



Master Solvers Panel

EOK: 4NT. As there is no room for *South* to hold a good hand there is no need to separate strengths via 4NT and a pass-or-correct 5♣, so in this case I believe 5♣ or 5♦ should be natural. Fancy actions that involve bidding or showing hearts are not on my radar. Nor is a gentle 4♣.

Rosen: Pass. Easy to say 4NT, show your minor but I doubt that with partner holding long hearts that we can make a game. Minus 500 or more seems more likely and if partner has heart strength, and leads the suit, we could get a plus. Call me cowardly, but I pass.

J.S.: *Instead of "cowardly," how about settling for "excessively conservative?" You could at least venture 4♣ (pass or correct) to indicate offensive values. Partner would then be afforded the option of bidding to the five-level.*

Stakgold: Double. This asks for partner's minor. With different vulnerability, I might bid 4NT, but there is a chance of going down two. And we might beat 4♣ if pard leads a heart and I get two ruffs, a minor suit A and a natural heart trick.

J.S.: *It's easy to see that with partner holding, say: ♠xx ♥AKxxx ♦x ♣Axxxx, you might be setting a 4♣ contract while your side is off -500 in 5♣. And maybe a double should suggest short hearts, even a void, with offensive prospects in at least one minor. Even so, the combination of preempting the auction with a reasonable shot at a vulnerable game – and also of pushing the opponents up one level, makes a more aggressive bid appealing.*

Mould: 5♣. We have quite a fit – it is incumbent on me to bid game. I have a real hankering to bid 4♥ to get the lead and then bid a minor to play. However, some days it may get passed out. If it doesn't, when I bid 5♣ over 4♣ partner may get the notion to return to 5♥. I wonder if I should walk the dog here with 4♣ to deter the opponents from saving against our five of a minor? The problem is that partner will then double 5♣ if they bid it, and that might be a problem for us. I think 5♣/5♦ are both pass/correct and 4NT is bid your minor, but promises values (which I don't have). To heck with it; I will play it straight and bid 5♣. I don't see how I can ever get a double in as a Lightner and even so would it ask for a ♥ lead? If they bid 5♣ and partner doubles, I have to pass but it wouldn't surprise me if it was cold. Great problem (that is code for "I have no idea what the right bid is").

Weiss: 4NT. I cannot be certain who owns the deal, though my dearth of high cards suggests it is not us. So I am going to mix it up. If partner happens to have a (very) good hand, I trust (hope) that he can divine not to bid a slam from my failure to cuebid 4♣. While the five-level might be excessive for us, I am willing to take that risk in return for the possibility that the opponents will buy the deal at too high a level. Another virtue of my call is that it might take away their Blackwood; they ought to have discussed the situation so that double serves as a surrogate. They will also have to have discussed responses over partner's five of a minor. I am going to double if they do bid slam, wishing for a heart lead and that my vulnerable partner will have another winner.

Roeder: 4NT. Only issue is if pard doubles 5♣ with my defensive cheeseball. Gulp! I will sit and hope for both a heart lead and an understanding partner.

Ivaska: 4NT. Given the vulnerability, I expect to have some sort of play for game in partner's minor. 4NT gets the hand off my chest quickly, usually an advantage, and it avoids the potential embarrassment of an opening lead through *North's* guarded ♠K (though this will happen only rarely). I must admit that I don't see the advantage of bidding dia-

monds now and clubs later, to say nothing of the ambiguity of a 4♦ call, which partner may regard as showing good diamonds, especially since I'm an unpassed hand. I wish I could suggest a heart lead against a high spade contract, but I don't see any way of accomplishing that.

Bramley: 4NT. Push them up while the pushing is good. Might make or might be a phantom, but opponents will have a hard time judging to double when one or both of them are short in our suit. Partner will be well placed knowing that I have both minors.

J.S.: *I didn't overwork the panel by asking if, after East-West take the push to 5♣ over 5♦, South should double, trying to indicate a heart lead. Would you? North held: ♠A ♥Q10854 ♦AK1064 ♣96, so, with diamonds 1-1, a heart lead defeats 5♠ a couple. At the table where our auction occurred, the bidding continued:*

South	West	North	East
	1♠	2♠	3NT
5♣	Dbl	5♦	Pass
Pass	5♠	Pass	Pass
6♦!			

South, for the Diamond team, instead of doubling (or passing), surprisingly took the push to 6♦. At the other table the artificial raise by East was 2NT, not 3NT, and South, again surprisingly to me, contented himself with a 3♣ bid and surrendered to 4♠. Was that cowardly or just excessively conservative? Partner did not find a heart lead. Both sides had missed a big chance.

Here are a few of my opinions: (1) Although five of a minor could be defined as showing an independent suit, it would be foolhardy to assume partner would think so without prior discussion. (2) With a view to greater preemption, South should bid 5♣ rather than 4NT. (No one knows how to ask for keycards after 5♣. Also, it would be possible to define 4NT as showing better defense than 5♣. But it would also be possible to define 5♣ as pass or correct, but preferring a club lead. There is always a new sequence to discuss with partner.) (3) If the opponents take the push to 5♠ it is worthwhile to risk a double (which should imply short hearts).

Problem 3.

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

♠A632 ♥AKJ103 ♦AQ72 ♣--

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
?			

Mould: 2♠. This is a hand for extracting as much information as possible out of partner, so I will start as low as possible. There are hands where we struggle in game and hands that will make a grand slam, and hands where we are currently in the wrong trump suit (♠xx ♥Qxx ♦Kxxxx ♣xx is a laydown 7♦ for example) so I need all the room I can get. I suspect I will get 3♥ and then I will need to decide what to do next.

EOK: 2♠. Diamonds next. A 4♣ splinter is best reserved for one-suiters so partner can identify the target trump suit. In real life I would bid 3♣ (short suit game try or better) and wait for *North* to name one of my side suits voluntarily. Without shortness I would bid 2M+1 (2♠ here) to request an opinion about the cheapest strain in which *North* would reject a help-suit trial bid.

Rosen: 2♠. My immediate impulse is to bid 6♥, but club values in partner's hand should sink a slam. Over a 3♥ response I would continue with a diamond call and let pard evaluate his holdings.

Stakgold: 4♣. Heart slam is a distinct possibility, so I bid a splinter 4♣. If partner makes any bid other than 4♥, I bid 6♥.

Roeder: 4♣. Easy for Ed Davis and his well-constructed, nine-step follow ups to a simple raise. If memory serves, the seventh step is a slam try with a club void. So, I would bid 3NT if I were playing with Ed or one of his acolytes. For non-Davisites, I think splinters make more sense than fit bids here. Bidding corollary: It is so much better to open heavy one-bids, with good follow ups, than to open marginal 2♣ openers.

Meyers: 4♣. I might as well let partner know my shortness. This is a strong splinter, so if partner has the ♠K, ♥Q, and ♦K, I expect some noise.

Ivaska: 3♦. This is a powerful hand with a moderate fit with partner, but we're still a long way from slam, so we shouldn't get too carried away. My plan is to settle for game unless *North* bids 3♠ (showing spade values plus an excellent diamond fit) over my (putative) 3♦ game try, even if partner jumps to 4♥, since I can't promise safety at the five-level. Of course, I'm bidding diamonds before spades because the ♦K would be more valuable than the ♠K. Even if *North* has a good hand, she/he usually will have some wasted club cards, and we have only an eight-card fit. I don't expect to see this bid cited in a bridge equivalent of "Profiles in Courage."

J.S.: *At least you don't get tagged with "excessively conservative."*

Weiss: 3♦. We could easily have a slam in a suit other than hearts, and diamonds is the suit most likely to yield the magic (♠xx ♥Qxx ♦Kxxx ♣Qxxx, is enough for 6♦). If partner bids only 3♥, I will try 3♠ next. The alternative is a self-splinter (4♣). The downside of that choice is that we might get locked into hearts because partner's positive bids will show controls rather than length.

Bramley: 3♦. Six diamonds is the best chance for slam, so that's where I make my try. If partner can't raise diamonds I'll give up on slam. Partner should be tuned in to this possibility and not just woodenly bid game with a big diamond fit. A splinter would let partner know how well his cards are working, but several good cards may not be enough to cover my slow side losers in a heart slam.

J.S.: *The collective responses are an eye-opener to me. I have always used a jump in a lower new suit after a single raise as a strong five-five hand, with slam possibilities if partner has a four-card fit in either suit. For me, a self-splinter implies that slam interest is in the opened (or raised suit). Thus the following bids are controls, not length. But whatever your methods, there is an advantage of letting partner know immediately that you are interested in slam. The slower 2♣ and 3♦ bids here will usually be looking for extra high-cards or a fit sufficient to bid game. Partner will rebid on that basis. I prefer 3♦, even though it keeps partner in the dark regarding your intentions for a round, for the reasons expressed above by the 3♦ bidders. Partner held: ♠Q87 ♥Q96 ♦K9843 ♣62. Greco and Hampson bid easily to 6♦ using their Precision system. Fleisher-Martel languished in game after: 1♥ - 2♥; 2♠ - 3♥; 4♥. You can decide for yourself if your partnership would get to the diamond slam.*

Problem 4.

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

♠8 ♥2 ♦AKQ98532 ♣AQ3

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
?			

EOK: My Brazilian friends could bid 1♦-1♥; 3♦, forcing, and some Italian-

influenced experts could force with a 2♣ rebid, but we don't have that luxury. Although 3♣ is perfectly understandable with a three-loser hand, at the table I'd have rebid 2♣, non-forcing, because it could be important to keep 3NT in the picture as well as 5♦ or 6♦. I do not expect 2♣ to get passed out although it is possible. You can fill in the blanks about getting past this bid being the key to the city.

Rosen: 3♠. I must be trying for 3NT without a spade stopper.

J.S.: *The downside of 3♠ is that it doesn't get the slam potential across to partner.*

Bramley: 5♦, which clarifies that my jump shift was based on long solid diamonds along with something in clubs. Partner will properly value major-suit aces, the ♠K and any stray minor-suit stuff. That looks like the best I can do. In contrast, 4♦ doesn't get the whole picture across and makes later calls (4♥, 4NT) ambiguous. I'm allergic to fake jump shifts, though I see the merit here. I usually open 2♣ to avoid them and might well have done so on this hand.

Weiss: 5♦. Maybe this will convince partner that diamonds are trumps. I cannot invoke Blackwood here, because partner will count the ♥K as an ace. My sequence ought to tell him which of his honors are going to contribute to our possible slam. I would have opened 2♣, planning to follow with 3♦. Nine plus tricks and two aces justifies 2♣ in my book.

Roeder: 5♦. If pard is looking at both major suit aces and passes 5♦ after my jump shift, he may be a candidate for a testosterone infusion! Sure, this makes life tough for us if pard has a perfect for a grand, but truthfully, I am not 100% sure that 4♦ is 100% forcing to the five-level.

J.S.: *It's news to me that a jump shift is only forcing to four of a minor.*

Ivaska: 5♦. I think I'm showing solid diamonds and a stiff spade (since I'm excluding 3NT). I hope partner will bid six with two of the three key cards (the two major suit aces and the ♠K) that I'm missing. I think that my previous auction was excellent. (I'm not sure that I can vouch for *North's* bids.)

Stakgold: 5♦. Since the opponents did not bid spades, partner probably has a decent hand and I can't afford to bid less than 5♦. With two aces pard will bid a slam, which might be cold or at worst on a finesse. With one ace and the ♠K, pard should bid 6♦, which would be cold. I think my early bids as *South* would be the same as presented in the *Forum* question.

Meyers: 4♦. I don't love the strong jump shift, but I don't mind it.

Mould: 4♦. Close between this and 5♦ (I do not see any other calls that make sense) and a good case can be made for either. I prefer 4♦ if for no other reason it may occasionally allow a 4NT bid from partner (RKCB for diamonds in my view). If partner bids 4♥ I'll bid 5♦. If I had to play 4♥ opposite: ♠xxx ♥KQJ10xxx ♦x ♣xx, partner should have bid 4♥ over 3♦! I cannot see any other start to this hand other than 1♦ and then 3♣, but fifty years ago this hand used to be in Acol text books as an example of a two-opener!

J.S.: *Partner held: ♠7543 ♥AK9543 ♦64 ♣2. With three tricks for opener, North should raise 5♦ to slam. After 4♦ the auction is not as clear. In the trials both South players started with a forcing 1♣. Platnick-Diamond bid: 1♣ - 1♥; 2♦ - 2♠; 4♦ - 4NT (heart control); 5♣ -*
(Continued on page 10)