

Southern California

Bridge News

Volume 58, #6

June 2021

Published by ALACBU

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Robert Shore



Important Changes to Grand National Teams

Since I published my last column, we needed to make a couple of changes to our Grand National Teams District Final. The event will be held June 5-6. That's a week earlier than I said it would be in my last column. The event will be held on-line. In my last column, I told you it would be in person. We've done our best to publicize these changes. This column and the flyer you'll see elsewhere in the *Bridge News*, are some of our efforts to that end. If you know someone who wants to play, please be sure they get the word.

What happened? The change of dates is our responsibility. We didn't realize when we first scheduled the event that our planned dates conflicted with a major event being held by the United States Bridge Federation. When the word of our planned dates got out, a number of players brought the conflict to our attention. We're not interested in forcing our players to choose between two important events so we decided to change the date of our District Final to avoid the conflict.

The change in venue is more complicated. We were, of course, well aware that ACBL was not approving in-person tournaments before August at the earliest. We didn't know, however, that ACBL considered GNT District Finals to be "tournaments" within the meaning of this rule. And one of the reasons we didn't know this was that we sent Conditions of Contest to ACBL literally weeks ago that identified the event as an in-person event. At the time they didn't say anything, so "we" (more about the scare quotes in a moment) took the time to line up a venue.

Three weeks before the scheduled event, we
PRESIDENT continued on page 2

District Director Report

by John Jones



Los Angeles County is slowly reopening many entertainment venues. One of those will be bridge, both clubs and tournaments. Various D23 clubs and unit games are reopening. All of them, to the best of my knowledge, are requiring vaccinations or masks, in some cases both. To assist F2F clubs get going, there will be all of the special masterpoint games that normally occur, plus some "Welcome Back" games". The "Welcome Back" games haven't been approved as of this writing but have been discussed by the board and will almost certainly be approved. The first national will likely be the 2021 Fall NABC in Austin, Texas. Sectional and Regional tournaments will be reopening as of August 1. Only fully vaccinated players will be allowed to participate. That's one shot of Johnson and Johnson, two shots of Moderna or two shots of Pfizer. But if you think three shots of tequila will suffice, you've probably had too many shots already.

Some of you have asked about what is happening to the District Director position. What is changing is that on Dec. 31, my term expires and we will no longer have a District Director. The 25 District Directors will become 13 Regional Directors. It will be their job to lead the ACBL. D23 will be a district.

DIRECTOR continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

Director's Corner	page 3
Rank Changes	page 4
Puzzle Page	page 5
Around the Units	page 6
GNT Flyer	page 11
Problem Solvers' Panel	page 12

PRESIDENT continued from page 1

got a very contrite e-mail from ACBL. They apologized for not realizing earlier that we intended to hold an in-person event, but they explained very firmly that it would not be sanctioned and that we would need to switch to an on-line event. And that is when “we” really put the pedal to the metal.

When I say “we,” I really mean our District GNT Coordinator, Jeff Grotenhuis. He’s the one who spent (and wasted) the time lining up an in-person venue, and he’s the one responsible for the fact that we’re having a GNT event at all this year. After receiving ACBL’s unwelcome news, Jeff sprang into action. In less than a week (and with the help of many of your fellow players from both inside and outside our District), Jeff figured out how to host an on-line ACBL-sanctioned team event, lined up a director, located software to handle the registration process, got it installed, revised the flyer, and revised the Conditions of Contest.

Given everything he had to figure out, I can only conclude that if Jeff had been in charge, Rome would have been built in a day. Creation would have been done in no more than four days -- five at the outside -- and Jeff wouldn’t have needed to rest on the seventh day. Seriously. I cannot overstate how much gratitude we owe Jeff for making this happen at all.

So I hope that if you enjoy playing the event, you take a moment to convey your thanks directly to Jeff. Remember — this (like all of our District positions) is a volunteer position; Jeff gets no compensation for his work other than the pleasure of knowing that he’s made a tangible difference. On the other hand, Jeff kept me intimately involved with his progress and his decision making from start to finish, so any complaints or criticisms about the event should be sent in my direction. As always, my e-mail address is below.

Next Board Meeting

Our next Board Meeting will be held in person on Saturday, July 3. Venue is still to be determined, but I intend to contact the Long Beach Bridge Center to suggest they hold an NAP qualifying game that day, so that we can hold the meeting thereafter. My current term, and that of all the other officers, ends at that meeting, so it’s our election meeting. (I am running for re-election, and I certainly hope that the rest of my fellow officers are as well.) That means it’s particularly important for all Unit Presidents to ensure that they have a full slate of representatives at the

meeting, so that we have a quorum that can, in fact, hold an election.

Something you want me to know? Contact me at Bob78164@yahoo.com.

DIRECTOR continued from page 1

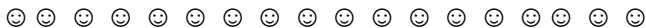
but combined with D22 into Region 11. David Lodge from the Palm Springs area is the favorite to be voted in as the Region 11 Director. He is currently the D22 Director and a good guy. I don’t plan on running. I’ve already had my fill of ACBL people doing silly things such as sending out reminder notices without mentioning any of: the date, time, reason for meeting, or length of the meeting. Or asking for forms to be returned that they haven’t mailed yet.

One positive item I was able to do was approve of a Regional at Sea. The regional will be run by Alice Travel and will travel to Hawaii from Los Angeles beginning May 29, 2022. There are no D23 regionals or sectionals currently scheduled then. However, since the cruise leaves and ends in our district, we get \$1,250 for approving it. Plus, we get \$5 for every D23 member who is on the cruise. This is essentially free money for D23.

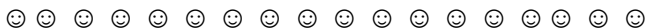
I promised I would write more about cheating this month. Cheating has exploded during the pandemic. There have more players convicted of cheating during the last year than there were in the 20 years before this combined. Some players think that it is easy to cheat online and they can’t be caught because nobody is sitting over them or can see them. They might be surprised to know that there is pretty good software that can evaluate tendencies and assess effectiveness. Nicolas Hammond has written software that evaluates players effectiveness on defense and while declaring. If your defense is significantly better than your declarer play then you may become a suspect. That is especially true if your partnership is better at defending than are Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth. We’ve seen pairs that were 10% better at opening leads than Rodwell or Meckstroth. Sure enough, the analysis showed they were cheating.

I’ve been on some of the expert panels that have accessed whether a pair or player is cheating. Giving everyone a fair shake is long hard work. You have to look at many hands to see if there is a strong tendency to do unusual things only when they are right. We don’t find that everyone who is accused is cheating. In one strange case, I found the player we were evaluating couldn’t be cheating, or if he was, he

It is interesting to see other sports (bridge is considered a mind sport), struggle with situations that bridge has handled effectively for a while. The 2021 NBA season had the Los Angeles Clippers (who I root for and was once a season ticket holder of), as one of the best teams in the Western Conference. The Clips stood third with a couple of games to go. They rested their best players during the last two games and lost both games to very weak teams. Did they deliberately tank to get into the fourth seed instead of the third seed for match up reasons (avoiding being on the same side of the bracket as the Los Angeles Lakers)? Only a mind reader might know. But in bridge, we have rules that allow higher seeds to select their opponents. A third seed can assure that it doesn't have to face a specific team in the opening round. A fourth seed might well face the team they least wanted to face. In most cases it doesn't make sense any more to even consider tanking in bridge. Other sports will soon catch on to bridge rules.



Benjamin Franklin invented the rocking chair.



A head-and-shoulders portrait of a middle-aged man with short brown hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored striped shirt. The background is plain white.

(Diagram for board #2 deleted)

Playing times for Round 1

North Player 2:24 **South** Player 2 **Total** 5:35**East** Player 2:25 **West** Player 4 **Total** 5:26

In this case, West called the director because South would not explain a bid. (The time at the end of the entry is the time that player took to act.)

13:06:07 Player 1 bid 1NT with explanation: 12-14hcp.

13:06:38 Player 3 bid 2D with explanation: both majors. (31 secs)

13:07:01 Player 2 bid Double.

13:07:14 Player 4 asked for explanation of bid. (13 secs).

13:08:01 Player 4 asked for explanation of bid. (47 secs)

13:08:16 Player 4 bid 2S

Player 4 took 13 seconds to ask for an explanation of a bid that could have been an Alert. Then Player 4 waited 47 seconds more before asking again. Finally, Player 4 made a bid without receiving any explanation at all.

So of the 2:53 seconds charged to Player 4, 1:02 of that was waiting for Player 2.

If a board in this round is not played the correct scoring is: Player 2 Ave-, Player 4 Ave+.

If any board in this round is sent to the director for adjustment, Player 2's side should get the benefits of any doubt or question.

If Player 4 complains, tell them their opponent would have made the right choice if they had the time.

I must be getting to that age. Yesterday I spent 15 minutes trying to change the channel with a bar of chocolate.

District 23 Rank Changes April 2020

Junior Master

Andrew Garwig
Caryn Mason
Xiaoyan Zhou

NABC Master

Michael K. Macy
Elliot B. Mazur
Melanie M. Smothers

Silver Life Master

Barbara A. Jones
S. K. Leech

Club Master

Daniel B. Ferguson
Susan K. Fitzpatrick

Advanced NABC Master

Carol L. Decordova

Diamond Life Master

Leonard Holtz

Bronze Life Master

Bob Becker
Patricia L. Bessone
Kathleen K. Shinkle

Emerald Life Master

Peter Knee

The Puzzle Page

Play or Defend? by John Jones

North

♠ 10 6 4
♥ J 9 4
♦ A Q J 7 5
♣ Q 5

West

♠ Q J 2
♥ A 7 5 3
♦ 9 2
♣ 10 7 4 3

East

♠ K 9 7 5
♥ K Q 8
♦ K 6 3
♣ 9 8 2

South

♠ A 8 3
♥ 10 6 2
♦ 10 8 4
♣ A K J 6

Contract = 1NT

Opening Lead = ♥3

With both sides able to see all the cards and play perfectly, would you prefer to declare or defend?

Bridge Jeopardy by John Jones

Category: TV and Movies

And the answer is ...

\$100 – Heartthrob actor who starred in “Doctor Zhivago” and “Lawrence of Arabia”, and the traveling Bridge Circus.

\$200 – While not on stage with Gracie Allen, this actor – comedian loved bridge.

\$300 – Produced “Mission Impossible” before being murdered in his garage during Bridge Week 1985.

\$400 – Agent 86 from the TV comedy “Get Smart,” he was an avid bridge player.

\$500 – This Santa Monica woman has several world championships and has several movie credits for negotiating music rights.

June Rebus

With thanks to Candy Scott

Well, can you figure out what this says?



Solutions to these puzzles are on the page following. No peeking!



Trivia Time!

The first novel ever written on a typewriter was “Tom Sawyer.”

If a statue located in a Park of a person on a horse has both front legs in the air, the person died in battle. If the horse has one front leg in the air, the person died because of wounds received in battle. If the horse has all four legs on the ground, the person died of natural causes.

In 2009, a team of scientists searched Scotland’s Loch Ness for evidence of Nessie. They didn’t find any monster but they did recover more than 100,000 golf balls.



Southern California Bridge News

Published monthly by ALACBU, Inc.

1800 Avenue of the Stars, 12th Floor,

Los Angeles, CA 90067

Phone: 310-440-4100

email bridgenews@acbldistrict23.org

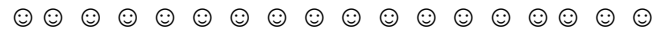
Editor/Designer. Tom Lill

Managing Editor. Bob Shore

Contributing Editor. John Jones

Copy deadlines: the 23rd of the preceding month. Opinions expressed in the Southern California Bridge News are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of ALACBU, Inc., The Bridge News or the Editor. The Bridge News reserves the right to reject material it considers to be in poor taste or deems otherwise unsuitable for publication.

Submitted by John Jones:



Of course, I don't believe in luck, though we all know, mind you, that it exists. [Hideous Hog]

\$100 - Who is Omar Sharif?
\$200 - Who is George Burns?
\$300 - Who is Barry Crane?
\$400 - Who is Don Adams?
\$500 - Who is Jill Meyers?

Around the Units in District 23



Long Beach by Lillian Slater

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

Sorry, no news from Long Beach this time.



Pomona – Covina by Tom Lill

www.acblunit551.org

Individual: Saturday June 5, 9:30 a.m., Upland
Unit Game: Saturday June 19, 11:00 a.m., Glendora
Longest Day: Saturday June 26, 9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., Glendora
Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game

We will be holding two one-session games in support of The Longest Day (Alzheimer's Association) at the Knights of Columbus in Glendora. These are single-session events, so you can play in either, or both, as you wish. (Or neither, but why?)

Entry fee will be \$6/person, and all this (well maybe a tiny bit will go towards the snacks) goes to the Alzheimer's Association. Additional donations are welcome also. Want to donate (it's tax deductible, of course), but cannot make it to either game? Try <https://act.alz.org/goto/LaFetra>.

The Knights of Columbus have graciously agreed to donate the rent to this worthy cause, and of course the Director will be working for nothing. Well, he's worth it, I'd say.

Our Monday F2F games at Rose's no longer *require* you to wear a face mask or shield – it's up to your discretion.

So far as I'm aware, the merger of the PPDVBC and the 556 VBC is on track. So there won't be a PPDVBC after 5/31. You can check the schedule of games at 556 here: <https://my.acbl.org/club-results/266882>. To find the games on BBO, search for "556" in All Tournaments. 556 is planning to incorporate as many of the PPDVBC games into their schedule as possible, but ...

No rank changes again this month.

This time, our Hand-of-the-Month is an interesting exercise (or so I think) in hand evaluation. At favorable vulnerability, you deal and find yourself looking at these cards:

♠ 7 ♥ K 6 5 3 ♦ 9 ♣ A K Q J 8 3 2

It seems like a normal 1♣ opening, no? Yes. For all that it's a 4-loser hand, you don't really have the high card strength for 2♣. OK. LHO passes, partner bids 1♥, RHO passes, and ... now what?

Well, what could partner hold (besides 4+ hearts I mean)? Anything from 6 HCP on up, I suppose. With a bare minimum, if you raise to only 2♥, partner is going to pass and the opponents are surely going to compete in spades. Bad for your side. Can you make some sort of forcing bid? After all, even with a 6-count, unless all partner's high cards are in the black suits, 4♥ is a likely make. Well, no number of hearts you can bid is forcing. You could make a splinter bid in either pointed suit (how often do you have *that* option?) but which one would be right? In this case, neither, as your partnership doesn't have splinters in its arsenal. So you cannot guess wrong *that* way.

How about a phony reverse into 2♦? Ugh. It's often right to force in a suit you don't actually have – and certainly, if you reverse, your first suit is longer (!) than your second. But if you reverse, partner might even raise you, and then you'll never convince her you have four card heart support.

Well. At the table (well, at the computer – this was BBO), I chose 4♥, shutting out the opponents'

spades and at least getting to game. Partner then upped the ante with 6♥! Partner's hand was:

♠ A 8 4 3 ♥ AQ 4 2 ♦ A J 5 ♣ 9 7.

As you can see, the slam rolls home. In fact, at all 7 tables, 13 tricks came in. Only two pairs bid the slam; three pairs were in 4♥; one was in 3NT (well, matchpoint scoring *does* favor notrump!), and one pair was in 2♣. They probably had a mis-click or something; that would be my guess, with both partners holding an opening hand.

There might be a way to get to the grand, but I can't really see it. Perhaps this auction would work:

1♣ – 1♥; 4♥ – 4♠; 5♠ – 5♦; 7♥?

You would be gambling that partner has the trump Queen, though. Too tough for the Monday night 0-1000 game though!

Or, responder could take charge with Blackwood, which would show that the partnership has all five key cards and the trump Queen. But responder can't really count 13 tricks, not knowing of that huge pile of clubs in opener's hand. C'est la guerre!

Quote for the month: "Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner. [James Bovard]

Downey – Whittier by Liz Burrell

Finally, there is a light at the end of this seemingly interminable tunnel. Like most other ACBL clubs, the Downey Whittier Bridge Club has not played face-to-face bridge since March 11, 2020. But thanks to Morris Jones and several others, we have been able to quench the thirst for competitive play through the virtual clubs on BBO. Can't imagine the void in our lives without these hard-working bridge whizzes. We owe all of them huge thanks.

We have great news: the Downey Whittier Bridge Club will be open to all vaccinated members on Saturday, June 16! (The Downey Women's Club where we play requires anyone entering the building to show proof of vaccination; naturally, we must comply if we want to play.) We meet at 9813 Paramount Boulevard in Downey. The game starts at 10:00 a.m., but please plan to arrive by 9:30 a.m. the first time we meet to handle the red tape.

All of our members are invited back, with certain restrictions. If you are interested in playing, we will be happy to send a copy of these (temporary, we hope!) rules to you. We would love to see all of our "old" members and any others who would like to play. Please call or text me at 562-972-2913 with questions or comments.

This has been an unprecedented time in our lives and we sincerely hope none of us ever sees the likes of the last year and a half again. We mourn the loss of many of our friends, relatives, acquaintances, and send our condolences to all affected by this unspeakable evil. Perhaps getting back to our favorite pastime will help our return to normalcy more quickly. Please come and visit us at the Downey Club whenever you can, and stay well.



Santa Clarita- Antelope Valley by Beth Morrin

Changes to Our Summer Schedule (June, July and August)

Mojo (Morris Jones) has been running games for Units 551, 559, and 564 for the last year and is taking the summer off. With ACBL's approval we will incorporate some of his games into our schedule to accommodate his members and they are welcome to play in our Virtual Club games as well. Contact paula@pacbell.net for reservations. Our games cost \$3 unless it is a special game series. The new schedule starting June 1st is:

Monday:	12:15 PM our regular Open game
Tuesday:	10:15 AM 499er game (cost is \$5) new game 6:15 PM our regular Open game
Wednesday:	10:15 AM 499er game (cost is \$5) new game
Thursday:	10:15 AM our regular Open game
Friday:	12:15 PM our regular Open game
Sunday:	12:15 PM 499er game (new time) 12:30 PM a regular Open game (new time – now matchpoints)

Winners in Unit 556+ Open MP games:

Mon. Apr. 26

N/S Kathy Swaine – Rand Pinsky 62.95%

E/W Anita Walker – Aggi Oschin 56.82%

Tues. Apr. 27

N/S Amr Elghamry – Dominique Moore 67.59%

E/W Pat Larin – David White 62.04%

Thurs. Apr. 29

N/S Bob McBroom – Kathy Flynn 57.50%

E/W Pat Larin – David White 59.44%

Fri. Apr. 30

N/S Bill Papa – Dwaine Hawley 63.38%

E/W Jan Ladd – Roy Ladd 59.60%

Mon. May 3

N/S Amr Elghamry – Rae Murbach 67.42%

E/W Temo Arjani – Ramesh Sawhney 62.88%

Tues. May 4

N/S Pat Larin – David White 59.92%

E/W Amr Elghamry – Dominique Moore 60.32%

Thurs. May 6

N/S Bob McBroom – Kathy Flynn 62.35%

E/W Steve Shanker – Sharon Wolf 68.48%

Fri. May 7

N/S Rae Murbach – Joseph Viola 63.58%

E/W Jan Ladd – Roy Ladd 60.19%

Mon. May 10

N/S Kathy Swaine – Rand Pinsky 62.50%

E/W Alan Nueman – Harry Randhawa 61.67%

Tues. May 11

N/S Ruth Baker – Roy Ladd 63.10%

E/W Barbara Jones – Tom Jones 59.52%

Thurs. May 13

N/S Janice Joerger – Pat Larin 64.43%

E/W David Khalieque – Harry Randhawa 57.37%

Fri. May 14

N/S Graetchn Torres – Michael Connell 63.05

E/W Sharry Vida – Beth Morrin 55.28%

Mon. May 17

N/S Ruth Baker – Roy Ladd 61.62%

E/W James Rozzell – Steve Shanker 61.46%

Tues. May 18

N/S Ruth Baker – Roy Ladd 66.67%

E/W Pat Larin – David White 60.55%

Thurs. May 19

N/S Elliot Nueman – Alan Nueman 65.12%

E/W Paula Olivares – Roy Ladd 62.65%

Fri. May 20

N/S Pat Larin – Wayne Rapp 62.82%

E/W Carol Reukauf – Paul Reukauf 59.79%

Winners of Unit 556+ Sunday Afternoon IMP Pairs**Game at 3:25:**

Sunday May 2 Ruth Baker – Roy Ladd

Sunday, May 9

Sunday, May 16 Debra Pride – Pat Larin

Sunday, May 23 Debra Pride – Pat Larin

The Longest Day is our annual fundraising event held to fight against Alzheimer's disease held by Alzheimer's Association. This is our 8th year in the partnership and since very few clubs are playing face-to-face bridge, we will hold games with our Virtual Club on Saturday, June 19th and Sunday, June 20th.

Next Board meeting: TBA, via Zoom.

Masterpoint Limited On-line Clubs by David White

**Farewell, My Friends.**

Along with the merger of the PPDVBC, the D23 club has been absorbed into the Unit 556 VBC. Check out the Santa Clarita – Antelope Valley Unit column for more details.

So, we bid fond farewell to this section of the SCBN.

Pasadena – San Gabriel by Morris “Mojo” Jones



mojo@bridgemojo.com

[Editor's note: Mojo is taking a well-earned vacation this summer, planning to enjoy some long-missed freedom. So, this

column will be on hiatus for a while. Let's hope Mojo returns invigorated from his road trip and ready to return to this space.]

Happy summer to all Pasadena San Gabriel bridge players! Jane and I are heading off “into the sunrise” with a multi-week US road trip.

Jane and I celebrated being fully vaccinated by hosting four Saturday evening home bridge team games for most of my students over the past year. We had four great two-table fully vaccinated bridge and pizza parties.

Do you have your vaccination yet?

When we're back from our trip, I'm hoping to see you live at the tables in Arcadia, and lots of progress on the renovations at the San Marino club.

Congratulations to new rank changes! New Junior Master Xiaoyan Zhou (who joined us for two at-home bridge parties), new NABC Master Elliott Mazur, and new Silver Life Master Ken Leech.

DISTRICT 23

Grand National Teams Finals *Revised*

June 5th and 6th 2021,

Online at www.bridgewebs.com/agile/GNT (ready shortly)
sanction 2106623

Swiss Qualifying

Saturday, June 5 @ 10 am
and
Saturday, June 5 @ 3 pm

Knock Out Finals

Sunday, June 6 @ 10 am
and
Sunday, June 6 @ 3 pm

National Finals will be held July 14-July 17 during
Summer National Online Bridge Championships (NAOBCs) on BBO

Winners need not attend National Finals.
In which case, second place finishers will have the right to attend.

Permissible Convention Charts

Open Championship Flight

Open + : Unlimited

Flight A : Open + 0-6000

Flight B : Open 0-2500

Flight C : Basic + Non LM under 500

Estimated Masterpoint Awards

For National Winners in Each

Flight Open + : 36.00 Gold

Flight A : 30.00 Gold

Flight B : 26.00 Gold

Flight C : 15.00 25% Gold, 75% Red

Event chair

Jeff Grotenhuis • District 23 GNT/NAP Coordinator
email: jeffgro@gmail.com • cell: 310-600-4275

Conditions of Contest may be found at:
<http://www.bridgewebs.com/acbl23/>



Problem Solvers' Panel

Moderator: John Jones

Panelists are: Mark Bartusek, Kitty Cooper, Ross Grabel,
Daniel Korbel, Roger Lee, Mike Shuster, and Jon Wittes.

Our guest panelist is Peter Knee. Peter, along with his partner Bill Schreiber, are the defending North American Pair champions for D23 (this occurred F2F in 2019 before the pandemic). Peter is a semi-retired ACBL director. Peter submitted problem number four.

As always, panelists are playing 5-card majors, 15 - 17 NT, and 2/1 GF. Beyond that, except where indicated, panelists may use any reasonable methods.

1

IMPs
Both Vul

South	West	North	East
???	2♥	pass	pass

You, South, hold: ♠J3 ♥965 ♦AKQ10 ♣AQJ5

What call do you make?

We'll start with a rather ugly problem. We have a nice balanced 17 HCP hand, great! What we don't have is: a stopper in the opponents' suit, a five-card suit to overcall, three spades, nor enough to double and bid again. Pass, double, 2NT, 3♣, 3♦, and 3♥ are all possible, and all flawed. What's the least of evils?

I'll start with a panelist that thinks defending is the way to go (all vulnerable is the best vulnerability for defending as opposed to bidding).

Grabel: Pass.

Next up is our guest panelist who hopes that extra HCP compensates for lack of a third spade.

Knee: Double. If partner bids 2NT (I don't play Lebensohl after a balancing double), I'll bid 3NT. If partner bids 2♠/3♣/3♦ I'll pass, 3♠ I'll bid 4 (partner has expressed an interest in playing more 4-2 fits), 4♣/4♦ I'll raise to 5, 3♥ should get us to a good minor suit slam.

Now for those who overcall in a four-card suit.

Cooper: 3♣. Annoying hand to hold. If partner has ♣K and a heart stopper 3NT might fetch so let's make a bid that gets her to value that card.

Shuster: 3♦. This is unlikely to be a disaster... and might find us a game. If I'm going to play a short fit, let it be the one with 100 honors. If partner can bid over this we should be well placed to find the right game, and if my guy passes it doesn't have to be wrong. 2NT would be more attractive if LHO was NV, where they are less likely to have a good suit and/or an outside entry.

Finally we'll look at the responses of those that believe that trying NT even without a stopper is probably the best description given the problematic conditions.

Bartusek: 2NT. I can't pass and risk missing a vulnerable game. 2NT seems like the least of evils. I refuse to double with only a doubleton spade and

insufficient strength to warrant a follow-up call. There exists overwhelming support for this kind of action: see The Bridge World May 2021 Master Solver's Club problem #D where 22 out of 28 panelists either overcalled 2NT or doubled and rebid 2NT holding ♠AK ♥J98 ♦AQJ5 ♣A1084 after a vulnerable opening weak 2♥ bid on their right (and that action seems more dangerous than mine since the suit will practically always be led by LHO on that auction).

Lee: 2NT. I'm not going to pass, and nothing else seems very reasonable.

Korbel: 2NT. This is terrible. But I can't pass.

Wittes: 2NT. If this is wrong, I apologize to partner, but some action seems called for, and despite my lack of a heart stopper, this is the best description of my strength and distribution.

This is an old hand and was previously used in an Eastern panel several years ago. The panel there had votes for everything our panelists did plus for 3♥, asking for a stopper. Every bid the panel suggested could be the winner, but I don't like 3♥ at all. 3♥ would normally show about 8 tricks and a solid suit someplace. It will merely be an overbid if partner does have a stopper. But if partner doesn't have a stopper and bids 3♠ or 4♣, what now? We could easily play in the wrong strain.

What would I bid? I'd try 2NT. I partnered Marshall Miles enough to know that Marshall would bid 2NT on this hand and do it in tempo. He was always so smooth that the opponent on opening lead had no clue whether Marshall had a problem or not and frequently made the wrong opening lead.

<div style="font-size: 48pt; text-align: center;">2</div> <div style="text-align: center;">IMPs E-W Vul</div>	South	West	North	East
	???		1♥	pass
	You, South, hold: ♠QJ4 ♥QJ4 ♦Q103 ♣QJ92			
	What call do you make?			

The panel doesn't care much for this hand. 4333 distribution and all queens and jacks. Talk about a hand that isn't worth its 11 HCP value. Yuk! It's bad enough that we have a quote from the late great Edgar Kaplan.

Korbel: 2♥. It was Edgar Kaplan who once famously said, "No aces, no kings, no singletons, no voids, equals no hand."

Grabel: 2♥. My high card structure is so poor that unless partner makes a game try, I'll settle for a part-score.

Shuster: 2♥. The hand is pretty no-trumpy, but we can try to get there later if partner takes another call. If I wanted to take a stronger course, I'd bid 1NT and then rebid 2NT over partner's rebid, but I don't think we're quite worth that, and we are unlikely to miss very many good games with the simple raise. I'll try to win the NV swing by staying low on a hand that is really not very promising.

One panelist has a gadget for stopping low.

Cooper: 2♣. My methods include 2♣ always being Drury (if allowed). I'll then show a 3-card limit raise at the 2-level. This is a horrible 11 count. If 2♣ isn't Drury, then I'll bid 1NT semi-forcing.

Some panelists make a standard three-card limit raise if partner can't raise NT.

Knee: 1NT. I have too much not to make a balanced limit raise. At least all my queens are supported. Partner has all aces and kings and opening leader may well be end-played at trick one. On a good day partner will raise my forcing notrump and we'll play 3NT.

Lee: 1NT. I don't mind 2♥, but calling this a balanced invite feels like a practical move.

One panelist isn't going to raise hearts unless partner rebids them.

Wittes: 1NT. This hand shows why I hate queens and jacks. I have 11 high card points, but it feels like 8. I would love to bid 2♥, but there are too many hands that partner will pass, and we have a play for game. If partner bids the expected 2 of a minor, I should bid 3♥, but I'm going to bid 2NT with all these secondary cards.

One panelist thinks I made this hand up.

Bartusek: 1NT. Second choice is 2♥. This seems like a contrived hand to illustrate the Esteemed Moderator's tendency to downgrade balanced 4333 hands and those with a lot of quacks. Note that I am going to hide my heart support and rebid 2NT over partner's expected 2m call on the next round since 3NT very often plays better than a major suit fit when all four queens are held. Note that 4♥ games are often off four cashing tricks unless partner is distributional (which he can show over my 2NT rebid).

Part right, part wrong. Having played with me for several decades, Mark knows my bidding style oh too well. He got it right that I hate this hand. What he got wrong was that I didn't make the hand up. I held this hand in an online San Diego game. I was partnering my friend Doug Blagdon. Doug had a yucky hand too; ♠K9 ♥98532 ♦K82 ♣AK7. He passed my 2♥ raise. We both passed again when RHO balanced with 2♠, more on his good looks than on any semblance of a hand. We beat it a trick for +100, losing an IMP to the -140 scored by the opponents at the other table. One of the opponents suggested bidding 1NT followed by 2NT, as suggested by Wittes.

<div style="font-size: 48pt; text-align: center;">3</div> <div style="text-align: center;">Matchpoints N-S Vul</div>	South	West	North	East
	1♥ ???	1♠	2♦	pass
	You, South, hold: ♠KQ96 ♥K10862 ♦AJ96 ♣void What call do you make?			

An important issue to this problem is the question of how strong 2♦ is and how far is it forcing. There are about five different agreements that I have seen expert partnerships have. From weakest to strongest those agreements are:

- 1) Shows 10+ evaluation points, a 3♦ raise or 2♠ rebid is not forcing,
- 2) Shows 10+ HCP, a 3♦ raise or 2♠ rebid is not forcing,
- 3) Shows 10+ HCP, promises a rebid,
- 4) Game forcing, except 4 of a minor may be passed if 3NT is bypassed,
- 5) Unconditionally game forcing.

All of these agreements have some benefits and some drawbacks. If 3♦ isn't forcing then a 4♣ splinter or a 2♠ cuebid make the auction game forcing.

We'll start with the cuebidders.

Lee: 2♠. Let's hear more about partner's hand.

Knee: 2♠. This should show diamond support and, hopefully, lead to some cue-bids or more about partner's distribution.

Korbel: 2♠. General game force for now. We'll see what transpires. I don't think this is a hand I'll be excited to play in 3NT.

Most of the 3♦ bidders seem to be aware that partner might occasionally pass.

Shuster: 3♦. I'd love to bid a "forcing" 3♦, but I'm also not quite slammish enough to try 4♦ (where if partner bids 4♠, I'd be uncomfortable with the 5♣ continuation; partner could easily have something like ♠x ♥Qx ♦KQxxxx ♣AQJx, and there we are, heading to slam off two aces.) With only one key card and no source of tricks, I think 3♦ is enough for now. I'm giving up on NT. A cuebid doesn't promise support here, and doesn't leave us in a very good place over most of partner's continuations, especially 3♥.

Grabel: 3♦. As long as the auction doesn't die there, we will be well placed.

Wittes: 3♦/4♣. I assume partner is not allowed to pass 3♦. If that is the case I will bid 3♦. The late great Grant Baze once told me he thought the splinter was the most important bid in bridge, so I would love to bid 4♣, but the spade KQ rather than the Ace are a negative, and 3♦ gives partner a chance to support hearts if that was his/her intention. It also leaves more room for slam investigation. If partner is allowed to pass 3♦, I would bid 4♣.

Bartusek: 4♣. A non-forcing 3♦ raise is too likely to miss a game (which rates to make opposite as little as ♠xx ♥Qx ♦KQ10xxx ♣Qxx). I might as well show my club shortness while guaranteeing four or more diamonds in support. Note that in Bridge World Standard a 3♦ raise of responder's suit is non-forcing.

Cooper: 4♣. Splinter, an overbid. I would prefer to have better hearts, or at least the ♥A.

I like the 4♣ splinter, but Kitty is right, it isn't perfect.

<div style="font-size: 48pt; text-align: center;">4</div> <div style="text-align: center;">IMPs N-S Vul</div>	South	West	North	East
	1♣	2NT#	pass	pass
	???		dbl	rdbl
	# Unusual for hearts and diamonds			
	You, South, hold: ♠KQJ6 ♥A ♦72 ♣KQ8643			
	What call do you make?			

We know West is showing 5/5 or better in the reds. We know what partner is doing, showing a maximum passed hand with good defense against at least one of the opponents' suits. What's the redoubler doing? God only knows. I've learned that people who bid like this are normally difficult to play with. They make goofy undiscussed bids and fail to realize that there are multiple possible meanings to their goofy call. Frequently we hear "I must have blah, because otherwise I would have bid blahblah (which is equally obscure). And yes fans, men more than women tend to make bids like this.

We'll start with the passers. There are two reasons to pass. One is to sit a double if that is what partner wishes to do. The second reason not to bid spades immediately is to let partner know we have four spades, not five.

Shuster: Pass. If partner wants to double them, I'm ok with that. XX doesn't change anything.

Bartusek: Pass. I'll refrain from bidding an immediate 3♠ because partner might think that I am 5-6. On most auctions I'll probably bid 3♠ on the next round to show 4 spades with extra strength. My 4-6 distribution and black suit honors are much more offensive than defensive. An immediate 3♣ bid here would show a minimum strength hand with extra club length. Note that some experts play a double here by partner as basically a negative double showing the 4th suit rather than the standard penalty-oriented double.

Korbel: Pass. South will have to run and we will see if partner doubles.

Wittes: Pass. Are we playing with a pinochle deck? I'm assuming the redoubler had a spot in mind, especially at this vulnerability, but since partner is a passed hand, I'll wait and see what develops (Fotomat?).

Now for the man who gave me the problem, and those who joined him in trying 3♠.

Knee: 3♠. I believe this hand has a message to tell and should bid 3♠ rather than pass. I have more offense than defense and good distribution. Vulnerability suggests that a game may be preferable to sitting for a double.

Lee: 3♠. It might be right to penalize them, but at this vulnerability I'm just going to take a practical view and describe my hand.

Grabel: 3♠. Not sure what East has on his mind but it sounds like I will get our best result from bidding our hand.

Cooper: 3♥. I have a good hand for offense so I expect we have a game ... *I think Kitty should be showing a heart honor and forcing to game.*

What is the double? I play that is a desire to double them. What is Rdbl by a PH? No preference?

5

IMPs
Both Vul.

South	West	North	East
???	pass	pass	pass

You, South, hold: ♠864 ♥Q963 ♦AK10976 ♣void

What call do you make?

We finish this month's problems with a fourth chair decision. Do we open this juicy nine HCP hand with excellent offensive potential, and if so, what do we open? Pass, 1♦, 2♦, and 3♦ will all have their fans. We'll start with those that focus on Pierson points and the problem with not owning the spade suit.

Grabel: Pass. I learned a long time ago the rule of 15. Points + spades. This is 12.

Cooper: Pass. Not enough Pierson points so it is not our hand.

Bartusek: Pass. HCPs around the table rate to be 10-11-10-9. It's extremely unlikely that we have a game, so any action I take would be an attempt to make a part score. It seems too risky to let the opponents get together by allowing a 1♠ overcall by LHO. Even a 2♦ call is too easy to compete over.

Several panelists tried 1♦, not wishing to pass out a hand with this much offensive potential.

Lee: 1♦. Preempting seems silly with 3=4 in the majors, and we could still have a game. Pass is not worth talking about.

Knee: 1♦. Too much chance for a vulnerable game. I'll raise a 1♥ or 1♠ response or retreat back to diamonds if partner bids notrump. There's a reason why I asked the optometrist for rose-colored lenses.

Korbel: 1♦. Normally I wouldn't open this aggressively, but the prospect of making 4♥ is too high to open 2♦ or pass it out. Good problem.

Shuster: 1♦. But if we open aggressively, I'd pass it out instead. 4♥ is still possible and I don't want to just concede a partial.

The final option is to open 2♦ or 3♦. That gives up on finding a major suit fit, but makes it more difficult for the opponents to enter the auction safely.

Wittes: 2♦. The other three hands should be divided fairly equally in high cards, but I have a good diamond suit, and good distribution, so unless partner has a lot of values in clubs, we should have a reasonable play for 8 tricks.