

Bridge News

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Robert Shore



Bridge Week 2023

While at the Ventura Regional, I had a couple of meetings to discuss the future of Bridge Week and of District 23 itself. As directed by the Board, we formed a committee (Vice President Jan Wickersham, John Jones, and me) to consider whether to recommend approaching District 22 about a possible merger or other combination. The committee's consensus was that we should *not* do so. The primary potential advantage we saw to such a combination was financial — Bridge Week 2022 lost a lot of money, forcing us to several “break glass in case of emergency” measures to deal with the resulting shortfall. However, we considered it unlikely that any merger would solve this problem, simply because no prudent organization would be likely to voluntarily assume any future liabilities.

If merging with District 22 won't solve our financial problems, the committee's consensus was that the loss of several benefits of independence (local control and a continued ability to send our own players to play North American Pairs and Grand National Teams) weighed against recommending a merger. Instead, the committee will recommend attempting to place Bridge Week on a firmer financial footing by significantly increasing card fees. In my personal opinion, the correct price is \$20, but I don't think either the committee or the Board has reached consensus on that issue.

The second meeting was between me and District 22 officers to discuss the possibility of running Bridge Week 2023 as some kind of joint enterprise, where District 22 would bear the risk of financial loss in exchange for substantial control over the event and a healthy share of any profits. Discussions will continue but I am skeptical that they will result in an agreement.

PRESIDENT continued on column 2

Regional Director's Report

by David Lodge



David did not submit a column this month.

PRESIDENT continued from column 1

The fundamental issue is that partnering with us is not an attractive financial proposition because the potential losses far outweigh the potential profits. Specifically, Bridge Week 2022 lost about \$12,000. If attendance holds steady (and we again meet our room night obligation with the hotel), then increasing card fees to \$20 per session (my recommendation) would only result in about \$2000 of profit. The profits would be higher, of course, if the tournament grows over 2022's numbers.

At any rate, even knowing this, our neighbors in District 22 are willing to continue discussions. However, they will not be in a position to make a decision until after they have assessed the financial performance of their Ventura and Palm Springs tournaments, which they will use to come up with their own projections of the likely financial performance of Bridge Week 2023.

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PRESIDENT continued from page 1

This is an entirely reasonable position for District 22 to take, but I don't think we can afford to wait that long. In my opinion, we need to make a decision and get flyers out in time to distribute them at Palm Springs. (Distributing them at Phoenix would be even better.) Accordingly, I plan to call a Zoom Board meeting for 9:30 a.m. Sunday, November 20. My hope is that at that meeting the Board is prepared to make the decision to proceed with Bridge Week 2023 and to set a price that gives us a reasonable chance to make a profit.

North American Pairs

As you probably know by now, we have rescheduled the District Finals for North American Pairs. It looks like the new date will be January 15, 2023. The issue is simple — with our current Webmaster having moved out of the District, we are in the process of recruiting a new Webmaster. Accordingly, we were unable to widely disseminate the planned schedule sufficiently far in advance of the event. That didn't seem fair to us, so we pulled the plug on the October date in order to give all qualifiers who want to play a fair opportunity to participate.

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

The Director's Corner
by David White

How to ask About the Auction

“A fool can ask more questions than a wise person can answer.”



The auction is very strange. The opponents have bid every suit, including yours, at least twice. You really want to know what the heck is going on. So, of course you ask for an explanation. How you ask and when you ask are important. This is where I made the mistake of trying to enlighten a player as to the correct way to ask for an explanation, while I was a player. Re-teaching me the rule: “When you're a player, don't direct.”

One of the biggest lies taught to starting players is “you can always ask for an explanation of a bid.” The correct rule is: “you can usually ask for an

explanation of the opponents agreements, at your turn to bid or play.” With thanks to Jim Perkins for his article of five years back, let me explain.

When you ask, ask about the entire auction, not just one bid.

In the example below, the player PASSEd though out, and then asked about one bid and one bid only (4♣); the partner then led a club to the poser's only honor, the ace. Suspicious?

You should not ask when partner will be leading.

Any questions you have will probably be answered by the dummy hitting the table. Even if partner has already lead face down, you will have another opportunity to ask before you play to trick one. Asking a question might tempt partner into improperly trying to change their lead.

Do not ask what the opponent thinks the bid means.

The opponents will tell you their agreements, or if they don't have one. But, they are not required or even allowed to guess.

An example:

<u>ME</u>	<u>LHO</u>	<u>CHO</u>	<u>RHO</u>
1♣	P	1♥	P
2NT	P	3♣	P
3♠	P	3NT	P
4♣	P	4♠	P
5♣	P	5♥	P
6♣	P	P	P

CHO stands for Center Hand Opponent (partner).

- 4♣ was ace asking.
- 4♠ showed 2 aces.
- 5♣ was a sign off.

Before the final pass, RHO demanded an explanation of the 5♥. I have no clue. I signed off at 5♣. 5♥ came out of the blue.

When pressed by the director I said 5♥ was ASBAF (All Strange Bids Are Forcing). This satisfied my full disclosure requirement, but earned me a procedural penalty for excessive snark.

You can not ask to enlighten your partner.

If partner isn't paying attention, it's not your job to wake them up.

You can not ask out of idle curiosity or for a lesson.

The pros earn a living teaching bridge, you haven't paid for the lesson. Many will answer your questions, but not during the play.

Do not ask, in the middle of the auction, just to disrupt the oponents thought processes.

When the opp is trying to decide twix 7♠ and 7NT, they don't need you asking about the one diamond response six rounds of bidding ago.

You can ask, but don't be surprised if you don't get the answer you were looking for.

“The wise person keeps their mouth shut and lets everybody think them a fool. The fool opens their mouth and removes all doubt.

North American Pairs *by Morris Jones*

North American Pairs Final is set for January 15.

Because of the lack of notice about the earlier date, we've moved the District 23 North American Pairs Final game to January 15. The location is TBA, but will be announced in the December Bridge News. (It will either be in Pasadena at a new bridge club, or in Long Beach.)

If you qualified to advance in the North American Pairs this past June, July, or August, in person or online, make plans to play in the District Final game. Winners will receive an invitation to represent District 23 at the Spring NABC in New Orleans.

More information in the December SCBN.

District 23 Rank Changes September 2022

Junior Master

Cindy Barth
Paul Barth

Jerry J. Jameson
Barbara R. Roller
Paul Roller

Club Master

Marilyn Amato
Glenn T. Barry
Barbara A. Barschak
Barbara A. Betz
Nancy Carr
Mark Maltzman
Patricia M. Warner

Sectional Master

Margery Teller

Regional Master

Vivian Freedman

NABC Master

Mikie Alpert
Lewis Anten

Life Master

Nancy A. Toussaint

Silver Life Master

Lynn J. Danielson
Toni S. Stitt

Ruby Life Master

Richard Bakovic
Virginia S. Brewer

Gold Life Master

Kiran Kumar

Sapphire Life Master

Jo Melis
Michael D. Nash

Diamond Life Master

Seymour Zemlyn

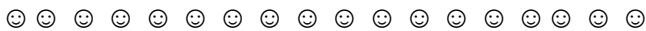
The Puzzle Page

Bridge Jeopardy by John Jones

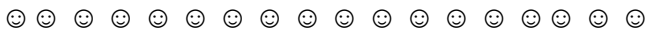
Category: Original Life Masters

And the answer is ...

- \$100 – LM #1.
- \$200 – The first Life Master to achieve LM by winning points.
- \$300 – First female LM.
- \$400 – First player recognized as the youngest LM.
- \$500 – First 11-year-old LM.

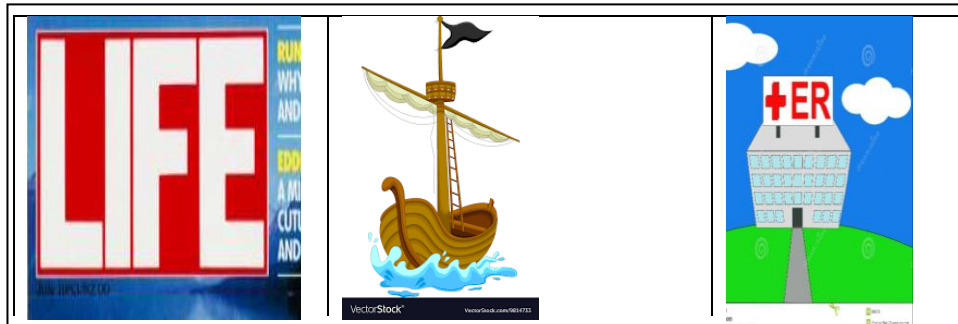


Submitted by John Jones



November Rebus

Well, can you figure out what this says?



Play or Defend? by John Jones

North

♠ A 9 7 4 3
 ♥ K 8 7 6 3
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ 7

West

♠ void
 ♥ Q J 9 5 2
 ♦ 10 9
 ♣ K Q 10 9 8 2

East

♠ Q 8 2
 ♥ 10 4
 ♦ Q J 8 5 4 3 2
 ♣ J

South

♠ K J 10 6 5
 ♥ A
 ♦ K 7
 ♣ A 6 5 4 3

Contract = 7♠

Opening Lead = ♣K

All players can see all the cards. Do you play or defend?

(Solutions to these puzzles are on page 5.
No peeking!)

Solution to “Play or Defend?”

Answer: Play. Win the ♣A. Cash the ♥A, the ♦K and the ♦A. Cash ♥K while pitching a club. Now comes a key play: play the ♠9 and run it if East ducks. Then play a spade to the Jack. This leaves the following six card end position:

	<u>North</u>	
	♠ A 7 4	
	♥ 8 7 6	
	♦ void	
	♣ void	
<u>West</u>		<u>East</u>
♠ void		♠ Q
♥ Q J 9		♥ void
♦ void		♦ Q J 8 5 4
♣ Q 10 9		♣ void
	<u>South</u>	
	♠ K 10 6	
	♥ void	
	♦ void	
	♣ 6 5 4	

Next lead the ♠K out of hand. What you play from dummy (where you win the trick) is dependent on which card West discards. If West discards a club, then you play small from dummy and win the ♠K. But if West discards a heart, you overtake the ♠K with the ♠A to be in the dummy. If West has pitched a heart and you win in the dummy you now ruff a heart, ruff a club, ruff a heart setting up dummy’s last heart. When you ruff a club at T12, dummy’s last heart is set up. If West pitches a club on the play of the ♠K in the six card end position, you follow with a small spade, winning the trick in declarer’s hand. Now, ruff a club, ruff a heart, ruff a club setting up declarer’s last club. Ruff a heart to hand at T12 and declarer’s last club is good. This is an entry shifting trump squeeze. Note that running the ♠9 was necessary to set up this position.

The really amazing thing about this hand is that it was made single dummy at the table by the great Norwegian star Geir Helgemo (who now represents Monaco). He used clues from the auction and the fall of the cards to discern the position, and then played it as I described above. The original auction was:

All vulnerable.

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♠	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
7♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

2♠ was Michaels - hearts and a minor.
2NT was spade support, forcing to game.
4♣ indicated club shortness.
4NT was Keycard Blackwood (03 or 14 (Pi))
5♠ showed 2 Keycards with the queen (treating the 5th trump as the queen).

Helgemo earned a “Hand of the Year Award” from the International Bridge Press Association for his play.

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

- \$100 – Who is David Bruce (Bernstine)?
- \$200 – Who is Charles Goren?
- \$300 – Who is Sally Young?
- \$400 – Who is Johnny Crawford?
- \$500 – Who is Doug Hsieh?

Solution to “Rebus”

“Life Master”

Have a good bridge rebus? Send it to johndjones44@yahoo.com

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Around the Units in District 23



Pomona – Covina
by Tom Lill
www.acblunit551.org

Individual: November 1, 5 a.m., Ontario
December 3, 10 a.m., Upland

STaC: November 1, and 4, La Fetra

Upgraded Club Championships: November 8, 11*,
15 and 18, La Fetra

Unit Game: Saturday November 19, 11:00 a.m.,
Glendora

Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game

There's an asterisk (*) appended to our Club Championship for November 11, because the Center will be closed that day in observance of Veteran's Day. So the plan is to hold the game at Tom's Place, where we often hold the monthly Individual game. PLEASE note that I can manage four tables easily, and five tables with some effort, but no more. So if you plan to play that day, it would be *very wise* to make a reservation with Tom (i.e. Yours Truly), because it will otherwise be first come, first served.

Early-Bird Advance Notice: La Fetra will be closed on Friday, December 23, and also on Friday, December 30, in observance of Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. There will be no game held on either day.

In the October Individual, Clint Lew led the rest with 67.05%; Gary Atwell was next, at 60.23. Next were Linda Tessier, Yours Truly, Roger Boyar, Art Wallace, and Steve Mancini to round out the leader board.

Topping the charts this month we find Clint Lew – Linda Tessier with the only two 65%+ games, with 66.67% and 65.95%. Others atop the leader board were Bill Papa, Vic Sartor, Fredy Minter and Roger Boyar

We also are pleased (more so than usual – ahem!) to announce the Overall Individual Championship standings for 2021-22: Here goes:

Tom Lill	57.4%
Clint Lew	54.8%
Steve Andersen	53.7%
Peter Kavounas	53.3%
Roger Boyar	52.6%

These standings are computed by taking a weighted average of each player's best six games, percentage-wise, over the past year.

In the October Unit game, Amr Elghamry – Fredy Minter, with 63.54%, edged out Vic Sartor – Bill Papa by just ½ match point. Gary Atwell – Susan Emminger were third, followed by Tim and Eileen Finlay.

There were no rank advancements again this month.

Once again, no one beat a path to our door, panting to be on our Board of Directors, so the same cast has agreed to serve another term. *Sigh*.

Here's another amusing hand, this time from a regular club game. It was hand-dealt, so no electronic blame can be charged. As dealer, I picked up this monster:

♠ KJ987542 ♥ AKQ106 ♦ none ♣ none.

BTW, I calculate the odds of picking up an 8-5 hand at about 1 in 31,948, so that's *that* for a while. (If you played every day, 24 hands/day, you'd pick up a hand with this shape about once in 4 years.) Anyway, I decided to open it 1♠. From there it went pass, 1NT (forcing), 3♣. Bah. Wish I had opened 4♠! I chose 4♥ as my rebid, which became the final contract. The opening lead was the ♣Q, and I saw this dummy:

♠ Q ♥ 732 ♦ Q10972 ♣ K1092.

Now I *really* wish I had opened 4♠! I made five, as LHO elected to discard as I ran the spades instead of tapping me in a minor; with trumps 4-1, I think I got tapped out before I can run the spades. Elsewhere, the contracts were 4♥ down one, and 4♠ making. Yes, more difficult to tap out declarer when he has eight trumps! Again ... better lucky than good!

And these freak hands seem to run in streaks ... just one week later, I was on defense, holding this junk pile:

♠ 105 ♥ A42 ♦ 976432 ♣ 84.

Ho, hum, next deal please. No interest here, you say? Wait! The auction was

LHO	Partner	RHO	Moi
1♠	2♥	pass	pass
3♦	pass	3♠	pass
4♠	all pass.		

Partner led the ♥Q, and dummy flopped with

♠ Q2 ♥ K1065 ♦ 10 ♣ K107632.

Declarer played the ♥K from dummy, you know what I played, and declarer ruffed. Well, OK. Two rounds of trumps followed, all following, and then a small diamond was led from the closed hand towards the 10 ... and partner showed out! Wow. Declarer was 7-6! So now it's obvious, I will win trick 13 with the Curse of Scotland. Declarer's exact hand:

♠ AKJ9864 ♥ none ♦ AKQJ85 ♣ none.

What makes this even more amusing is that at one table, the holder of this semi-balanced hand shot the grand ... and just about fell off her chair when the diamonds proved to be as sour as could be. Bridge, *such an easy game*.

Oh, yeah – if you really care, the chances of picking up a 7-6 hand are *far* better than the chances of an 8-5 hand: about 1 in 17,970. Don't hold your breath!

Quote for the month: "The shortest distance between two points is usually under construction." (from "Laughter to Get You Through the Day")

Downey – Whittier by Liz Burrell

Liz Burrell, 562-972-2913
lizburrell7@gmail.com
Downey-Whittier BC

Contrary to recent rumors, the Downey Bridge Club is alive and well, but remember, space is limited be sure to get your name in as soon as possible.

October was an up-and-down month and attendance was sporadic, to say the least. We had 4 tables three times and 2½ tables once. However, Steve

and Linda Wood topped all aspirants during the month with a 69.05% game on October 12, earning 2.63 black points. Other first place winners were Nancy Toussaint/ID Patel on October 5, Barbara Horn/John Dobson on October 19, and Liz and Kent Burrell on October 26.

Looking forward, next week, November 2, is a STaC game at Downey which includes Districts 22 and 23. Please join us. As you know, STaC games are always challenging, but especially frustrating for some of us. Ahem. Our next STaC game will be December 7, also including Districts 22 and 23. Make your plans now for these games.

Before your calendars fill up, please note that December 14 will be a festive day at Downey. We will have our usual game, of course, but we will also celebrate the season with an appropriate lunch. Be sure to join us for good food, great bridge, and excellent camaraderie.

Several of our members have been on extensive trips recently. John Dobson and his wife traveled all over Europe recently for the umpteenth time. And Kiran Kumar just returned from an amazing safari. Her photos posted on Facebook were awesome, but it looks like she got a little too close to the King of the Jungle in a couple of them! Glad they all made it home safely. And Gabby Sill and Connie Kang have recently embarked (separately) to who-knows-where. Safe trips to them. Also, Linda Wood recently had successful eye surgery and is astounded to find out what those little words at the bottom of the TV mean. Our best wishes to her.

We wish you a happy Halloween and many treats, but no tricks.



Santa Clarita- Antelope Valley by Beth Morrin

Unit 556 is still looking for a place in the Santa Clarita area to restart face-to-face bridge games. If anyone has suggestions, please contact one of our board members. The Virtual Club is still going strong.

Virtual Game Schedule

Monday:	12:15 PM	Open game
Tuesday:	6:15 PM	Open game
Thursday:	10:15 AM	Open game
Friday:	12:15 PM	Open game
Sunday:	12:15 PM	749er game
	12:30 PM	Open game

Contact our club manager at virtualclub@bridgemojo.com for reservations. Our games cost \$3 unless it is a special game series.

Big Games (65+%):

Tues. Sept. 27		
David Khalieque – Harry Randhawa		67.06%
Sun. Oct, 2		
Amr Elghamry – Gerard Geremia		70.14%
Mon. Oct. 3		
Roy Ladd – Ruth Baker		65.74%
Mon. Oct. 10		
Greg Vernon – Robot		65.56%
Tues. Oct. 11		
Pat Larin – David White		67.06%
Thurs. Oct. 13		
Lulu Minter – Robot		71.39%
Fri. Oct. 14		
Bill Brodek – Carolyn Cohen		65.24%
Sun. Oct. 16		
Carolyn Cohen – Cathryn Martin		68.06%
Avice Osmundson – Carolyn Staab		65.56%
Mon. Oct. 17		
Rae Murbach – Gerard Geremia		68.21%
Roy Ladd – Ruth Baker		65.43%
Tues. Oct. 18		
Amr Elghamry – Dominique Moore		67.78%
Thurs. Oct. 20		
Dominique Moore – Carolyn Cohen		68.52%
Fri. Oct. 21		
Bob McBroom – Robot		69.17%
Sun. Oct. 23		
Kathy Flynn – Bob McBroom		71.83%
Genise Hasan – Judy Feder		67.06%
Next Board meeting:	TBA, via Zoom.	

Pasadena – San Gabriel by Morris “Mojo” Jones

bridgemojo.com

Important schedule change for the November Unit Games!

We wanted to take advantage of the fall STaC tournament running Oct. 31 through Nov. 6, so we're moving the Sunday Unit Games to **November 6 and 20** this month. Especially for these games, be sure to reserve your seat with Miriam Harrington before the game! Our space is limited. Call Miriam at (626) 232-0558.

Save the date!

Our unit is reviving the traditional Holiday Party and bridge game on **December 11**. We'll have lunch, and a great bridge game at the Arcadia Community Center. We're happy to welcome visitors from anywhere in District 23.

Winners in October ... well how about that, the same pairs won both games:

October 9 AND October 23:

- N/S: Peter Szecsi, Amr Elghamry
- E/W: Arthur and Dominique Moore

Our next round of beginning bridge classes will be starting after the first of the year. They'll be on Wednesday evenings, starting January 11, offered through PCC Extension, and taught at Arcadia High School. Keep it in mind for friends and family who might like to learn our game.

Lots of players climbing the rank ladders this month!

New Club Masters:

- Linda Carter
- Beth Hollander
- Stuart Soldate

New Bronze Life Master:

- Nancy Nakanishi

New Gold Life Master:

- Marilyn Kogan

Congratulations all!

Unit 559 currently has 359 active members. Wouldn't that be a fun group for a holiday party! Make your plans now. ☺



Long Beach by Lillian Slater and Ardis Laine

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

Hope your Halloween was Spooktacular, and you have many things to be thankful for this month.

Join us for our next Unit game on Sunday, November 27th, at 12:30 p.m. Only \$8 for the Open and \$1.99 for the 199er section!

And remember our Fall Sectional on November 12-13. Open and NLM pairs on Saturday and Swiss teams on Sunday, all for only \$10 a session. Make reservations by email to kulrusty@charter.net.

Hope to see you there!

October's 70 Percent Games



Mel Fineberg and Fred Willbanks had a 71.51% game in a field of 10 tables on October 10.



Rita Vanlierop and Bonnie Shok had a 78.9% game in a field of four tables during a NLM game on October 14.



Nancy Toussaint and John Crabtree had a 70.47% STaC game in a field of 10½ tables on October 31.

Torrance – South Bay by Carolyn Byrnes and Laura Gastelum

Bridge in a Day featuring Margie Michelin was a success. Twenty people were in attendance, 13 guests were “newbies” and the remainder were current players or friends of the students. Marjorie Michelin’s presence was a big draw for the experienced players. A big thanks to club members who volunteered.

The following Tuesday Beginning Bridge class started and 4 students walked in with their Bridge in a Day books, another two have also registered for the class. Lillian Slater from Long Beach is teaching, Carolyn Hannas from SBBC and Allene Buchanan from Long Beach are volunteer assistants for the class.

Tournament Season is on and we have some winners:

Ventura Regional: Bracketed Swiss Team ties for 1st Place Ramani Ravikandan, Laura Gastelum, Carolyn Byrnes and Marcus Evans. The latter two are members of the Long Beach Club.



Saddleback Unit Game in Laguna Woods: 1st place went to Laura Gastelum and Terry Hane.



Problem Solvers' Panel

Moderator: John Jones

Mark Bartusek, Sid Brownstein, Ellis Feigenbaum, Ross Gabel, Jill Meyers, Margie Michelin, Rick Roeder, Mike Shuster, and Jon Wittes are panelists.

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.

This is November, a month that I always thank the people that make this column work. I will first thank all of my readers, especially those that mention my column in conversations and emails to me. I am particularly grateful to those who send me possible problems. I will next thank my panelists. Except for the July issue, where some of my panelists are juniors, and the April issue, in which I normally include a fictitious expert, all of my panelists are experts. Their opinions are those of players who deserve a great deal of respect for their bridge expertise. They take the time to think out tough problems (at least I try to make them hard problems) and give thoughtful responses. I will continue my gratitude to thanking my proofreaders. Proofreading is a difficult task. Yet it is a necessary part of every column. Most readers would not believe the number of changes and positive suggestions that my proofreaders make. Oddly, when I get multiple proofreads, I frequently get something that is caught only by one proofreader. My proofreaders this year include: Gabe Foster, Chris Hitchcock, Bob McDonnell, Jo Melis, and Lillian Slater. My final thanks go to my editor Tom Lill and my webmaster Dave White. I frequently run late and make their jobs more difficult. But with little complaint they do a fantastic job of getting my column onto the Internet.

<h1>1</h1> <p>Matchpoints N-S Vul</p>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	1NT	2♠#	2NT*	3♠
	pass	pass	???	

= Natural, single-suited (had two-suited bids available)
* = Lebensohl

You, South, hold: ♠ KQ ♥ Q1092 ♦ A973 ♣ AJ5

What call do you make?

The first question is do we double the opponents? The second question is how high do we bid if we don't double the opponents?

Some panelists consider dropping the hammer on the insolent opponents who dared interfere with our auction.

Michelin: Double. My double should tell partner I was bidding Stayman with a stopper (or possibly 3NT with a stopper) and not trying to get out in a minor and let him make the decision.

Feigenbaum: Double/3NT. Think my answer depends on who I am playing with. For family harmony I probably double; left to my own devices (often entertaining) or in the famous words of Jim Looby, "if I were playing with myself," I bid 3NT still showing a four-card heart suit with a stopper (again, possibly 3NT with a stopper).

Other panelists think we aren't getting enough on defense, but don't wish to invite a slam.

Roeder: 3NT. I'm confused as I thought there were only 40 HCP in a deck. 4♥ could work well but might run into mirror distribution.

Grabel: 3NT. Should show a 3NT bid with a stopper whereas a direct 3NT bid would have shown the values without a stopper.

One panelist suggests a twist on standard Lebensohl.

Shuster: 3NT. Double is possible, but I don't expect partner to pass if I do, and I can't afford to risk missing 3NT at MPs. I prefer to not use Lebensohl to "show" a 3NT bid with a stopper; I think it a poor idea to tell the opposition whether or not they should lead their suit and to give advancer the three level for a lead directing call. If playing Lebensohl the way I recommend, then this sequence would promise four hearts.

Some panelists follow through with their slam try.

Brownstein: 4NT. Quantitative.

Bartusek: 4NT. At this vulnerability, penalizing them will only get us +500 which is insufficient at MPs (they'll get five trumps and a ruff in dummy). The KQ tight opposite xx requires me to slightly downgrade the hand. The K&R hand evaluator rates this hand as 15.05 while DK gives it a 16+ evaluation (I more realistically evaluated ♠Ax ♥Q1092 ♦A973 ♣AJ5 as 15.5 which K&R says is 15.35). Thus, the choice is between 3NT and an invitational 4NT (a 4♠ bid will probably spiral the auction out of control, imply first round control, and lose the ability to invite slam). *(Hand evaluators are pretty good at assessing the value of balanced hands in an auction where no bid has yet to be made. The K&R evaluator is very good and the DK is pretty good. However, those evaluating tools are severely limited in the sense that they don't change after an opening bid).* The expected red suit length with my LHO makes me lean toward the conservative action; however, I've generated far too many hands for partner that will make slam. Note that any suit bid at the 4-level by me would show six+ cards in a hand that probably wanted to sign off at the 3-level (but took the push). *Mark is 100% on target with that remark; 4♥ is a very dubious call. 4♥ overstates the heart length (we have four instead of*

six) and understates overall HCP strength (we have 15 HCP instead about five to seven). A double by me after Lebensohl would guarantee a spade stopper and be an action double, but I'm more interested in partner's strength rather than his distribution. I suppose the quality of partner's 1NT openings and slam acceptance tendencies are very relevant to this problem. Note that partner can be assured that I've guaranteed at least second round control of spades by bidding 2NT then 4NT (and I might have cuebid 4♣ with first round control).

Two panelists object to the auction, thinking that an original takeout double is superior to the 2NT Lebensohl call.

Wittes: 4NT. I don't accept the 2NT Lebensohl bid. That's the last bid I would make with this hand. I think 4NT quantitative is the least likely bid to be misconstrued. Or negative double followed by 4NT. Partner should take into account that my RHO could surely be psyching at this vulnerability.

Meyers: Abstain. I would have doubled 2♠ as takeout so this is a silly problem and since I made such a ridiculous bid to start with I am abstaining.

The panelists who preferred an original double are completely correct. Double over an overcall of 1NT has been played as takeout for several years now. The actual hand is from Long Beach Bridge Center, and I don't know whether the partnership who gave me the hand, Melanie Smothers and Lillian Slater, play doubles as penalty or takeout. I was playing with Jo "The Beast" Melis and she held the hand in question. She did not have a takeout double available, as she picked penalty when I gave her the choice. She used Lebensohl only to signoff in 3NT (there was no 3♠ bid at our table; I made the normal 11 tricks). At the table in question, the 2♠ overcall made by Alan Olschawang was not a thing of beauty, holding ♠J98762 ♥A7 ♦T54 ♣73. But advancer's raise to 3♠ on ♠T43 ♥8653 ♦Q8 ♣QT94, made by my friend Alan Flower, is probably best described as "bidding on his good looks". That got doubled, but this netted the down three that several of our panelists suggested, with declarer scoring an ace, four trumps in hand, and one ruff in the dummy.

<h1 style="font-size: 4em; margin: 0;">2</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Matchpoints Both Vul</p>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
	pass	1♥	1NT	pass
	2♥&	3♣	dbl	3♥
	???			
	& = Transfer to spades			
<p>You, South, hold: ♠ J10842 ♥ 4 ♦ K972 ♣ KJ3</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>				

Most of the panel doubled, an action I agree with. I'll start with the panelist who disagrees.

Bartusek: Pass. My initial reaction was to double, since it's our hand with the balance of strength. Unfortunately, I can see dummy hitting with three trumps and the expected club shortness making my defensive assets worthless. (Give LHO ♠xx ♥AQJxxx ♦void ♣Axxxx and they might even make 4♥!) It really depends upon whether partner has three or four hearts and can lead trumps twice to cut down club ruffs. With presumably no spade fit it seems like it's the opponent's hand. Thus, I'm going to reluctantly pass because I don't think we can make anything (BTW, downgrade hands with jacks).

Now the majority.

Brownstein: Double. I have invitational values and too much to pass.

Roeder: Double. With 23-25 HCP, we cannot let them play undoubled.

Feigenbaum: Double, and hope partner either finds a 3NT bid or leads a trump.

Shuster: Double. I'll try for 200. Partner will realize I don't have a heart stack here, just a good hand. It seems like RHO doesn't like his hand much to have not bid 2♥ over 1NT, so if partner passes, I expect dummy to track with two hearts and one club.

Wittes: Double. I have maximum values for my bidding, so I think it's our hand. Right hand opponent didn't bid 2♥ directly over 1NT, so all they're doing is taking a preference. I don't expect partner to have more than two spades, and even if they have three spades and no great defensive holding in hearts, they are allowed to bid 3♣ over my double. It would be nice if partner could lead a trump, but they might not have a heart holding they can lead from. I also don't want partner leading the ♠K from Kx, but bridge is not a perfect game.

Grabel: Double. I have invitational values and too much to pass.

Michelin: Double. At IMPs I might be too chicken to double but in MP I am doubling because I want partner to know I was at least invitational with my transfer. I told him I had five spades and he knows I don't have a heart stack when the opener has at least five. Maybe he has a few hearts for his NT bid and East took a preference.

Meyers: Double. I have too much to pass; if partner passes, I am hoping for a trump lead. If they make it, I have been minus 730 before. But East didn't raise to 2♥ so how good could they be? If I double, partner will be clued in that I have values.

This is an old problem that I got from a D8 panel from many years ago. The majority of that panel also voted for an action double, but there were also votes for 3NT, Pass, and a mention of 3♠.

<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">3</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Matchpoints Both Vul</p>	North	East	South	West
	pass	pass	pass	2♠
	dbl	pass	???	
	You, South, hold: ♠ Q1098 ♥ KQ4 ♦ Q3 ♣ 9765			
	What call do you make?			

Several panelists ask the question of what 2NT would mean in this sequence. Lebensohl and natural are both mentioned. Which is best? For problems posed in this column, each expert is allowed to select rational options that he/she think are best, or what they play in their favorite partnerships.

First, we will hear from those who try for +200 on defense.

Brownstein: Pass for penalty!

Feigenbaum: Pass. Who am I playing with, Thomas Torquemada? I sit and hope plus 200 is there; if not, it's matchpoints; and, I haven't blown the whole game.

Now for the 3♣ camp.

Wittes: 3♣. My left-hand opponent opened 2♠ vulnerable in fourth seat, so I don't think my QT98 is as great as it appears on the surface. I expect LHO to have ♠AKJxxx more often than not. Also, partner is a passed hand, so I expect the points to be fairly equally divided among all four hands. Partner rates to be 1-4-4-4 to force me to bid at the 3 level as a passed hand, so at least we should have a 4-4 fit, even if any missing honors rate to be off-side.

Roeder: 3♣. The location of the ♠J might make the difference between +200 and -670. Do not give partner a heart attack for what may have been a heroic action. As Clint Eastwood famously asked, "Do you feel lucky, punk?" Today, no.

Shuster: 3♣. I don't expect my trump trick will stop the fourth seat two bidder from taking eight tricks. I'll just bid my long suit and hope they push one higher. 2NT would be natural, but also probably -300.

Bartusek: 3♣. This is a guess between 2NT and 3♣. Since the doubler is a passed hand there is absolutely no need for Lebensohl to be on in this auction. Thus, 2NT is natural here which describe my hand fairly

well (although I would strongly prefer 3♠ or spades). It would definitely be too scary passing for penalties since partner is a passed hand. In 3♣ I won't be happy if partner puts down a 1=4=5=3 hand, but 2NT will go down a lot after a small spade lead. It's likely that there is no successful action here. Note that 3♣ is more likely to be doubled, but more likely to be successful than 2NT (although if LHO foolishly leads a high spade against my known four-card suit then 2NT would work out better).

Michelin: 3♣. I need to know whether 2NT is Lebensohl. Here, with some partners after you are originally a passed hand it is natural. I'd like to have 10 or 11 but I'll chance 2NT if natural. Otherwise, I'll have to bid 3♣. The 2♠ bid for me is 11-14 with six plus spades.

Now for the 2NT bidders.

Meyers: 2NT. If 2NT is natural I bid 2NT, otherwise I bid 3♣. If 2NT is Lebensohl I bid 3♣.

Grabel: 2NT. Ostensibly this is to play in two places but hopefully my partner reads the situation right and passes.

Is 2NT best used as natural or Lebensohl? I stated previously that panelists were allowed to select rational conventions based upon their expert beliefs and experiences. In my world, it is completely illogical for Lebensohl to be on. Many of the follow-up sequences make no sense when both partners are passed hands. Does that mean that 2NT should be natural? No, I think that is a poor method here also. 2NT is best played here as Scramble, two places to play (normally the minors). This describes a 4-4 hand and allows the partnership to play in their best fit if the takeout doubler is 1=4=5=3 or 1=4=3=5, 0=4=4=5 or 0=4=5=4. Only Grabel mentions this treatment (some of the 3♣ bidders might play this but didn't comment on the convention).

<h1 style="font-size: 4em;">4</h1> <p>Matchpoints Neither Vul</p>	West	North	East	South
	1♠	2♥	2♠	pass
	pass	4♣	pass	???
<p>You, South, hold: ♠ 109852 ♥ K7 ♦ Q2 ♣ K952</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>				

We passed a difficult hand on the last round. Partner showed extras. Do we come to life and try to let partner in on our secret? If we take the position that we are coming to life, what's the best call?

Roeder: 6♣. Which hit version titled "Magic" do you prefer? Pilot in 1975, Olivia Newton-John in 1980, or the Cars in 1984? (*Extra credit if you can identify which version hit #1 nationally*). Because Magic is what you have. Technically, one can argue for a 4♣ cuebid, but I do not want to discourage a spade lead against slam.

Michelin: 6♣. I may be cold for 6 of either of partner's suits. 4♥ would be a safe bid. I know he must have at least six hearts and five clubs and a spade void. I have two very important cards for partner, the kings of his suits. I hope we are not off two aces or two diamonds. I am willing to take wrath from partner, but I don't want to hear that I bid it like a girl. I could bid 4♠ if I had the understanding that it would be a super accept of partner's minor. *Yes, 4♠ must be a cuebid with a super hand for his/her minor. 4♠ is what I would bid.*

Shuster: 4NT. I'm going to commit to 6♣, so I might as well check for keys in case we have a grand. ♠void ♥Axxxx ♦Ax ♣AQxxx is not out of the question. I'm glad I don't use any method of "showing" a void over keycard - if we did, we would not be able to locate the ♣Q in time.

Some cite the matchpoint scoring and stay in hearts.

Bartusek: 4♥. Matchpoints requires us to take the risk of playing in a 5-2 heart fit. Note that partner did not use Michaels, so could easily have a sixth heart (but is expecting a 4♥ preference with xx on occasion).

Feigenbaum: 4♥. Seems too easy. We might easily be making 6♣ on a non-diamond lead. This is one of those hands where you want to bid 4♦ to deflect the lead on the way to a club slam. If it works, I am a hero; if it doesn't work we were going down in 6♣ whatever happens.

Grabel: 4♥. Partner should have at least two more hearts than clubs or he would have bid 2♠ over 1♠.

Meyers: 4♥. Although I would bid 5♣ at IMPs. I am playing partner for something like ♥AQxxx and ♣AQxxx.

Other panelists don't want to try for slam but think that clubs may prove to be the superior strain.

Brownstein: 5♣. Hearts gets tapped trick one. May have a shot at 6♣, but no 4♣ Leaping Michaels bid (*4♣ would be a preempt for most partnerships*) on the first round argues against going slamming.

Wittes: 5♣. 4♥ could be right at match points, but with a spade tap on the go, and hearts likely breaking badly, let's play the nine-card fit.

ANSWER to Roeder's trivia question: Olivia Newton-John.

<h1>5</h1>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>
	1♠	pass	2♠	pass
	3♥	pass	4♠	pass
	5♠	pass	???	
Matchpoints Both Vul.	You, South, hold: ♠ K865 ♥ Q542 ♦ J73 ♣ 84			
	What call do you make?			

Does partner need to have a void for this auction to make sense? Should we have tried 4♥ on the previous round?

Some go low, thinking they have represented the hand already.

Shuster: Pass. When we jumped to 4♠ without cuebidding a minor on the way, partner can infer that we did that based on two major suit covers. So, we've shown our entire hand (and maybe a bit more). Sounds like partner needs three major suit honors for slam.

Roeder: Pass. Because partner did not cuebid 5 of a minor, partner is concerned about trump quality. If I had just a touch more, I would bid on. We will not get a terrible score if slam happens to be on.

Meyers: Pass. I think partner is looking for a club control; if partner had a club control she could key card.

Wittes: Pass. Even though I have four trumps, I have a minimum with no controls other than the king of spades and queen of hearts. In view of the subsequent auction, I kind of wish I had bid 3♠ over 3♥ to see what partner would have bid next on that auction.

Other panelists bravely bid the slam.

Brownstein: 6♠. ♥Q should be enough.

Bartusek: 6♠. My initial reaction was to pass because I have an aggressive dead minimum acceptance of partner's game try. But, I have all my values in the

majors which partner is asking about along with a fourth trump, and partner could have something like ♠AQxxxx ♥Axxxx ♦void ♣AK or ♠AQxxxx ♥Axxxx ♦void ♣A or ♠Axxxxxx ♥AJxx ♦void ♣AK or ♠Axxxxxx ♥Axxx ♦A ♣A. If a side ace or potentially a king would have been useful, then partner would have started cuebidding. Note - I could have described my hand by bidding 4♥ on the second round which guarantees at least Hxxx of hearts (perhaps my hand is too weak?). Then, RKC might have sufficed.

Feigenbaum: 6♠. Is 5♥ a general slam try or old fashioned Josephine? (*In the USA, Josephine more commonly comes in the form of 5NT, although trump help asking bids can have other forms. In the USA it is commonly referred to as Grand Slam Force, but in other parts of the world it is called Josephine after its developer, Josephine Culbertson*). I would have bid 4♥ (*I agree*) on the way to 4♠; partner is allowed to have a four-card heart suit here. Having said that, I am an old-fashioned type of guy and I bid 6♠ because I have one of top three honors in spades.

Grabel: 6♠. With ♠K and ♥Q, hard to imagine what more he might expect!

Michelin: 6♠. Since only two suits were bid the 5♠ bid can't be asking for first or second round control in the unbid suit. Partner must have a void and he is asking me about my trumps; with four to the king I am bidding 6♠.

Hands 4 and 5 were sent to me from Michael Kamil via Facebook. Thanks Michael!