



Master Solvers Panel

By John Swanson
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The problems this month are taken from the 14th Red Bull World Bridge Series Championships. If you search the Internet to find the 13th Red Bull World Bridge

Series Championships, or the 12th or any other number, you will be unsuccessful. It was the 14th "World Bridge Series Championships," the name designated in 2010 for the quadrennial meet organized by the World Bridge Federation held in non-leap even years, originally known as the "World Pair Olympiad." But this was the first year that Red Bull has forked over the money to get their name mentioned. The events held are open, in the sense that entries do not represent geographic zones or nations, unlike the Bermuda Bowl (odd years) and World Mind Sports Games (formerly "Olympiad," held in leap years). From my viewpoint, the event was held in relative obscurity. The location was Sanya, the southernmost city in China. Because the events were open no events were needed for qualification; little was published in the Bulletin concerning the championships. And then there were vugraph issues. A Chinese Internet gaming company secured exclusive rights to broadcast the finals. As a result, BBO support was not as dedicated as usual. However, the BBO database did have some interesting deals from the semi-finals, with results from the Open, Women's, and Senior events. Our panel, as dedicated as always, will offer opinions on some of the bidding problems the competitors faced: Paul Ivaska, Roger Lee & Bobby Levin, Las Vegas; Mike Lawrence, Brentwood, Tennessee; Jill Meyers, Santa Monica; Rick Roeder & Ivar Stakgold, San Diego; and Bill Rosen.

Problem 1.

East/West vulnerable IMP scoring
You are South holding:

♠62 ♥AK43 ♦A9 ♣Q10732

South	West	North	East
	4♠	Pass	Pass
?			

Levin: Pass. If you ever played rubber bridge you would pass as fast as I would.

Lee: Pass, but double is fine to me. Very close call.

J.S.: One supposes Roger doesn't have a lot of rubber bridge experience.

Stakgold: Pass. I play that a double of preempts up to 4♥ is takeout, but the double of 4♠ is business (4NT would be takeout). My hand seems unsuited for either bid, although I realize that I may miss a substantial penalty of 4♠ or a good save in 5♣.

J.S.: I believe that one should treat a double of a 4♠ preempt (or an opening bid of 1♠, 2♠, or 3♠ raised to game) as takeout. Let's change this hand slightly, moving one of the spades into the diamond suit: ♠6 ♥AK43♦A92 ♣Q10732. You desperately want to be using the double as takeout.

The flip side is that when you have an almost certain set, say ♠KQ10x and a couple of aces, you must pass.

Meyers: Pass. I don't know whose hand it is, but I don't think I have a reason to bid; our likeliest plus score is defending.

Roeder: Pass. We may well beat 4♠ one trick, but the vulnerability should be respected. If the clubs and diamonds were reversed, taking action would be more reasonable. Tougher decision in match points.

Rosen: Pass. There are no good actions, in my estimation, for this hand. With considerable defense I pass and see what happens.

Ivaska: Pass. I don't think I have much to gain by doubling and a lot to lose. It's most unlikely that we have a game and also unlikely that a vul vs. non-vul LHO is going to go down a lot, if at all. (I wouldn't be surprised if we ended up -790 or even -990 after a double.) Partner won't take out unless she/he has a six-card suit, but 5♦ could incur a large penalty (sometimes with no game on for the opponents). If I had another king or so, of course, I would have no choice but to double.

Lawrence: Pass. Vulnerable 4♠ bidders aren't going down a lot and my hand has too many warning signs to try to find a contract, namely: two spades; lack of diamond support; lots of losers.

J.S.: It's tough to argue against the panel's unanimous choice of pass. I will observe that entering this auction with marginal values works far more often than I think it should. In Sanya, four players faced this decision. Only Piotr Gawrys of the event-winning team doubled; he was fortunate to find his partner with seven hearts. 5♥ doubled was down one when the defense couldn't judge the necessity of cashing two clubs immediately, gaining 11-IMPs against 4♠ making at the other table. An interesting auction developed in the other match after Geoff Hampson (West) opened 3NT, showing a good major suit opening preempt. North incautiously overcalled 4♥ holding: ♠J103 ♥QJ98652 ♦K ♣65, with the result that his partner eventually bid to 6♥. Even so, that showed a profit against the vulnerable game making at the other table.

Problem 2.

Neither vulnerable, IMP scoring
You are South holding:

♠J1053 ♥QJ763 ♦J4 ♣108

South	West	North	East
		Pass	Pass
?			

Meyers: Pass. I'm not bidding 2♥ (suit too bad) and not psyching 1NT.

J.S.: Perhaps you didn't consider all the possibilities. How about a martini-inspired 1♥ opening?

Roeder: Pass. I love opening light in third seat but there are two strikes against a 1♥ opener. If it goes 1NT on your left, double by pard, you have no economical second suit to bid. Also, light openers should strongly suggest a lead. A 2♥ opener should be reserved for last-chance desperados.

Stakgold: Pass. If one regularly psyches on very weak hands in third seat, the opponents should be pre-alerted.

Ivaska: Pass. I feel that 1♥ or 2♥ won't inconvenience the opponents greatly, while simultaneously courting disaster. If someone were to point a gun at some vital organ and advise me that I may not pass, I would try 1NT because most modern defenses to 1NT are not designed to extract penalties and my body is sensitive to gun-

trumps, they will break 2-2.)

Here's another hand from Eddie Kantar's book entitled "Take All Your Chances at Bridge 2," expressly slanted for all intermediate and Novice players. If you don't own this book (and its older brother), I won't accept your claim that you are trying to advance your knowledge of cardplay technique. And I'm pretty sure both are still available through Amazon or kantar-bridge.com.

But don't those of you who are beyond the I/N level skip this lesson. I expect you to succeed, but I think you will admit that it's easy to miss in the heat of battle at the table.

As always, take your time, plan ahead, and count your tricks. Then turn to page 14 to see if you have grasped the point of this layout.

shot wounds. That might work if partner is weak and unable to take part in the auction, but I regard that possibility as quite unlikely given my weakness and East's original pass.

J.S.: With partner a passed hand and you holding three jacks and a queen, it is quite likely the opponents are on for 3NT. If you bid the opponents have fewer options in the auction; their bidding will be hampered to some extent. The downside is that if you bid partner may enter the auction even without the threat of violence.

Lawrence: Pass. I don't mind the heart suit for a weak two bid but I have four spades and the wrong kind of side values. I would prefer ♥QJ10xx and out to this hand. This vulnerability isn't as appealing as not vs vul. Down four, doubled, may be a disaster with no one vulnerable.

Rosen: Pass. I leave it to others to bid 1♥ or 2♥. I vote for an anti-jackpot pass.

Levin: I admire a 2♥ bid but only white against red would I consider doing it ... so I pass.

Lee: 2♥. I think my random junk and major suit length makes an all-out psyche unattractive, so I will just make some noise.

J.S.: Three of the four South players who had the opportunity to disrupt the auction in third seat did so. Two tried 1♥, overcalled 2♣ by West, and eventually found themselves down three (not doubled) in 3♥. This would usually have been a good result, because the opponents have nine winners in notrump. However, spades were blocked and a heart lead disrupts communication - they can only cash eight of their nine winners. Another West tried 2♥. It was interesting that at that table West overcalled 2NT while neither 1♥ opening was overcalled with 1NT.

The South who did not open found himself on opening lead against 3NT. He assumed it would be futile to try to establish his entry-less heart suit so tried to find partner's suit with the diamond jack opening lead. He would have been more successful had he made a heart noise.

These first two deals highlight a fear that many of us have of bearing the responsibility for generating large minus numbers by taking a risky action. Stolidity can cut both ways, as these deals illustrate. Of course, if you bid like your counterparts, you will not see the gains or the losses; accordingly experience will not be a teacher.

Problem 3.

Both vulnerable, IMP scoring
You are South holding:

♠KJ ♥2 ♦AJ862 ♣AQJ92

South	West	North	East
		1♣	2♣*
?			

*Majors

Rosen: 2♥, limit or better in clubs.

Ivaska: 2♥. This depends on the methods you're playing. At present, in this situation I play that 2♦ is natural and non-forcing, 2♥ shows a limit raise or better in clubs, and 2♠ is forcing in diamonds. Other partnerships may well play a variation of this, but the important thing is to have some firm understanding about this situation, which, after all, comes up fairly frequently. I want partner to immediately think in terms of a big club fit. I do have a wonderful hand, but I'm not strong enough to insist on a club slam, particularly against bad breaks, which seem likely in view of East's bid, so I need some cooperation from North. Over 2NT or a (non-forcing) 3♣ I plan to bid 3♦. It would be nice if 3♥ instead showed shortness, but that treatment is not general.

Stakgold: Double. I start with a double and will bid aggressively at my next turn. Chances for 6♣ are good facing many minimum openers by partner. I hope to find out more as the auction proceeds.

J.S.: This looks like a "telling" hand rather than an "asking" hand to me, thus I like:

Lawrence: 3♥. A splinter. Will keep bidding over 3NT. It's nice to have this bid available. It conveys many important mes-

sages that can't be shown with a slower approach.

Meyers: 3♥, a splinter in my book.

Roeder: 3♥. Set those sails slam-ward!
Lee: 3♥, club raise with heart shortness - not sure what the alternative is.

Levin: 3♥. Hoping partner thinks I have shortness instead of seven of them.

J.S.: Only one of six World Series pairs reached 6♦. North holding: ♠1075 ♥A653 ♦KQ10 ♣K83. Fantoni began with 1♣, Hampson bid 2♦, and Nunes did bid 3♥. But his 3♥ was not a splinter; it showed clubs and Nunes passed partner's 3NT rebid. The Dutch pair of Drijver-Brink did well to bid slam after a 1♥ opening on the less than robust four-card major.

Problem 4.

Neither vulnerable, IMP scoring
You are South holding:

♠842 ♥KJ9532 ♦A85 ♣2

South	West	North	East
			INT*
2♦**	Dbl***	Rdbl****	3♣
?			

*14-16
**either spades or hearts
***diamond defense
****bid your major - partner's redouble requests you to bid your suit at the two-level. Does your hand warrant bidding it at the three-level?

Meyers: 3♥. Partner asked me to bid my major; I am not ashamed of my 2♦ bid.

Stakgold: 3♥. I assume the redouble shows tolerance for both majors. Although I am relatively weak for my 2♦ bid, the high cards are well placed and I have a singleton club. The auction has improved my hand.

Roeder: 3♥. Pard's wish is my command. While my holding is quite minimum, successfully competing in a part score scenario could net 5 or 6 IMPs, not to mention the possibility of talking the opponents out of a skinny, making game. Even if seven tricks happen to be the limit in hearts, the opponents will often not be in a position to make an IMP double.

Lawrence: Pass. This isn't that good a hand. My ♠xxx isn't ideal since North seems to have something in spades. Is North's redouble defined as cards? What would other bids mean such as Pass or 2♥ or 3♥? I think you owe us some more stars.

J.S.: Sorry, ten stars on one hand is all the editor allows.

Lee: Pass. Doing anything else seems like a huge overbid. To me, partner's redouble wasn't encouraging, he just didn't want to play 2♦ doubled.

J.S.: The last two comments raise the question as to whether or not a pass implies that you hold a diamond suit. I vote no. West has shown diamonds, East holds at least two; the likelihood that you hold a playable suit under such conditions is remote. If you do, too bad, you don't get to show it by passing. It is much more valuable to be able to announce competitive values with a redouble.

Ivaska: Pass. I don't think that I have enough in reserve to bid again; my suit lacks intermediates, and partner may well have good defense against clubs. Not only that, but, if I pass, North may have the presence of mind to bid 3♥, asking me to pass or correct, and the hand figures to play better, probably much better, from his side.

J.S.: The corollary to using a redouble as encouraging and pass as non-committal is that both 2♥ and 2♠ would show an independent suit; an offer to play. But Paul makes a good point - it would be better to play hearts from partner's side. This could easily be accomplished by using transfers by the 2♣ bidder: 3♦ would show hearts; 3♥ would show spades. If East had bid diamonds, South could double to show hearts. There are zero hands on which one would want to make a penalty double. The transfer principle should also be used if West bid a suit rather than doubling, and North (See Solvers on page 14)

Hand of the Month

By Joel Hoersch
Editor, D22 Forum

♠ K102
♥ A63
♦ AK10
♣ QJ76

♠ ??	♠ ??
♥ ??	♥ ??
♦ ??	♦ ??
♣ 10?	♣ ??

♠ AQJ985
♥ 542
♦ J43
♣ 8

Contract: 4♠ with no opposing bidding. Opening lead: ♣10, covered by the jack and king. Plan the play after East shifts to the ♥Q. (When you play