

Master Solvers Panel



By John Swanson
Lancaster, California

Thanks to our panel this month: Wafik Abdou, David Berkowitz, Andrew Gumperz, Mike Lawrence, Roger Lee, Jo Anna Stansby, Ivar Stakgold, and Jim Tritt. The problems are mostly from online games.

Problem 1.

Neither side vulnerable IMP scoring
You are South holding:

♠10 ♥102 ♦AKJ42 ♣AK963

South	West	North	East
1♦	2♣	Dbl	Rdbl
?			

Lawrence: 4♣. I would be asking if redouble had any significance. A different question is if 4♣ is forcing. I'm inclined to think not. Because game facing: ♠xx ♥Axxx ♦xx ♣10xxxx is close to cold, I refuse to bid 3♣ and then find that the redouble was some kind of honor showing bid for partner's spades.

J.S.: What should redouble show here? I would expect my partner to hold good enough spades and sufficient high cards such that he doesn't fear playing in 2♣ redoubled (at least until it is passed out in 2♣ redoubled), but a hand inappropriate for continuing the preempt with a raise.

For that matter, what should a pass of 2♣ redoubled by South imply?

In my partnerships a pass of a redouble at the three-level or higher means that I would have passed partner's negative double; it is a penalty pass. At the two-level the pass implies a minimum hand

with no descriptive bid.

Stansby: 3♣, then planning to rebid 4♣ if partner bids 3NT. An immediate 4♣ would be not forcing.

J.S.: The generally used agreement is that jumps after partner's negative double are limit, that is, invitational. Under that guideline 4♣ is not forcing. It is not obvious to me that such a treatment is correct. If one is required to cue bid first, the auction gets crowded and it is difficult to differentiate various hand types.

I'm going to straddle the fence – it is up to individual partnerships to determine if jumps to the four-level would be forcing. Jumps to the three-level should be non-forcing.

Berkowitz: 4♣. Initially felt that a 3♣ cue (or even pass) might be better, and while I sort of like pass, the cue will complicate matters.

While 4♣ might be technically non-forcing, that is okay with me. I feel this is a good expression of my values and distribution.

Abdou: 4♣, value bid. IMPs are so liberating that we don't have to worry about bypassing 3NT. Bidding 3♣ is an option, but that should be long, strong diamonds looking for 3NT.

Stakgold: 4♣. Because partner should have clubs for his double, my hand is quite good and I will invite game with 4♣.

Tritt: 4♣. Should be natural and show extras, though not forcing, with 3♣ available as a force. That leaves open the possibility of partner trying 4♥ with five or more strong hearts, which I would pass. The preempt has made it difficult to

make delicate slam tries, so I would assume bids are natural – including 4NT – with a spade cue bid as the only force.

Lee: 3♣. I think it's fine to go low and then double their spade bid if they come back in, to keep everything in the picture. 4♣ sounds too much like 6-5 to me.

Gumperz: 3♣. The problem here is the wide range for opener's 3♣ rebid. Without conventional assistance, 3♣ might show as little as 1-3-5-4, 11-count, or up to a healthy 15-count. While I have never discussed this exact auction, I do play "good-bad" 2NT in most competitive auctions. On this hand we'd like to make a "good" 3♣ bid to strongly invite game. For example, after 1♦ - (1♠) - Dbl - (2♠), 2NT would be good-bad, typically showing a shapely minimum. Opener might have both minors, or six diamonds, or even support for hearts; he will clarify his shape at his next turn. By using 2NT to show minimum unbalanced hands, opener's direct suit bids of 3♣, 3♦ or 3♥ all promise extras and invite game. After 1♦ - (2♠) - Dbl - (Pass), unfortunately good-bad cannot be used as it would leave opener no rebid when he holds a weak notrump. On the actual auction, pass can show our weak notrump hands, and 2NT can revert to good-bad. We need the metarule that when opener can pass to show a weak notrump, 2NT is good-bad.

J.S.: With the acknowledgment that 'good-bad' can be quite useful and would help in this situation, the simpler agreement that 3♣ freely bid shows more than a minimum should be sufficient to help with this problem. If one agrees with my premise of what the redouble shows, there is a reasonable chance that partner has four spades, including a stopper. If

you put that together with your expected eight minor suit tricks, 3NT is a strong possibility. Although 3♣, even if it shows extra values, is a bit of an underbid, it allows for the ever-appealing 3NT. I have sympathy for 4♣, for that is what I bid, but partner held: ♠K854 ♥KJ82 ♦7 ♣Q742, and a club game was hopeless with the ♥AQ offside.

Problem 2.

Both sides vulnerable IMP scoring
You are South holding:

♠K10 ♥Q3 ♦AKQ986 ♣AK7

South	West	North	East
	Pass	Pass	Pass
?			

J.S.: How do you plan to handle the auction?

Gumperz: This is much too strong for 2NT, so I will open 2♣ and rebid 2NT. The semi-balanced pattern and dispersed honors makes this hand more suited for notrump than for play in five of a minor.

Stansby: 2♣. Partner will make a control-showing response. If 0-2 controls (ace = 2, king = 1) I will show a balanced game force. If 3+ controls, I will show diamonds.

Lee: 2♣, then 2NT. This hand is positionally poor for 2♣ then 3♦ because I might not get in the first notrump bid, and nothing else is right on values.

Abdou: 2♣, then 2NT. I like to have a ten trick hand when I open 2♣ and follow with three of a minor. I would open 3NT if we have the agreement of a heavy gambling 3NT in fourth seat.

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