

District 8 Solvers Forum

by Tom Dodd

1. Matchpoints, NS vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—		—	1D
Pass	1NT	2S	?
What is your call as South holding:			
S-5	H-AJ84	D-AK932	C-A53 ?
Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
3C	100	8	18
3D	80	1	20
Double	70	2	31
Pass	70	2	9
3S	60	1	7
3H	50	1	13
2NT	50	1	2

I love problems like the six we have this month. Everyday situations like those we might face on any given day. Ones that give us headaches, to be sure, but then bridge isn't exactly everyone's idea of stress relief.

Our first exercise depends to some extent on partner's style as well as North's reading of your own habits. If North is an aggressive type who simply won't let the opponents play a 2-level contract, then passing holds some merit here. You have no guarantee that your hands fit well, even though there will be an 8-card fit in one or both minors.

A 1NT response to 1D is rather broad in strength and distribution. Thus far you know North has no 4-card major and 6-11 HCP. So is this hand worth a free venture to the 3-level?

WERTHEIMER: "Pass. Nothing stops partner from a reopening double, which is takeout (or optional)."

HUDSON: "Pass. I have no convenient bid, and I don't want to jeopardize our likely plus by overbidding. Maybe partner will do the right thing."

In years past, the submitter of this problem would have received a *Bridge*

World kudo because it generated at least one vote for every minimum action, plus votes for pass and double.

KNIEST: "Double. Shortness and extra values. Standard, no? I think this will be a much more frequent call on the panel than the solvers, which is why it's a good problem for those who haven't defined this auction."

I would've thought there would be more votes for double from the panel, too, but fully a third of solvers chose this call, which is dangerous unless you've discussed it with partner.

KESSLER: "3S. I'm an overbidder. This hand has so much potential and so many controls. Partner will never think his hand is any good because he doesn't have any controls."

Fine and dandy, except that North may play you for a bit more, and you haven't the trick-taking potential to justify a game force. The majority felt they had to take action, given that the auction virtually guarantees us a fit in one of the minors.

WALKER: "3C. And hold my breath. I'll continue overbidding by raising 3D to 4. If North raises to 4C (more likely as I'm probably hitting his suit), I'll bid 5C and hope his raise was based on 5-card support."

ATHY: "3C. It's a bit awkward to be bidding a 3-card suit, but you do have a 6-loser hand and you need to make a call before West makes his 3S call. Partner has 7+ minor-suit cards and you were promised an expert, so he or she will know what to do."

FEILER: "3C. Sounds like this is partner's suit. If I bid it, he'll be a happy partner and may bid on."

Not that I particularly like 3C. It's just the extra values and controls that make it seemingly worthwhile the do something here, without being too encouraging. For you result merchants out there, here's the "right" answer, straight from the horse's mouth:

MATHENY: "3C. It's difficult to be objective because this was successful at the table."

2. Matchpoints, both vulnerable

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

What is your call as South holding:
S-KQ7 H-KJ108 D-J5 C-AKQ6?

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
Pass	100	13	47
3S	70	1	27
4S	50	2	27

This is a bit simpler than #1, as it's a do-you-or-don't-you problem. Not surprisingly, the majority say we've done enough. Even a self-confessed overbidder saw no need to move:

KESSLER: "Pass. I've told my story and I have nothing extra. If partner has Axxxx and out, he should have bid more than 2S."

Even ace-fifth doesn't make 4S a great contract, since diamond AK and a ruff locks you in dummy. North has already limited his hand, not once but twice. True, making a red game at IMPs goes a long way, but is there really a chance given the auction so far?

CURTIS: "3S. On average, partner will have about 4 points. Hearts are evenly split as East didn't open 1H and/or rebid 2D, and West didn't make an easy 1H bid. So, there's probably even distribution (no ruffs) and partner should hold about 5 points and 5+ spades, unless opener is strong -- not likely as he didn't open 1NT with a balanced hand."

Whether North has 4 or 5 pts, could mean everything, assuming the 5th point is the club jack. For sure, if North has what we hope for, he'll carry on to game, and might even make it with a good trump split and favorable heart position. But North didn't promise a fifth spade. We could easily be facing a 4333 (or 4342) Yarborough and be lucky to score 8 tricks.

MERRITT: "4S. I've already bid my hand like an imbecile! But I think that passing is just in complete violation of partnership trust, so I bid 4S. What's

wrong with 2S over 1S? I think my values make up for the lack of spades."

A direct raise might have worked better, but what about hands where North has a second suit and some values? BWS provides for nebulous cuebids like this to distinguish between strong hands with 4+-card support and those without. Just because this time North didn't give the hoped-for response (a second suit or a jump or even a NT bid) is no reason to stick his head under the blade (Yes, North will have to play this thing!). More than half the Solvers thought it best to raise (half of them all the way to 4S) without knowing if the hands fit or if North has any values at all.

RABIDEAU: "Pass. Hope we're not too high already."

SPEAR: "Pass. Eight tricks aren't guaranteed, but we have a good chance to go plus with a pass."

MARSHALL: "Pass. Over here (Scotland, or Europe in general?- TJD) the cuebid guarantees another bid, but then 1S didn't show much and 2S seems to guarantee just about nothing."

3. Matchpoints, both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	1H	Pass	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-KQ987 H-AJ107 D-Void C-10943?

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
1S	100	7	49
4D	90	6	40
2NT	70	2	3
4H	50	1	3
3H	50	0	5

Fast or slow? This one seems a matter of style, since both ways have advantages and disadvantages. I secretly admire this train of thought:

WILLIAMS: "2NT. I like to have second-round control in all the unbid suits to splinter. Even not playing that way, 2NT still rates to work out better. Should partner bid 3C, a slam is certainly not out of the question."

Problem is, any other response is not much help, as once you make this deci-

sion you cannot later transfer the “captaincy” of the auction back to North. You’re it for the duration, and is club shortness really a prerequisite for a slam investigation? My hand simulator generated tons of examples where North has 2 or more clubs with no real extras, and his hand still offered a laydown or high-percentage slam. A pity we can’t take our electronic friends to tournaments.

But I digress. Back to the question:

WALKER: “4D. I know it’s in ‘vogue’ to place a bunch of restrictions on splinter bids, but if you insist on those rules you might as well take the convention off your card. This is the best way to get partner to evaluate his spade and club holdings. Bidding 1S is guaranteed to get you nowhere— no matter how you bid after this, you’ll never convince partner your hearts are this good or this long.”

FEILER: “4D. I know, this could help them get to a 5D sac, but there are so many possible slams with partner having very minimum hands that I’ll have to take the chance.”

HUDSON: “1S. If the opponents don’t preempt too vigorously, I’ll be able to describe my hand better than if I had splintered.”

ATHY: “1S. An easy 1-over-1 to start. I don’t like to splinter voids, especially when I have a good 5-card suit.”

CURTIS: “1S. Go slow. You don’t know if you belong in slam or game. Jumping to 4H or splintering with a void is dangerous in either case.”

KNIEST: “1S. Three decent answers, and the best really depends on partner’s hand. I think showing a source of tricks and later showing good hearts and diamond shortness gives the best picture.”

Which to choose? I don’t normally like splintering with voids because partner won’t know if his ace has value or is wasted. Here, however, there really isn’t any way to show this hand by going slow — a secondary jump to 3H over 1NT or 2 of a minor is-

n’t even forcing, and to think the auction will develop to allow a jump to 4H at the third turn is a pipe dream. And if North has the hoped-for spade/club cards, a diamond preempt is not at all unlikely. If EW do save, at least I’ll feel comfortable passing a double of 5D having shown shortness.

4. Matchpoints, none vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1H
1S	Pass	Pass	DBL
2C	DBL	Pass	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-J H-AKQ1083 D-AJ106 C-62?

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
Pass	100	10	31
3H	80	3	13
2H	60	2	33
4H	50	1	16
2D	50	0	7

A few panelists commented that the reopening double wouldn’t have been their first choice. With the concentrated strength, it’s close, since a useful rule of thumb when reopening is not to double if you wouldn’t have sat for a direct penalty double had it been available. A close call to be sure, but now that the auction has revealed the trap pass, plus a bunch of black cards in North’s hand, my reopening double appears to have paid dividends. Why is it, then, that a significant minority of the panel and a majority of solvers want to allow EW to escape the ax?

FEILER: “Pass. I wouldn’t have reopened with a double on the previous round, but now am glad I did. Partner should have length in both blacks.”

HUDSON (and similarly **WALKER**): “3H. By far the toughest problem of the set. It could be right to pass, but partner is showing a penalty double primarily of spades. Because of my takeout double, he’s counting on me for something like honor-third of clubs, which I don’t have.”

While I agree that North probably holds better spades than clubs, the majority has much the better argu-

ment, particularly given the vulnerability and form of scoring. After all, North didn't have to double 2C; there were other bids available (2NT anyone?) with moderate clubs and the advertised spade stack. Some panelists were drooling at the prospects of +500:

RABIDEAU: "Pass. Partner was planning a penalty pass of our reopening double, and while his clubs aren't as good as his spades, he doesn't have many red cards for me. My only flaw is a 6th heart, which will occasionally allow us to make game ... C'est la vie."

KNIEST: "Pass. They may never come up for air, or maybe they've landed on their feet. I have the red suits locked up and have 2(!) clubs to push through. I *do* note that the double only confirms a trap pass of 1S."

MATHENY: "Pass. It's tempting to try 3NT, but partner should have a lot of black cards. It's also good that I can lead clubs twice if necessary."

I might try 3NT with solid hearts, but the auction advertises a bad break in that suit, which bodes ill for either a heart or a NT contract, making even game problematical. And if partner is loaded in the black suits, what is the effect of doubling then pulling?

WERTHEIMER: "Pass. This is a question of trusting partner. Even if pulling the double is the winner, it's the losing call for the partnership." Amen, brother.

5. IMPs, none vulnerable

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

What is your call as South holding:
S-105 H-Q863 D-KQJ1087 C-A?

Action	Score	Votes	%	Solvers
3D	100	8		49
3S	90	5		5
Pass	60	3		31
2NT,3NT	40	0		9
3H	40	0		6

Just how good can North's hand be for the free 2S call? Even though system dictates this is not forcing, North

should have a good reason for jumping into the middle of two bidding opponents. I'm assuming at least a decent spade suit and/or a diamond fit. Your hand isn't exactly gravy, with only 2-card support, but the potential ruffing value and solid diamonds persuade me to not go quietly into the night. A lot depends here on the partnership's individual styles.

KESSLER: "Pass. I may well have a better hand for North than he has for me. I see no reason to bid unless partner cannot play the dummy."

The 3S bidders (myself included) take the aggressive approach, vulnerable at IMPs. Let's hope our partners aren't equally aggressive, lest they require defensive lapses or a miracle to score up the sought-after red game.

ATHY: "3S. My gut instinct is to bid 3D, but there's lots of room for spades in partner's hand. He's way short in hearts — plus he could have made a responsive double if he had clubs."

MERRITT: "3S. While I hate to hang partner, he should have cards for his freebid and some diamonds (not many hearts or clubs, since he didn't make a responsive double). He also might have a big hand and feel uncomfortable starting with 3H."

The 3D bidders, while not going quietly, took a dim view of game prospects:

CURTIS: "3D. We're looking for the best and safest contract. Partner has made a freebid at the 2-level and thus has 5+ spades and 8+ points. Your hand could be almost worthless in spades if the trumps are knocked out and diamonds can't be set up."

KNIEST: "3D. 2S was constructive and non-forcing, so pass is tempting. However, my shape and the bidding suggest at least a moderate diamond fit, and by emphasizing my suit we might get to a magic 3NT or 5D."

WALKER: "3D. I'd like to raise spades, but once my club ace is dislodged, my hand may be worthless in a spade contract. Notrump is out; partner could have the perfect hand (spade

and diamond aces, plus some help from the opponents in setting up a heart trick), but with just one stopper, I'm not willing to bank on that.

3D is truly the "safe" call, since North rates to have a couple. If EW lead trumps against 3D, we'll likely still go plus. 3S, while it may lead to a minus, also may lead to an easy 620. I just hope partner doesn't make the "automatic" game bid simply because we're red at IMPs. Playing with that type of partner, better to take the safe way out by passing or rebidding 3D.

6. IMPs, both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-A8752 H-KQ9753 D-2 C-2 ?

Action	Score	Votes	% Solvers
1H	100	10	49
Pass	80	4	29
1S	70	1	13
2H,3H	40	0	5
2C	30	1	3

Twenty years ago, this problem wouldn't have generated much ink. It still doesn't today, but for different reasons, as we shift from point-counting to trick-taking and defensive values as the opening bid gold standard. When I played Forcing Club systems, opening these hands was mandatory, as you couldn't get into much trouble (because your hand was limited by the failure to open 1C), and particularly at matchpoints, it usually pays to strike the opening blow. Some panelists saw this as a "which-suit-to-open?" problem:

MARSHALL: "1H. I bid long suits first, especially if they have 6 cards. Maybe I'll get to show spades later on."

SPEAR: "1H. Hope hearts is the right spot, or partner can bid spades."

KNIEST: "1H. At least I'll have some possibly useful info to guide my next call. Any preempt is an operation and should justifiably upset partner. I certainly have enough defense and playing strength for an opener."

RABIDEAU: "1H. Partly a matter of style, partly a matter of having had very little luck backing into the auction with hands like this in the past. Of course, it would be an easy opener if the major-suit lengths were reversed."

KESSLER: "1H. I don't understand the problem. This is clearly an opening bid; it's only a matter of whether you rebid 2H or 2S (that's me)."

While I don't share the gung-ho enthusiasm of issuing a forcing reverse on a 9-count, regardless of playing potential (particularly over 1H-1NT), I also don't share the optimism that I can adequately describe this hand after a pass.

HUDSON: "Pass. 1H and 1S are misdescriptive. Since I have the majors, I will probably be able to come in later if it seems advisable."

FEILER: "Pass. Reverse the majors and I'd open 1S. Later in the auction, when I make a Michaels bid, partner should take me for longer hearts."

Why would North make this inference? I'd bid that way (pass and then Michaels) if the heart 3 was the diamond 3, perhaps. It's precisely the sixth heart that makes this an admittedly borderline opener. Ask yourself one question: Which is the "better" opening bid, this hand or a featureless 13-count with the majority of high cards in queens and jacks?

Thanks to all for sending in solutions to this interesting and instructional set. Congratulations to **Bob Bernhard** and **Micah Fogel**, who topped all Solvers *and* panelists with perfect 600's. They're invited to join the December panel.

Past columns are on the web:
www.prairienet.org/bridge/#forum

I hope you'll all join us for the last set of 2001 and try the problems on page 10. Please send your answers as soon as possible (by Oct. 24) on the web form: www.prairienet.org/bridge/forum.htm or by sending mail or email to:

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▲ HOW THE PANEL VOTED (Panel/Staff average: 532)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Score
Norm Athy, St. Louis	3C	Pass	1S	Pass	3S	1H	590
Tony Curtis, Chicago	DBL	3S	1S	Pass	3D	1S	510
Kent Feiler, Harvard IL	3C	Pass	4D	Pass	3D	Pass	570
Charles Fyffe, St. Louis	3H	4S	1S	4H	3S	2C	370
Jim Hudson, DeKalb IL	Pass	Pass	1S	3H	3D	Pass	530
Gary Kessler, Springfield IL	3S	Pass	1S	Pass	Pass	1H	520
Finlay Marshall, Edinburgh UK	2NT	Pass	4H	3H	3D	1H	480
Larry Matheny, Bloomington IL	3C	Pass	4D	Pass	Pass	Pass	530
Larry Rabideau, St. Anne IL	3C	Pass	1S	Pass	Pass	1H	560
Jack Spear, Overland Park KS	3C	Pass	4D	2H	3D	1H	550
Don Wertheimer, South Bend IN	Pass	Pass	2NT	Pass	3S	1S	500
Hugh Williams, Carbondale IL	3C	Pass	2NT	Pass	3D	1H	570

▲ HOW THE STAFF VOTED

Tom Dodd, Boerne TX	3C	Pass	4D	Pass	3S	1H	570
Tom Kniest, Clayton MO	DBL	Pass	1S	Pass	3D	1H	570
Scott Merritt, Champaign IL	3D	4S	4D	2H	3S	Pass	450
Karen Walker, Champaign IL	3C	Pass	4D	3H	3D	1H	570

▲ Solvers Honor Roll (Solvers' average: 485)

Bob Bernhard, Longwood FL	600	John Seng, Champaign IL	550
Micah Fogel, Aurora IL	600	Paul Soper, Champaign IL	530
Kathy Miller, Bloomington IL	560	Len Vishnevsky, San Francisco	530
Bob Cardeaux, Ft. Wayne IN	550	Tom Oppenheimer, Ballwin MO	510
Judith Liebman, Urbana IL	550	Rich Peer, St. Louis	510

Solvers Forum – December Problems

1. Matchpoints, both vulnerable

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

What is your call as South holding:
S-A84 H-A1092 D-AK642 C-5?

2. IMPs, both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	—	2D	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-AKJ10863 H-AQ9 D-Void C-KQ5?

3. Matchpoints, none vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	--	--	1C
1S	Pass	2S	3C
Pass	Pass	3S	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-Void H-AKQ D-K107 C-QJ108764 ?

4. Matchpoints, EW vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	1D	1S	Pass
1NT	2C	Pass	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-AQJ972 H-J983 D-102 C-4?

5. Matchpoints, none vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	1H	2D	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-K84 H-J53 D-Void C- A1086542?

6. Matchpoints, both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
—	—	2H	?

What is your call as South holding:
S-J H-3 D-AQ982 C-QJ9876 ?

Thanks for the problems above to Scott
Merritt (#1 & #5) & Bob Sievers (#6)

Submit your solutions online: www.prairienet.org/bridge/forum.htm

District 8 Solvers Forum

New problems for the next issue and the form for submitting your answers and comments are [here](#).