



Master Solvers Panel

where 1♣ is natural or any balanced pattern with either 11-13 or 17-19 HCP, 1♥ is four-plus spades, 1NT is 17-19 balanced and two or three spades, 2♦ is four or more hearts (in addition to five-plus spades).

J.S.: *It would not be a surprise to me if such a treatment became common in a few years for tournament players (who don't use a forcing club system). A couple of Reisinger pairs demonstrated other conventions which allowed them to stop at two of a major. One North opened 2♣, another opened 2♦, both showing a balanced 18-19 (♠QJ ♥Q763 ♦A97 ♣AKQ7). Their partners transferred with 2♥, resulting in a comfortable 2♣ contract. At double-dummy a three-level major suit contract is two tricks better than 2NT, but the defense usually erred against spade and heart contracts, making them three tricks better.*

Problem 2.

East-West vulnerable, B-A-M scoring
You are South holding:

♠1096532 ♥K64 ♦8 ♣543

South West North East
1♦

?

Berkowitz: Maybe if I were younger, or partner was a passed hand, I would try 2♣. Preempting on this type of hand either gets me an unfortunate lead, or a declarer who plays like he has the hand records.

Lee: Pass. Preempting here has a fairly likely downside of getting an unwanted spade lead if LHO ends up declaring, which to me outweighs the upside of landing in spades when it's right.

Weiss: Pass. It is tempting to bid 2♣, particularly at the vulnerability, and I would do so at IMP scoring. There is a hope that partner will be able to boost the preempt to a high level. In the Board-A-Match setting, my judgment is that my poor suit limits the potential for success of that maneuver. Too often, the bad guys will be crowded into a successful notrump contract that they might not have chosen if unimpeded. And of course, there is some chance that I will get killed in 2♣.

Davis: Pass. The alternative of bidding 2♣ is too likely to lead to a bad result for our side. If I bid 2♣ and partner cannot effectively further the preempt, I have not done sufficient damage to their auction to justify getting partner off to a probably unsuccessful spade lead and also helping them out in the play. A spade lead from ♣Kx or ♠Qx will not only cost a trick but will cost a tempo (picture partner with a natural heart lead). Another drawback is that if partner has a good hand with a spade fit or spade tolerance he is likely to voluntarily bid too much in spades. 2♣ would be more worthwhile if partner was a passed hand since they would then have a game although even then getting partner off to the wrong lead at this form of scoring is a good way to lose the board.

Tritt: Pass. Bad hand, bad suit, bad as a lead director, and the only value (given currently available evidence) is a defensive value. If I were to trade my ♥K for a small or middle spade spot, I would try 2♣.

Abdou: Pass. Both 2♣ and 3♣ are too rich for me and I don't want spades led. Say they get to 3NT and pard leads a spade from ♠Ax or ♣Kx instead of a heart

from ♥Q10xxx! Just because I am favorable I don't have to be crazy.

Gumperz: 2♣. One of the most desirable positions for preemption is after a minor opening, far more desirable than after a major (when the opponents have often already found their major suit fit). For the opponents to profitably defend they must not only be able to double you for penalties, not so easy in these days of negative doubles, they must also be able to set you four tricks should they have a game. Unfortunately, you are not always dealt the perfect hand for preemption, so you must make do, especially when white versus red.

Stansby: 2♣. My regular partners won't be surprised.

J.S.: *I'm surprised – that such a high percentage of the panel was willing to shove their spade suit back in the board and give East-West a free rein in the auction. I prefer 1♣, 2♣ or 3♣ to a pass. Yes, there is a risk that a declarer may be able to better judge the play if you bid; there always is. I'm not so worried about getting partner off to a bad lead. A spade preempt in this situation does not promise a hefty suit. Perhaps I have not sufficiently considered the board-a-match dictum that you shouldn't risk losing a board that your teammates might have already won. The best policy in these situations is to stick with what works for you. If the opponents are clever enough to nail you every time you stick your neck out or your partner is apt to judge the situation incorrectly because you bid – stay quiet. Four international champions had the 'bid, no-bid' decision in the Reisinger. After a forcing 1♣, Eric Greco bid 1♣, his counterpoint, Piotr Gawrys passed. After a natural 1♦, Tor Helness passed, Alejandro Bianchedi bid 3♣. The passers defended a cold 7♦; the bidders collected +100 against 7NT which had little play. And 7♣ would have been a good save against 7♦ (partner held: ♠Q874 ♥107532 ♦4 ♣K107).*

Problem 3.

Neither side vulnerable, B-A-M scoring
You are South holding:

♠Q932 ♥Q83 ♦KJ10 ♣875

South West North East

1♥* Dbl 2♣** 3♦

?

*4+ spades

**4 spades, minimum range

Abdou: Pass, sounding like a broken record, but I still have a pard. He may compete or reopen with a double which I would pass (if he has a suitable hand in context of his limited 2♣ bid). Bidding is anti "law." Double is close, especially at B-A-M, but I need the ♥K instead of the queen to double.

Stansby: Pass. More defense than offense but not enough to double.

Gumperz: Pass. I think this a close decision at B-A-M. Double is for a one-trick set so in theory, if 3♦ will fail more than 50% of the time, you should double. I am guessing the contract is right around 50%, making double a break-even proposition.

Davis: Double. I hate it because they might make it which could kill a good result by my teammates but it seems like the best B-A-M bid since I expect we have a better than 50% chance to beat

it as I am a favorite to have two trump tricks and my two queens may help on defense. I also want to discourage partner from bidding 3♣ as I do not expect to make it. I may regret this if I chase them to 3♥.

Tritt: Double. If they play 3♦, I am betting that we can beat them. If they run to 3♥, I am betting that my action will help partner more in the auction and/or the defense than it will help declarer in the play.

Lee: Double. It may be wrong, but this might be necessary if 3♦ is down one at the other table, and it may also save partner from a nasty decision about whether to bid on, which is always tempting at this vul and form of scoring.

Berkowitz: Double. Must stop partner from turning +50 to -50 at this form of scoring. As 3♥ would be a game try, this double means business.

Weiss: Double. I would not dare to do this at IMP scoring. Here, I have two almost sure trump tricks using high cards that will not be useful if I pass and partner takes the push, as he often will with diamond shortness. Incidentally, I think partner's 2♣ call shows a hand at the mid-to-upper end of the minimum range, as with a dead minimum he can bid 1♣ even when holding four trumps. I will not be shocked if this double backfires, but I deem it a percentage action. East doesn't have to have full values; perhaps he just doesn't want to let us play a happy 2♣ contract. Maybe I ought to double at IMPs too.

J.S.: *At seven of the eight tables for which I have results the auction was some variant of the sequence in our problem. Six of the seven South players did not double 3♦. At two of those tables North competed to 3♣, which was doubled and set a trick; 3♦ is also off one. While acknowledging there is risk involved, to me the double of 3♦ seems clear cut for the reasons given by our panel.*

Problem 4.

Both sides vulnerable, B-A-M scoring
You are South holding:

♠QJ5 ♥53 ♦A106 ♣AK983

South West North East

Pass 1♦*

?

*2+ diamonds, 11-15 HCP

Abdou: Pass. A vulnerable 1NT overcall requires more guts (polite term) than I have. Not vul I would bid it. It is easy for them to double trying for the magical +200, or pard may get aggressive with the right seven-count. I think in general the best strategy is to strive to bid over the Precision nebulous diamond; however, my club holding indicates that the opening bid will be 1♦ at the other table as well. Therefore I don't think we will be blown out of the water if I pass with this hand.

Weiss: Pass. My hand is fine for defense and not particularly good for offense. The prospects for a 2♣ overcall, the only alternative I would consider, are poor with a weak suit and a passed partner. Both sides vulnerable is the least appealing setting for dubious entry.

Berkowitz: 2♣. Hamman-Wolff lived for years with overcalls like this. I rate pass well above the youthful 1NT overcall. Yes, I see the seductive ♦10. Oppo-

site an unpassed partner 1NT would be more attractive, but still not my taste.

Davis: 1NT. This is the worst vulnerability for bidding but my hand is very likely to be the best hand at the table and I think 1NT is the best description of my hand (the ♦10 is very seductive). LHO will be a little more reluctant than usual to double my 1NT overcall given that his partner's opening bid standards are less than those of standard bidders and he also knows less than usual about opener's hand.

Stansby: 1NT. This is the best description of the hand and I would bid the same at IMPs.

Gumperz: 1NT, which is a better description of my hand type than 2♣.

Lee: 1NT, not everyone's choice at this dangerous vulnerability, but I am wary about bidding 2♣ over a Precision 1♦ in general, and passing is too meek for me (but could work).

Tritt: 1NT. Aggressive, but I think this hand is worth more than its point count, due to the spot cards, controls, source of tricks and spade fragment. Also, it takes away the one-level from the opponents before they can exchange information and facilitates reaching spades when partner can transfer or bid. If I pass, I don't think I will be any better placed when the auction gets back to me, and bidding 2♣ seems more dangerous and less flexible than bidding 1NT.

J.S.: *The at-the-table scorecard shows two passes, two 2♣ overcalls and two 1NT overcalls. The notrump overcall was unlucky because partner held ♥Kxxxx and the ♣J with hearts splitting five-one. There are good arguments for the various calls but I suspect the scale should be tipped in favor of pass because partner is a passed hand.*

Problem 5.

Both sides vulnerable, B-A-M scoring
You are South holding:

♠987 ♥93 ♦KQ6 ♣KQ842

South West North East

Pass Pass 1♦* Pass

?

*4+ diamonds

Gumperz: 1NT. Ugh. We have to choose between: 1♣ on three little, 1NT wrong-siding the NT, 2♣ on a flattish ten-count, and 2♦ on three-card support. This problem illustrates the weakness of the 1♦ opening and why opener should strive to open 1♣, not 1♦, with four-four in the minors. After a 1♣ opening, hands which have no four-card major can be easily bid. Here, after 1♦, the bidding options are atrocious.

Stansby: 1NT. Raising diamonds will cause partner to misjudge the auction if it becomes competitive.

Lee: 1NT, typical match point/B-A-M sickness, but with the opponents silent it just seems quite likely to me to buy the contract opposite a balanced 12-14 or an off-shape hand with short clubs.

J.S.: *In the Reisinger, Roger opened 1♣ with the North cards: ♠AKQ10 ♥K875 ♦9842 ♣J, which resulted in an appealing and successful spade partscore. Unfortunately, at the other table his teammates found their way into the auction and went for -500.*

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