



Master Solvers Panel



By John Swanson
Lancaster, California

The problems this month are taken from the finals of the recent Bermuda Bowl. Sweden played against a team from Poland which had to replace one of their pairs after they were denied credentials by the World Bridge Federation. Our panel features regulars: Bart Bramley, Roger Lee, Fred Hamilton, Jill Meyers, Rick Roeder, Bill Rosen, and Ivar Stakgold. And a hearty welcome to newcomer Alan Mould of Manchester, England. Alan has won a number of national titles in Great Britain and has represented his country in international play. He has been a coach or captain of the England women's team for the better part of the past 15 years. He is currently the conductor of "Marks and Comments," the bidding competition in Bridge, the UK equivalent of the Bridge World magazine. Alan also reports that he played bridge at the same school attended by William Shakespeare, but did not make it clear if he actually partnered him or not. It will be interesting to read opinions from the other side of the Atlantic.

Problem 1.

Both sides vulnerable, IMP scoring, You are South holding:

♠7 ♥K98763 ♦J1096 ♣KQ

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

*Three hearts
**Weak raise

Meyers: 3♥. Shows at least five hearts and some values. I don't have enough to jump to 4♥.

J.S.: That is way too conservative with such a fine offensive hand given that partner has a heart fit.

Roeder: 4♥. Since you can make opposite so many minimums, this is a reasonable value bid with your fitting club honors. The only big downside is when you talk the opponents into a profitable 4♠ save (or make). Thus, 95% credit to a "walk the dog" 3♥.

Bramley: 4♥ – What else? Most balanced minimums offer decent play. Sure, I won't enjoy 4♠ passed back to me (I'll double and pray), but I don't see anything else I can do to help. Besides, the direct blast has worked best for me.

J.S.: I like anything else, anything which will, at least in part, describe the nature of your hand and enlist partner's cooperation in the coming decision.

Lee: 4♥, might make, might push them to save.

Mould: 4♥. Yes, yes, I know that leaves me in a quandary when they bid 4♠, but (a) they haven't bid it yet and often don't (they are vul after all) and (b) the more room I give them to play about with, the more likely they are to actually decide to bid 4♠. So I bid 4♥ and worry about 4♠ later. As for a slam, I need a huge hand from partner for that. I have to stay out of game you say? *Naw!*

Stakgold: 4♥, which should have a good play even when facing a near minimum opener. If West bids 4♠ and pard doubles, I will pass, but if pard passes, I will have to guess.

J.S.: Exactly right, the reason that I like 3♠ now. Partner will double a 4♠ bid by West if he has values in spades and will pass otherwise. After expressing this opinion to Roger, he sent this rejoinder:

Lee (continued): I could try 3♠ expecting LHO to bid 4♠. If partner doubles or passes, we break even because I am going to double. The gain is when partner can bid to the five level himself, which I think is very unlikely (although possible), and even if he wants to do this, he is likely to do it anyway over the auction 4♥ - 4♠. I'm with you if partner had shown a four-card raise or if he had opened diamonds.

J.S.: I'm unconvinced. There is no way partner bids 5♥ over 4♠ if you do not ask for cooperation, and his pass will not be a vote to continue on.

Rosen: 4♥. Woodenly, I raise to game and will, hopefully, figure out what to do over the expected 4♠ call.

O'Hara: 4♥. "I'll think about 4♠ tomorrow."

Hamilton: 3♦. We have to do something stronger than 3♥ and the possibilities are 4♥ (what we think we can make), 3♦ (help suit try) and 3♣ (fit). The problem is of course what to do over 4♠ by LHO, and how best to help partner with that decision. If the opponents were barred we would just bid 4♥ (Wolff game try). I am a bit uncomfortable with both 3♣ (no length there) and 3♦ (I sure don't want the lead,) but at least 3♦ will help with pard's decision if West bids 4♠, so that is my bid.

J.S.: Nystrom, holding: ♠843 ♥AQ2 ♦A43 ♣A754, solved the problem as North for his team by opening 1NT. South transferred with 4♦ and Gawrys for Poland elected to pass holding: ♠AKQ1065 ♥J104 ♦K87 ♠10. (I believe it is winning bridge to venture 4♠.) At the other table, after a multi-way Polish 1♣ (usually a balanced minimum hand), our problem auction took place. South bid 4♥, West the expected 4♠, followed by three passes. The Polish North failed to cash the setting trick at the critical moment, and Sweden scored up a double game swing.

Problem 2.

Neither side vulnerable, IMP scoring, You are South holding:

♠-- ♥AJ986 ♦1076 ♣AK1095

East	South	West	North
?			2♠

Roeder: Double. Don't think I am quite good enough to Michaels. If Pard sits it out, I have three potential defensive tricks. 3♥ is out; it would be embarrassing to struggle there when 6♣ is on ice.

Rosen: Double, the most flexible bid. Sometimes partner even says pass with a spade stack.

Meyers: Double, but 3♥ is a very close second choice.

Hamilton: 4♣. I do not play this forcing and it is an overbid even then, but it is the best one can do with what we have been dealt. Getting well placed in the auction is a cardinal rule of mine and I will stick to my guns!

Bramley: 4♣, hearts and clubs. Not forcing as I play, thus acceptable. A slight overbid to show my two main suits. Urgency is a good idea with LHO poised to jack up the level himself. Too bad if we're supposed to be in diamonds; I can't do everything.

Lee: 4♣, hearts and clubs. I just think that if it's close at all, you should get your suits in immediately. With Bob (Hamman) I play Leaping Michaels non-forcing although I prefer forcing, which is how I play with other partners. To me, thinking about the strength of the action is secondary to just imagining the kinds of problems it can solve or avoid, although I do not consider the actual hand to be under-strength. I would be quite happy to hear my partner jump to slam.

Stakgold: 3♠. Tough decision: overcall 3♥ or bid a Michaels 3♠ (heart and a minor). I choose the more aggressive bid in hope of finding the best fit. Unfortunately this means we can't play 3NT as pard's 3NT would ask for my minor.

J.S.: The classical Michaels cue bid in this situation has given way to 'Leaping Michaels' in many partnerships, to allow a direct cue to ask for a stopper. When you invoke Leaping Michaels you have bypassed 3NT, but that is more than offset by immediately identifying which mi-

nor you hold.

Mould: 3♥. Okay, presumably this is here to test the lower limits of our Leaping Michaels. Well, you have found mine! This is not a 4♣ bid for me though I accept it could work spectacularly well. That leaves double and 3♥. The fifth heart is just too important to leave on the shelf, though double all pass might work well ☺, so 3♥ it is for me. My good heart pips (J98) give me some protection, though if I am doubled at the speed of light I may try 4♣.

J.S.: Our first smiley face! I am with Alan on this one, but without conviction. There is such an advantage of getting both suits in immediately that it may well be better to overlook a missing honor or two and try 4♣. In the Bermuda Bowl, Nystrom had a similar problem after a 2♦ multi opening, where opener's suit could be either major. He jumped to 4♣ (showing clubs and a major) and his side arrived it an excellent 6♥ contract. At the other table, Mazurkiewicz for Poland overcalled 2♦ with 2♥. His partner, holding: ♠9754 ♥KQ10 ♦AK432 ♣Q, simply raised to 4♥ rather than cue bidding, which would have allowed for the possibility of better things, resulting in another +11 IMP gain for Sweden.

(See Solvers on page 10)

Ivaska on Bridge



By Paul Ivaska
Las Vegas, Nevada

Defenders Rarely Solve Your Play Problems that a Declarer Advertises

North
♠854
♥A4
♦K75
♣K10864

West
♠J97
♥QJ1083
♦J3
♣A92

East
♠Q10
♥K9652
♦Q104
♣Q53

South
♠AK632
♥7
♦A9862
♣J7

North	East	South	West
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening Lead: ♥Q

This hand was played in a duplicate tournament and illustrates an important principle of declarer play. The final contract of 4♠ was played at all 13 tables in the section. Obviously, the contract depended on declarer's play in clubs. Eleven declarers sooner or later played the ♣J, hoping against hope that left hand opponent would tip off the position. Unfortunately for these Souths, their opponents played low smoothly, preserving the crucial guess.

For the record, five declarers made the winning play of rising with the ♣K. Only two South players found the

best approach. After winning dummy's ♥A they crossed to the trump ace and played the ♣7, concealing the fact that there was a club problem, and that they started with only one heart. Both Wests succumbed to the pressure, rising with the ♣A, since they feared a singleton in South, especially since declarer had bid two suits, and later jumped to game in spades.

The general principle mentioned above is that declarer should conceal his problems from the defenders as much as possible. If he is skillful, many such problems will be gratuitously resolved by unsuspecting opposition.

Smashing down the ♣J may be dramatic, but serves only to illuminate the situation. It's also rather naive, since most defenders soon learn to play small in tempo unless they hold both missing club honors.

Incidentally, the two players who led the ♣7 intended to finesse table's ♠10 if West had followed small easily, since it would then be reasonable to assume that he didn't have the ace. Really, it's just another example of the benefits of looking at the situation from an opponent's point of view.

Here's another example: suppose you're playing 4♥.

Dummy
♥Q72

Declarer
♥109853

Don't lead the ♥10 in a clumsy effort to tempt a cover. Just play the ♥3 quietly, and hide the fact that you're missing the ♥J. Maybe your left hand opponent will go up with an honor (♥AKx or ♥AKxx), and will do the same when you later push the ♥5 toward dummy.