Oz: "4D. When I can de cree from on high, I do!"

KESSLER: "3D. If I bid 3S followed by 4D over the expected 3NT, this may get out of hand, and I doubt that partner will think I have 4 diamonds. If partner bids 3NT over 3D, we're well placed to bid 4S."

DODD: "3D, the strongest bid I can make for now. Playing possum and trying to catch up later risks not only the contract, but partnership trust. I have no idea which strain or how high we should go, so why do anything rash?"

ATHY: "3D. My first thought was 'where are all the clubs?'"

WALKER: "4D. You can construct a 'probing' auction to try and drag a spade

preference out of partner, or you can show your power, confirm the fit and have a sane, easy auction. With partner having 9+ red cards – and probably club length, if the non-vul. opponents' silence is taken into account – it's highly unlikely he has the hoped-for spade fit."

These two make a good point about the inferences to be drawn from the opponents' failure to bid. If you hope partner has good-enough spade fillers for 6S – which means he's therefore short in clubs – that means the opponents have been passing, not vul., on their combined 11 clubs. While this is possible, it is also highly unlikely.

The other question is how many diamonds to bid? 3D is clearly the most flexible; it leaves plenty of room to explore spades and cuebid fully. On the other hand, 4D hammers down the trump suit and gets the ball moving on slam exploration, but costs a valuable level of bidding. This is a fine line, and I feel the jury is still out.

I gave 2S a higher score than I feel it deserved because there's some doubt as to whether or not it's forcing. The BWS page suggests it may be, but most pairs play this rebid as weak and passable. So even though BWS may "officially" deem 2S forcing, don't try it with an unsuspecting partner if you have a hand this powerful.

4 IMPs, East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	—	1D	Pass
1S	DBL	2D	?

What is your call as South holding:

S-K75 H-A86 D-J1093 C-K104?

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
DBL	100	12	40
Pass	90	1	13
2H	70	0	14
2NT	60	3	32
2S	50	0	2

Have you been playing with your partner long enough that he would understand the humor in going minus 380? My partners never seem to find this funny! My line is always along

the line of, "We would have beaten this hand senseless if only the opponents had n't had their bid!"

This is a poker hand. You have queens and eights. There is a bet into you, but no one at the table seems confident. Do you call or raise? As the panel was in the raise camp, I will discuss the merits of the safe call.

KESSLER: "2NT. I'm not hanging partner by doubling; they'll run to 2S anyway. Our best shot at a plus is 2NT, at the 3-level in partners' 5-card suit, or defending at the 3-level."

Dorothy: "Pass. If this is wrong, I can don my ruby slippers and escape back to Kansas before we compare."

WALKER: "Pass. We have a good chance of +100, but I'm not sure enough to double. Partner probably has a lightish, shape double with a diamond void. I want him to keep making those in the future, so I'm not going to hang him with 2NT."

I really like half of Mark's logic and half of Karen's, but neither seems wholly correct. Double is risky and may give them an easy road to 2S, but bidding 2NT strikes me as murder! On the other hand, pass gives up the chance to get rich. If I was just a *little* rich, I wouldn't be so pro-double, but our rose-colored-glasses panel sees this as a way to get filthy rich.

FEILER: "Double. Easy. We have most of the HCP but may have no game."

PEER: "Double. Partner's double is based on shape, but he should have some values. They are red."

WILLIAMS: "Double. They have no fit and we have more than half the deck. I'm not sure what we're supposed to be making, but whatever it is, they will go for more."

It's not all that clear they don't have a fit (even a *9-card* fit). The doublers are optimistic, but I'm with them. Call it "testosterone-induced bravado". Yes, I've slinked back to the girls' table many times to report neg-380. That's always when I hope "estrogen-induced nurturing" will kick in! Usually it does :))

5. IMPs, Both vulnerable

West North East South

— — 2S DBL

Pass 4H Pass ?

What is your call as South holding:

S-A4 H-K8 D-AK876 C-AK95?

Action Score Votes % Solvers

4S 100 6 30

5S 90 1 2

4NT 80 1 27

6H 70 0 4

6NT 70 1 4

5D 60 3 13

Pass 60 2 13

5H 60 2 9

It's time for the obligatory "three opponents" joke. Righty took the fun out of this, and now partner has completely buried us. Worse, we might not get to declare! So now that we have no friends at the table, and our dog probably doesn't even like us, what are we to do? One idea is to take your toys and go home.

WERTHEIMER: "Pass. Why punish partner? I expect him to bid 4H with seven to the QJ."

MARSHALL: "Pass. All I can say is ugh! Any further bid may lead to disaster."

To jump ship with all this power seems like a travesty. On the other end of the gusto scale is:

FEILER: "6NT. 4S, 4NT and 5NT would all be taken as heart raises, and minors as very long suits."

Wicked Witch of the West: "6NT. No one is gonna push me around."

When all you have is a hammer, every thing looks like a nail! Any hand I can construct where you can make 6NT also makes 7 of some thing.

KNIEST: "4S. Liar's poker. If partner has a 2nd suit, I expect him to show it."

HUDSON: "4S. I'll drive to 6H unless partner shows me an other suit."

RABIDEAU: "4S, giving up on 7 to find (I hope) the best strain for six."

KESSLER: "5H. Very tough. Partner is never going over 4S. What we need is trumps, so ask about them."

Will partner really bid a Qxxx suit over 4S? While we'd *like* him to, I'm not

convinced this is the accepted treatment. If 4S means "bid another suit", what do you bid with A, KQxx, AKxxx, QJx? If you really want partner to show a minor, how about:

WALKER: "5S, which is pick a slam. If partner has a 4-card minor and only 4-5 hearts, he'll bid the minor."

Since you've forced slam, partner will be more comfortable bidding a moth-eaten minor. I also like Mark's 5H if you want to show partner some love and support, even though he just spit in your face. The problem, though, is that 5H sounds like it's asking for a spade control, not trump quality.

In an established partnership, you run into two hands a century where you need to use all this stuff. But if you aren't playing with that regular partner, who cares! Maybe I like 6NT after all.

6. Matchpoints, No body vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1H
1S	Dbl*	4S	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-43 H-AQJT97 D-AJ742 C-Void?

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
5D	100	13	86
5H	100	1	2
6D	70	2	5
DBL	50	0	4

Proponents of sound bidding stress Rule #2 of partnership bidding, which is "Game before slam." As I have never made a sound bid in my life, I usually ignore this rule, but it does seem to fit this situation. While Rule #1 ("support with support") was flagrantly broken in our first problem, Rule #2 was surprisingly adhered to here. The prevailing thought seems to be when you get preempted, stay preempted. Only one other panelist moved past the 5-level:

WILLIAMS: "6D. I trust the opponents' bidding, so I'm counting on partner to have 0 or 1 spade."

In competitive auctions, you want the opponents to have to make the last guess. 5D will almost certainly make, and 6D will have chances. What 6D has

going for it is that may induce a "save". If you bid only 5D, EW will probably give up, knowing you had to guess last. The mere game bidders differ entirely:

RABIDEAU: "5D, Duh!"

KESSLER: "5D. To bid more is a total crapshoot. However, if they bid 5S on my left and partner passes, I'd bid 6D."

DODD: "5D, I have to do something here, as pass is not forcing. I only hope partner is n't loaded in clubs, and that both 4S and 5D (or 5H) go down."

The Tin Man: "5H. The Wizard has given me *six* hearts, plus 100 honors. I could n't care less what partner says."

WALKER: "5H. 5D looks obvious, but this is matchpoints. Partner is known to be short in spades and he rates to have a couple of hearts. It will be a rare hand that makes 5D and not 5H."

To bid the "obvious" 5D is to give up. Were this IMPs, there'd be no doubt, but matchpoints complicates things. It's bizarre that the three panelists who did *not* bid 5D seem fairly certain about their calls, while the 5D bidders, other than Larry, seem uncertain.

I would like to thank the Oz cast for assisting me, and I look forward to hearing from the rest of you soon.

Thanks to all who sent answers to this very perplexing set. Congratulations to **Mason Myers** and **Arbha Vongsvivut**, who topped all Solvers and are invited to join the April panel.

Thanks to our 2001 guest panelists -- **Don Wertheimer & Jim Hudson** -- for a job well done, and welcome to **Tony Curtis** and **Bob Bernhard**, who won the 2001 Solvers Contest and will be guests for 2002. A full list of winners and runners-up will be in the April issue.

You can enter the 2002 contest by trying the new problems on page 11. Please submit answers as soon as possible (by Feb. 25) on the Web form:

www.prairienet.org/bridge/forum.htm
 or by sending mail or email to:

Tom Dodd

43265 IH 10W, Boerne TX 78006

Email: fieldtrialer@yahoo.com

▲ How the Panel Voted (Panel average: 540)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Score
Nor man Athy, St. Louis	1NT	4S	3D	DBL	5D	5D	550
Tony Curtis, Champaign IL	2NT	4S	3D	DBL	4S	5D	600
Kent Feiler, Har vard IL	2NT	4H	3S	DBL	6NT	5D	540
James Hud son, DeKalb IL	2NT	4S	3D	DBL	4S	5D	600
Mark Kessler, Spring field IL	2NT	4S	3D	2NT	5H	5D	520
Finlay Mar shall, Ed in burgh UK	2H	4S	3D	DBL	Pass	5D	540
Larry Matheny, Bloomington IL	2NT	4S	3D	DBL	5H	5D	560
Kathy Miller, Bloomington IL	1NT	4H	3S	2NT	5D	5D	480
Rich Peer, St. Louis	Pass	4S	3C	DBL	4S	5D	520
Larry Rabideau, St. Anne IL	2NT	4D	3S	DBL	4S	5D	570
Don Wertheimer, South Bend IN	1NT	4S	4D	DBL	Pass	5D	510
Hugh Wil liams, Car bon dale IL	1NT	4H	3S	DBL	5D	6D	490

▲ How the Staff Voted (Staff average: 552)

Tom Dodd, Boerne TX	1NT	4H	3D	DBL	4S	5D	580
Ka ren Walker, Cham paign IL	2NT	4D	4D	Pass	5S	5H	560
Scott Merritt, Cham paign IL	2NT	4H	3D	DBL	4NT	6D	540
Tom Kniest, Clayton MO	1NT	4S	3S	2NT	4S	5D	530

▲ Solvers Honor Roll (Solvers' average: 489)

Ma son Myers, St. Louis	580	Mike Carmen, St. Louis	530
Arbha Vongsvivut, St. Louis	570	Terry Goodykoontz, Cham paign IL	530
Steve Babin, Normal IL	550	Leroy Boser, Elkhart IN	520
Da vid McNitt, Elkhart IN	550	Ju di th Eaton/G. Galanos, Carbondale IL	520
Bill Rot ter, Gran ite City IL	550	Lisa Sievers, Cham paign IL	520
Paul Soper, Sierra Vista AZ	540	Michelle Wetzel, Rantoul IL	520

Solvers Forum -- April Problems

1. Matchpoints, both vul ner a ble

West	North	East	South
--	--	--	1D
1NT	2D	2S	?

What is your call as South hold ing:
S-K1065 H-A D-AJ864 C-K87 ?

2. Matchpoints, EW vul ner a ble

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

What is your call as South hold ing:
S-108542 H-AK D-5 C-Q10754 ?

3. IMPs, none vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1D	DBL	Pass	1H
Pass	1NT	Pass	?

What is your call as South hold ing:
S-J975 H-K9842 D-J103 C-4 ?

4. Matchpoints, NS vul ner a ble

West	North	East	South
--	--	3C	Pass
4C	4D	Pass	?

What is your call as South hold ing:
S-AQ1076 H-109754 D-63 C-5 ?

5. IMPs, both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
--	1C	1NT	Pass
Pass	DBL	Pass	?

What is your call as South hold ing:
S-J9743 H-65 D-QJ953 C-5 ?

6. Matchpoints, NS vul ner a ble

West	North	East	South
--	--	--	1D
3C	3D	4C	?

What is your call as South hold ing:
S-10654 H-AQ3 D-AK1084 C-A ?