



# Master Solvers Panel

**J.S.:** A fourth seat 3NT opening seems quite logical, but it is always good to have discussed it with partner before trying it out.

**Stakgold:** 2♣. If partner responds the standard 2♦, I will bid 2NT showing 22-23 points. If the opportunity comes later, I will show my strong diamonds and look for slam in that suit.

**Berkowitz:** I plan to open 2♣ and rebid 2NT. This seems like an adequate valuation. Although my plan buries the diamonds, I will have to live with that, as 6♦ is a long way off.

**Lawrence:** 2♣, intending to rebid 2NT, not 3♦.

**Tritt:** 2♣, followed by 3♦. The hand is too strong for 1♦ (which could also result in subsequent problems), too strong for 2NT (which would also be misdescriptive), too slammish (and misdescriptive) for 2♣ followed by 2NT. My suggested route is not so great either, but I think it comes closest to describing the hand while permitting slam exploration.

**J.S.:** That is my preferred plan also. One drawback is the possibility that you won't be able to complete the description of your hand with a 3NT bid. That problem can be minimized if partner's 3♥ rebid is defined as a second waiting bid, affording the partnership as much room as possible for descriptive bids.

With values to search for slam North can make a forward-going bid on the next round. Also, the partnership cannot use the stringent requirement that Wafik does, that the 3♦ bid shows ten tricks.

**Berkowitz** (continued): My alternate plan is to open 1♦ and, after partner hopefully bids a major bid, rebid 3NT. But don't see how that is going to help me either.

**J.S.:** That's the plan that my partner used. Should North bid on holding: ♠7 ♥A854 ♦J72 ♣QJ843? Even opposite a solid 3NT rebid such as: ♠Kx ♥xx ♦AKQxxx ♣Kx any game higher than 3NT might be defeated.

If one does open 1♦ and partner responds with 1♥, a 3♣ rebid seems a better slam effort than 3NT. If your partner would bid higher than 3NT with the North cards after: 2♣ - 2♦; 2NT - 3♣; 3♦, then stick with a 2NT rebid. If not, you might consider a more delicate 3♦ rebid.

## Problem 3.

Neither side vulnerable IMP scoring  
You are South holding:

♠4 ♥A83 ♦A987653 ♣A4

South	West	North	East
?	3♥	3♠	4♥

**Lee:** Double, expecting partner to bid 4♠, followed by 6♦ (I would bid 5♦ over 5♣). Partner should get the picture that I have a good hand with long diamonds but that I'm willing to play 6♣ if his spades are good enough. It's an overbid, but going low is just as much of a guess.

**Lawrence:** 6♦. A nice headache hand. Double isn't penalty, so I have to consider if doubling and then bidding 5♦ is a good option versus bidding 5♦ immediately – which implies a more inflexible hand – or bidding 6♦, which requires a decent catch. However, the signs suggest I will buy well.

For me, the fact that 7♦ will be cold facing many hands encourages me to bid at least 6♦. So 6♦ it is ... if partner has eleven black cards, I'm wrong in all possible ways.

**J.S.:** If double is not penalties, how takeoutish is it? The concept behind responsive doubles is that, when the opponents have shown a fit, the likelihood of effectively doubling the opponents for penalties is not great – it is better to use a double to show offensive values with length in the unbid suits. Some partnerships switch to penalty doubles after 3♠, some after 4♥, some not at all.

No matter where one draws the line, there will be difficult choices.

**Abdou:** Double. Take the money. If partner pulls because of exceptional distribution, I would consider a move toward slam, but for now slam is a big parlay. Pard needs strong spades and more in a hand where distribution could be foul.

**J.S.:** Regardless whether double is takeout or penalties, is it best to give partner a chance to pass when your offensive potential in diamonds is so great?

**Tritt:** 5♦, which should be natural and slammish. With non-slammish hands that do not fit spades, I would double 4♥. There is a good chance of finding a diamond fit, given the opponents' heart fit, in which case I hope partner will raise to slam.

On the other hand, if partner solos into 5♠ he should have a self-sufficient suit, in which case I can raise to slam. He should have a good hand for his 3♠ bid, but if he does not and lacks a good diamond fit, we will play 5♦.

**Stansby:** 5♦. Too bad if partner has two red singletons.

**Gumperz:** 6♦. You have a huge hand on the auction; 7♦ has play opposite a near minimum like: ♠Axxxx ♥x ♦Kxx ♣Kxx. I think the slam chances are too good for a 5♦ call, so it's 6♦ for me.

**Stakgold:** 6♦. North is short in hearts and probably has at least two diamonds. Since I can't think of a way to obtain further info, I will just gamble on 6♦!

**Berkowitz:** 6♦. Let's see how good partner is at putting down an appropriate dummy.

**J.S.:** Rather good this time, despite the minimum high card strength expected for 3♠: ♠AKQJ73 ♥-- ♦J42 ♣10973, maybe even good enough to raise 5♦ to 6♦. The diamond slam is on with diamonds 2-1, but spades were 5-1, so not even 4♠ makes with a black suit lead. 4♥ is down only one trick; there was not much money to be had by doubling.

## Problem 4.

Both sides vulnerable, IMP scoring  
You are South holding:

♠K107542 ♥A76 ♦832 ♣J

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
?			

**Abdou:** 3NT. With heart help and a club honor, even opposite a minimum reverse we should have game. I'll regret not bidding 3♦ on the way if pard is 0-2-5-6, say: ♠-- ♥Kx ♦AKQ10x ♣KQxxxx.

**Lee:** 3NT. Holding bad spades and hearts sufficiently stopped, I don't see the point in suggesting a different contract.

**Stakgold:** 3NT. Awkward hand. It is easy to find North hands consistent with the bidding, where the best final contract would be 2NT, 3NT, 3♠, or 4♠. North probably has a singleton spade, but I

can't find out if it is an honor. I'll let my ♣J guide me to 3NT (best if pard has ♠x ♥KQx ♦AQxx ♣AK10xx).

**Stansby:** 3NT. Anything else seems impractical.

**Berkowitz:** 3NT. That ♣J is a beautiful card for notrump, and my spades are too ratty to bid them directly, or even try for them indirectly with 3♥. This seems like a no-brainer to me.

**Lawrence:** 3♥. Accepting game and giving partner room to bid 3♠ if he has two of them.

**Gumperz:** 3♥. I don't think these spades are good enough to rebid again, but a 6-2 fit might be an improvement over 3NT. I'll bid 3♥ planning to raise 3♠ to 4♠ or pass 3NT. The game-before-slam principle suggests 3♥ should be defined as a tool for best-game exploration, and not a slam move (unless responder makes a subsequent slam move over a signoff).

**Tritt:** 3♥. First inclination was to simply raise 2NT to 3NT, but on further reflection I think 3♥ is superior. If partner bids 3NT over 3♥ you can pass in comfort. If partner preferences to 3♠, you can then offer 3NT as a choice of games – having implied a six-card spade suit via the 3♥ bid. The ♥A and ♠J are good cards for notrump, so I think the choice of games offer is better than merely raising 3♠ to 4♠. This gives partner more input in choosing the right game.

**J.S.:** Partner held: ♠86 ♥K8 ♦AK96 ♣AK874. Even with the ♠A onside 3NT has no chance, while eleven tricks are available in spades. If partner is going to reverse on hands such as these, allowing for slam investigation rather than bludgeoning the auction with a 2NT rebid, you must be careful to allow for either a spade or notrump game by bidding 3♥ over 2NT.

## Problem 5.

Neither side vulnerable IMP scoring  
You are South holding:

♠K7 ♥A987 ♦753 ♣K1084

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

\*Support double, three hearts.

**Berkowitz:** 3♣. The next move, if any, is up to partner. Sure, I'd like to bid more, but have you seen what people open white these days? I have extras, but that isn't a crime, and partner's implied shortness in diamonds is not a guarantee. Perhaps I should bid 2♥ but I will hope we have enough to make 3♣, and if he can scratch up another call, I will be off to the races.

**Abdou:** 3♣. Like my primes, but not enough room to investigate and not good enough to force, so the low road it is. Nice to have extras once in a while; it boosts partner's morale.

**Lee:** 3♣. Obviously something else might be right, including pass, but assuming the opponents have at least eight diamonds, we have a club fit and no likely game in sight opposite partner's expected balanced minimum, so this seems safest.

**Tritt:** 3♣. If partner has three hearts and two diamonds, he has to have at least four clubs. Seems about right on values, and if the opponents bid 3♦ I have an easy pass, knowing I have described my hand. If I settled for 2♥ and the opponents bid

3♦, I would not have shown support for a possible nine or ten card club fit.

**Stakgold:** 3♣. Gives partner an option: can pass with: ♠Axxx ♥Qxx ♦xx ♣AQxx. With stronger hearts or other good hands, North can still lead us to game.

**Gumperz:** Another hand where good-bad 2NT serves us well. We want to show a good raise to 3♣ so we can reach game facing: ♠Axx ♥Kxx ♦x ♣Axxxx. Another metarule is that 2NT is good-bad when the opponents have bid and raised a suit. That allows me to promise constructive values with my 3♣ call here. If RHO had passed and LHO overcalled 2♦, then my 2NT would be a natural game invite, making my 3♣ call wide-ranging.

**Lawrence:** 3♣. Passing is a sane choice but the club holding suggests bidding something. Since 2♥ is always available as a signoff bid, I'm wondering if 3♣ should not include some implication of values. I haven't had this consideration come into play, however. I'll bid 3♣ for various reasons. It rates to be safer than 2♥. Yes, I have undisclosed values but I'm comfortable that partner has two diamonds. West usually bids 3♦ when he has four. I note that 3♣ does not have to end the bidding. Someone out there may compete to 3♦ giving me another chance.

**J.S.:** I adapted this problem from a hand in The Bridge World, but didn't do such a good job because everyone found the 3♣ call too easily. The bidding concept I wanted to express was simply this:

**Stansby:** 3♣. This is a natural invite; minimum hands rebid 2♥.

**J.S.:** Let me add – "regardless of shape." Thus, even with five clubs and four hearts, after a support double one should bid 2♥ rather than 3♣ with no game interest.

## Bridge World Hand

Here is another hand from a Bridge World article, described by author Fred Karpin using a line from John Keats: "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

North		East	
♠J76	♥Q1097	♠10542	♥--
♦A75	♣KQ10	♦KQJ10986	♣A5
West		South	
♠K	♥653	♠AQ983	♥AKJ842
♦32	♣9876432	♦4	♣J
North	East	South	West
Pass	4♦	4♥	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

The ♦3 lead was won by the ace and a diamond ruffed high. Trumps were drawn in three rounds ending in dummy, and another diamond ruffed. Declarer led his ♣J to the queen and ace. East returned a club, won in dummy and the third club was cashed. By eliminating the minor suits declarer had an exact count of the distribution. Certain that East would not have opened 4♦ holding the ♠K along with his ♣A and long diamond suit, declarer led to the ♠A, confident the king would fall singleton.

This deal was played in the 1957 Nationals, exactly 60 years ago, by our senior panelist, Ivar Stakgold.