



Master Solvers Panel

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in 3NT; responder would then pull 3NT to 4M with M support and no club stopper (presuming opener would not have raised to 3♦ with stoppers in both clubs and the other major)

b. 3♣ equals stopper in the other major, no club stopper

c. 3NT is stoppers in both unbid suits

This has the advantage of being able to show the different important hand types without bypassing 3NT. It also allows responder to show his stopper and then bid again as a slam try. Of course, there is the usual overhead associated with this type of treatment – one has to remember that one is playing it.

Regardless of methods, it is important to realize that the raise to 3♦ crowds the auction. Thus despite holding three-card support, when appropriate, one should prefer to rebid 2♥ or 2NT (after the 2♦ response) on hands suitable for play in notrump. On the deal from which this problem is based, South held the king third of spades rather than clubs, making 3♣ (rather than 3♥) a tempting call. When South later bid 4♥ there was the confusion alluded to by Andrew, but North passed and all was well.

Problem 3.

East-West vulnerable, IMP scoring
You are South holding:

♠8 ♥J865 ♦KQ10874 ♣J5

South	West	North	East
3♦	Pass	3♥*	3♣
4♥	4♣	Pass	Pass
?			

*Strongly invitational

J.S.: There were a couple of complaints about the conditions:

Abdou: 5♥. I strongly disagree with 3♦! My guideline on preemption is that if the positive features are equal to the negatives I am aggressive. Here there are two negatives, four of a side major and only six in the preemption suit, but only one positive, the favorable vulnerability. Now, because I have no defense and am absolutely guessing after this distorted auction, I'll try 5♥. If my pard is a known jokester and 3♥ could be a psyche I would bid 4NT to give him a choice. If partner is a solid citizen, 4NT should show three hearts and seven diamonds.

Ivaska: 5♥. Obviously I (or maybe a player for whom I'm temporarily substituting) must regard our team as a huge underdog in this match, since I let fly with what I feel is a wildly undisciplined first-seat preempt. Partner can hardly be expected to visualize such a monstrous action, so I have to bid 5♥, especially in passout seat (as opposed to direct seat), however it turns out. My first reaction was 6♥ as I fill in for the probably incapacitated previous occupant of the South seat, but North probably doesn't have the necessary three aces and good trumps. As was the case in Problem 1, I'm wrong only if both 4♣ and 5♥ fail, relatively unlikely in my estimation.

J.S.: The difference of opinion between the previous two panelists and me is remarkable. I consider it an error to not preempt 3♦ with these cards in first seat, favorable vulnerability. Of course, partnership agreements take priority, but waiting around for seven card suits gives the opponents too many uncontested auctions. I could understand rejecting the preempt holding four mediocre spades, but with hearts I don't expect to outbid the opponent even if we have a fit.

Lee: 5♥. I can't imagine doing anything else with a singleton spade, four-card heart support, and possibly no defensive trick against 4♣.

Tritt: Pass. I don't believe the pass is forcing, given the non-vulnerable preempt opposite the invitational bid. I have described my hand fairly accurately, so I pass.

Gumperz: 5♥. What I should have bid the round before. The chances that the opponents were about to bid 4♣ were extremely high.

Stansby: 5♥. Pard didn't double 4♣, and I have extra offense.

Lawrence: 5♥. If 3♥ shows a real hand, then 5♥ should be clear. The biggest reason for passing is not that 5♥ will be a lousy contract. It is that we may be faced with a belated 6♣ bid from East-West.

Davis: 4NT. Asks partner to choose between 5♦ and 5♥. This caters to partner doing something creative like making a 3♥ bid on: ♠xxx ♥KQ10x ♦Axxx ♣xx. If partner wants to pass the choice back to me he can bid 5♣, and I will be happy to choose hearts.

J.S.: Ed's 4NT bid, allowing for a 3♥ lead directing bid from partner (also considered by Wafik), looks accurate to me. 5♦ should show seven diamonds and three hearts, assuming one chooses not to defend 4♣. This time Jim's pass was the winner. Partner had made an enterprising bid with four hearts to the queen and four diamonds. Slam is on for the opponents, but they were willing to accept +1100 against 5♥ doubled. 5♦ is no bargain, but does save one trick.

Problem 4.

North-South vulnerable, IMP scoring
You are South holding:

♠J7432 ♥7 ♦A86 ♣AQ52

South	West	North	East
?			

Lee: 1♠. I think bidding spades when you have spades is a pretty reasonable policy, and this is 2016 after all. Truth be told, I find not opening this hand to be mildly bizarre.

J.S.: How do you feel about a 1♣ opening? That bid was suggested in a recent Bridge World article, "Going Against the Field." I thought the idea of starting with 1♣ was more than mildly bizarre, and was interested if any of the panel would consider such a call.

Abdou: 1♠. I will not like it much if the auction continues 1NT by partner, 2♣ by me and a preference to 2♠ by partner. However, the same problem will occur at the other table. 1♠ is preemptive in nature and I have 2 ½ quick tricks, so no reason for a 1♣ opener (reserved for those under 26).

J.S.: On this occasion, it is good to be over 26.

Gumperz: 1♠. In the modern style. I have easily sufficient defense to open, and barely sufficient offense.

Stansby: 1♠. This is like pawn to king-4.

J.S.: Bobby Fischer said the opening move of pawn to king-4 was, "Best by test." But chess master Ernst Grünfeld, asked why he always opened with d4

(pawn to queen-4) replied, "I never make a mistake in the opening."

Lawrence: 1♠, but aware that this hand isn't wonderful. Everything is good but there isn't that much of it unless we find a fit. Not a good hand for any number of notrump. Bidding 1♠ means that I won't have to make a difficult choice after (for example) the auction: Pass - 1♥ - Pass - 2♥. Even this simple sequence would give me the option of bidding 2♠ on a lousy suit, or double, which risks losing the spade suit. The pluses of opening seem to outweigh the minuses.

Ivaska: 1♠. This is almost a religious question, and the answer depends greatly upon whoever holds this hand. Speaking just for me, bad things tend to happen to my side whenever I pass such a holding. The spade suit is lamentably weak, of course, but I do have two and one-half defensive tricks, and I lose almost all chance to describe the several aspects of this holding if I pass. Shall I overcall in spades or double for takeout, if indeed I get a chance at a low enough level? I don't worry that much about directing a poor opening lead, since I increase the likelihood of playing the hand by bidding as soon as possible. Whatever you choose, I think you should try to be consistent (if partnership agreement doesn't already dictate the answer), so that you don't get the worst of all possible worlds. More generally, players should follow their styles and instincts as much as possible, since failure to do so will tend to cloud later judgment.

Davis: Pass. This hand is a borderline opening bid; it is a distinctly weaker hand than if the spades were ♠J109xx. I would no doubt regret opening 1♠ and then playing in 2♠ vulnerable when partner has a doubleton spade and 6-9 HCP. It is also a poor suit on which to overcall. My choice is to pass and, if I am the first one to act for our side, will enter the auction with a takeout double. We might miss a five-three spade fit in a competitive auction, but we will be able to reach spades when we have a game and we will avoid getting partner off to a potentially costly spade lead.

Tritt: 1♠. Seems routine, although a 2♥ response by partner could be awkward.

J.S.: After 1♠ there are a number of auctions which might lead to rebid problems or a poor contract. And poor contracts can get expensive at this vulnerability. I would probably open in the heat of battle, but calm, cool, consideration tilts me towards a pass. And chess databases show that statistically d4 (queen pawn opening) has a slightly greater chance of success than e4.

By the way, why don't we have a database of bridge deals? Perhaps then we would know if pass, 1♠, or even a seemingly bizarre 1♣ opening is best.

Problem 5.

North-South vulnerable, IMP scoring
You are South holding:

♠7 ♥K854 ♦843 ♣AQ872

South	West	North	East
?		1NT*	2♣**

*15-17

**Majors

Tritt: Double, systemically defined as Stayman, but it must show high card values because I was not forced to bid. If RHO bids hearts, I can double; if he bids spades I can pass (forcing), allowing partner to double or bid. We should

be able to reach five of a minor when we have spade weakness opposite the spade stiff.

Lee: Double; I'm happy to defend 2♥ doubled, sit for 2♣ doubled if partner so chooses, and bid 3♣ if 2♣ comes around to me. Bidding 3♣ could work, but I play it's more minor-suit oriented than what I've got, and with this hand I like giving myself a chance to defend.

J.S.: There is a good deal of risk in head-hunting with this hand. Even if partner holds four spades, defending 2♣ is not likely to be rewarding. With really unlucky layouts it might even make.

Stansby: Double, showing high card values, invitational or better, and forcing to 2NT. If pard doubles 2♠ (penalty) I will bid 2NT not forcing.

Lawrence: 2♥, a raise to 2NT with a stopper. Although a 3♣ splinter is possible, transferring or Lebensohling to 3♣ doesn't look like a success barring some luck. This may give up on a killing against spades if partner has four, or even five, good spades.

Gumperz: 2♥. My agreement is when the enemy has shown both majors, two of a major promises a stopper in that suit, implies no stopper in the other major, and shows game invitational or better values.

Abdou: 2♥, assuming it is the old-fashioned bid to show at least 2NT values with a heart stopper. If 2♥ shows some kind of a minor suit competitive hand, then I have to double to show cards and the ability to penalize one of their suits. If West bids 2♣ and it is passed around to me, I go low with a 3♣ bid. A Lebensohl 2NT followed by 3♣ (which would show shortness in spades) is possible, but the hand is not strong enough for that sequence.

J.S.: Why not? Without interference the normal action with this hand would be to use Stayman; then, failing to find a heart fit, bid clubs, and if partner doesn't support, try 3NT. Trying to stop on a dime in 2NT and not allowing for a club contract both seem faulty to me.

Davis: 2♥. I play 2♥ is invitational or better in clubs (2♣ is the same in diamonds). I will pass if partner rebids 2NT.

Ivaska: 3NT. I play that a double of 2♣ in this sequence is Stayman, regardless of the meaning of 2♣. (Of course, there are several other possible meanings, especially when 2♣ shows the majors.) Here, though, a penalty oriented double is not a good idea. I don't look forward to defending 2♣ doubled (especially at this vulnerability) when the opponents have at least an eight-card fit and, if I bid 3NT eventually, I may have fatally assisted East in resolving an awkward opening lead problem. So I'll just try a direct, unsubtle 3NT and hope for the best as well as a favorable opening lead, which would definitely come in handy, given my moth-eaten suits and marginal high card strength. (At IMPs, though, I can't bid less than 3NT.)

J.S.: Weren't you the one who decried a 3NT gamble on a previous problem? At least you got to game. But the problem with failing to show clubs will become apparent if West bids 4♣ over your 3NT. You will be content to pass if partner doubles but what if partner passes? Do you now try clubs, bid a nebulous 4NT, or double and hope they don't make an overtrick? This time 5♣ is the winner.