

# Master Solvers Panel

By Marshall Miles  
San Bernardino, Calif.

This month's panelists are Jason Feldman and Joe Kivel, District 22; Rose Meltzer - Kyle Larsen and Ron Smith, District 21; Steve & Kitty Cooper and Steve Bruno, District 17; and two guest panelists: Jill Meyers of District 23 and Alan Sontag as guest expert at large.

## Problem 1.

North/South vul, IMPs  
You, South, hold:

♠KQ654 ♥J ♦8652 ♣A75

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

What call would you make?

ROSE - KYLE: 3♣. An awkward hand; we choose to lie about a fourth club, and make a non-forcing raise.

FELDMAN: 3♣. I'm tempted to bid 2NT, but if notrump is right it should play from partner's side. Besides, I will almost always be raised to game at these colors, and we could be going down a bunch.

If pard can't bid anything over 3♣, then that's probably our last plus score.

BRUNO: 2♠. At IMPs partner could have the right minimum to make a game: ♠Ax ♥Axxx ♦x ♣Kxxxx. So I bid again.

Pass is my second choice.

SONTAG: 2♠. Nothing is perfect, and I have too much to pass.

COOPERS: 2♠. Not a happy choice, but we are too good to pass, and 2♥ shows a bit more support than this. It would be nice if partner has a delayed spade raise.

MEYERS: Pass. I hate this problem. I want to keep alive but don't want to bid 2♠ or 2NT.

SMITH: Pass. With a poor fit in partner's suits and no diamond stopper, I'll go low with no direction.

KIVEL: Pass. At matchpoints pass is 90+%, but vul at IMPs, it's not so clear cut, but neither are any of the other choices. Even 2♥ could be right if partner's hearts are similar to my spades. So, I'll pass and hope to get a plus score.

M.M.: Everyone realizes there is a chance for game, probably 3NT. I think 2♥ - which was my choice - purportedly showing a mild fit - usually two small, possibly a doubleton honor - is slightly more encouraging to partner than a 2♠ bid. And if partner passes, which is more likely ... that partner can take eight tricks in hearts, eight tricks in spades, or nine tricks in clubs? Only a computer program like Deep Finesse will tell. My guess is eight tricks in hearts. But I'm glad nobody chose 2♦: What is partner supposed to do with a minimum hand (with or without a diamond stopper)?

## Problem 2.

Neither vul, matchpoints  
You, South, hold:

♠— ♥AK764 ♦985 ♣K10632

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

What call do you make?

KIVEL: 2NT. I wouldn't have opened this hand, and would like to abstain. However, even if I had a full opener with this distribution, I would be hard pressed to come up with a satisfactory bid. It probably is right 70% of the time to pass, especially if I have

no plans to play again with this partner.

I expect partner's next bid over my 2NT would be 3♥ or 3♠ - neither of which is forcing in my system, and I'll try to get out without too much of a minus score.

FELDMAN: 2NT. I don't see another option here.

ROSE - KYLE: 2NT. (The best shot is to bid 1NT and hope they condone it!) Seriously, we wouldn't mind passing this forcing bid.

SMITH: 2NT. This is ugly. If you ever were to pass a forcing bid, this could be it!

MEYERS: 2NT. I hate this even more than problem 1. What else am I supposed to bid?

COOPERS: 3♥. We will not bid NT with this shape, so we lie about our heart length and hope for the best. Since partner may well be short in clubs, he may have heart tolerance or a fit.

BRUNO: 3♥. The person who opened this hand has a death wish, which got fulfilled. I would never open it 1♥, and I don't play with anyone who would. It's much closer to a first-seat 2♥ opener.

But, with a gun to my head, I opened it 1♥, and now have to choose from two possible lies - 2NT or 3♥. It's too dangerous to tell pard I have a spade or two when I don't, so I'll lie about my heart length.

SONTAG: Pass. I think this is the best percentage action to get out alive, and I hope my partner will play with me again if I'm wrong about that!

M.M.: I'm with Sonty on this one. Bidding 2NT does not end this nightmare. Not surprisingly, partner has 6-5 in spades and diamonds (with 13 points). His next bid will be 3♣. Would you pass that? He will never let the bidding stop short of game unless you pass a forcing bid. And his suits are not likely to break well on this bidding. Does passing a forcing bid (perhaps one time in 500) prevent partner from bidding normally? Especially when it works? I don't think so. He will bid his hands properly so that if there is a bad result, it won't be HIS fault. The main risk in passing a forcing bid is that it may be harder for you to get good partners if they hear about it (and they undoubtedly will).

## Problem 3.

East/West vulnerable, IMPs  
You, South, hold:

♠A8 ♥A75 ♦Q106 ♣A10643

South	West	North	East
1♣	1NT	Dbl	2♦*
?			

\*Alerted as a transfer to hearts.  
What call do you make?

SMITH: Pass. As Al Roth used to say, "What's the problem?"

MEYERS: Pass. I don't see the problem. Partner's double promises another bid and their 2♦ bid promises another bid. I have nothing to say.

COOPERS: Pass. Double would show diamonds which we don't really have. So pass and await developments. By the way, we would have promoted this 14 HCP to 15, and opened 1NT - not 1♣.

SONTAG: Pass. It doesn't seem to me that it's my decision to make right now.

KIVEL: Pass. If I double, it'll go 2♥ - Pass - Pass. Now what? If I pass, and it goes 2♥ - Pass - Pass, I'll still have to decide whether to bid 2NT or 3♣, but that's probably less of a decision than the first case, and partner might bid over 2♥, and get me off the hook.

ROSE - KYLE: Pass. Let's see what partner does.

BRUNO: Double. Do I want to encourage my partner to double 2♥ with a doubleton heart? Since I have quick tricks and three hearts, the answer is "yes." If I had a softer or weaker hand the answer would be "no"

and I would pass over 2♦.

FELDMAN: Double, which shows an active interest in defending. Partner now can double the strains he wants to defend. The real problem is if it goes 2♥ - Pass - Pass back to me; I will double as well, because ... where is the spade suit? Partner must have extras if he has spade length. This is an auction to have clear agreements: partnerships must agree on how cheaply the opponents can play undoubled, and which doubles are takeout vs. penalty. (I play pass then double is takeout in my seat).

M.M.: Hooray! Steve and Jason saved me from being all by myself on this hand. After the notrump overcall, unless partner has a very freakish hand, there is little chance that we can bid and make a game of our own. And if we can, we can probably do better by doubling the opponents with favorable vulnerability. A double of 2♥, at IMPs, would be too dangerous if the opponents have eight hearts between them, especially when they are split 2-6. But what if partner and I each have three hearts? Can either of us double safely (without cooperation of some kind in the bidding)? Unlike most of the world, I don't think partner guarantees another bid because of his double with a good 8 or 9 points and a balanced hand. Even if he does, would he double with J10x of hearts? Or should I double with Axx of hearts? I think the double should say that I have a good defensive hand, so if he has a close decision, he will double 2♥, and if he doesn't, I won't either—and I won't mind being just +100. So far as the double is concerned, I have a better defensive hand against diamonds than hearts; it won't be a disaster if they make 2♦ doubled; and even if they belong there, how will they know it? West's pass wouldn't mean he has lots of diamonds; it would just mean he didn't have three or more hearts.

## Problem 4.

East/West vulnerable, IMPs  
You, South, hold:

♠J53 ♥A7 ♦AQ94 ♣A743

East	South	West	North
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	?		

What call would you make?

BRUNO: 3♦. If I didn't want my partner to ever balance again, I would consider passing. Another possibility is 2NT, saying I have two suits and want pard to bid his lowest-ranking four-card suit to find a fit with me. This could work well since partner could be 2-4-3-4 with about eight or nine points. We could find our 4-4 club fit.

But with such meager values the odds are he's at least 4-4 in the red suits.

Why torture him?

SMITH: 3♠. Someone doesn't have their values. Looks like we have game, unless partner balances as if he's playing matchpoints. Slam is not out of the picture.

FELDMAN: 3♠, unless I'm playing with a real aggressive pard that would have gotten in there the first time. Not quite sure what I'll catch, maybe a 1-5-3-4. The finesses should be working, as West doesn't have room for much.

ROSE - KYLE: 2NT. We expect partner to bid his best minor.

COOPERS: 2NT. Get partner to pick the minor. He may have more clubs than diamonds. We strongly object to the pass of 1♣, and would have overcalled 1NT.

SONTAG: 2NT. This suggests playing in either minor.

MEYERS: 2NT. I want to bring clubs back into the picture. This should give a choice of minors. I have a good hand but I

don't want to punish partner for coming back into the bidding.

It looks like if we have a game it would have to be an 11-trick game.

KIVEL: 4♦. I realize partner can have ♠void ♥Kxxxx ♦Kxxxx ♣Kx, and a grand is there, but shouldn't he have bid over 1♠ with that hand? And shouldn't he bid 2NT over 2♠, correcting a 3♣ response to 3♦? Bidding 4♦ will get him to bid a game with the appropriate hand.

I'll give up on the slam.

## Problem 5.

Both vul, IMPs

West	East
♠K6542	♠AJ7
♥7	♥8
♦AQJ	♦K732
♣QJ43	♣107652

South opens 2♥. What call would you make with the West hand?

If West doubles and North bids 4♥, what call should East make?

If the bidding goes 2♥, Dbl, 4♥, Dbl, what call should West make?

FELDMAN: (a) Double. (b) Double (resp). (c) 4♠.

COOPERS: (a) 2♠. We do not double with a decent 5-card major. (b) Dbl. We think two top cards plus a stiff heart are enough for a responsive dbl.

(c) 4♠. Partner can always bid 4NT if he insists on a minor. This should show five weak spades or four very good ones, since the dbl denies four spades.

KIVEL: (a) 2♠ (ugh!). Even though my spades are so poor, and I have ample support for the other suits, over the long run, I have found that it's generally right to bid the 5-card spade suit. But I certainly can live with a double. If I pass, the opponents will probably steal the contract.

(b) Pass. East has a tough call to make. I would probably pass and collect 100 or 200. A double would be value showing, and West would then bid 4♠, implying five spades or four good ones. While 4♠ is a very reasonable contract without opponent bidding, it doesn't rate to make on this hand. (c) 4♠. See above comment, although pass can be the winning action. Pass will probably collect 200 or 500, or -790 (rare), whereas 4♠ should be 620 or -100 or -200.

SONTAG: (a) 2♠. I've had better suits, but this is most descriptive.

(b) Double, responsive. (c) 4♠. What else?

BRUNO: (a) 2♠. If I had five hearts instead of spades and RHO opened 2♠, I would double. But when I can find a 5-3 major suit fit by bidding it at the two level, I make the attempt. (b) 4NT - pick a minor. We'll probably go down one in 5♣ when we can make a spade game. That's why I don't double with the West hand.

(c) Pass. Partner has ways to find a fit. In my style, double isn't one of them.

ROSE - KYLE: (a) 2♠. (b) Responsive double. (c) 4♠. At last, an easy one!

SMITH: (a) 2♠. I'm from the old school: bid the 5-card major first. (b) Double.

(c) 4♠. If you double with these hands, 4♠ must show five on the way back.

MEYERS: (a) 2♠. (b) Double. (c) 4♠.

M.M.: I'm with the majority who believe that West should overcall 2♠ with his five card suit. It helps partner to make the right decisions if he figures that a takeout double denies five spades unless the doubler has such a strong hand (at least 17 points) that he wants to double and show spades later. With something like ♠xxxxx ♥void ♦AKxx ♣AKxx I would make an exception to this rule, but partner should assume either a four card spade suit (although it could be three!) or a very strong hand.

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