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## Master Solvers Panel



By John Swanson  
Mission Viejo, Calif.

Welcome back to panelists Jan Janitschke, of Denver, Marshall Miles, San Bernardino, Jill Meyers, Santa Monica, Ifii Baqai, Irvine and Fred Hamilton, Las Vegas. Everyone should recognize the names of these great players (and, in Marshall's case, writer). If you don't you can browse through the back issues of the Forum online at: [contractbridgeforum.com](http://contractbridgeforum.com). Joining us for the first time is David Weiss. David doesn't play as much as he did in the good old days. He now travels the world with his wife Jie educating the world in behavioral decision making. His web site [davidjweiss.com](http://davidjweiss.com) is filled with articles on the topic, but it has some good stuff also: bridge articles, a book and a useful Microsoft Word template for bridge writers.

### Problem 1.

Both vul, IMP scoring

♠AKQ42 ♥-- ♦K1063 ♣AK105

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
?			

**Baqai:** 5♥. Assuming the raise to 4♣ is based on at least five card support, I am committing the hand to at least a small slam. If playing exclusion KCB, I would bid 5♥ and if partner shows the diamond ace, look for grand otherwise settle for 6♣.

**J.S.:** How are you planning to look for the grand after partner bids 5NT showing the diamond ace? There are no bids remaining under 6♣ ... anticipating this problem:

**Janitschke:** 6♣. Just guessing. Can't find out what I need to know.

**J.S.:** And now for the long-winded version:

**Weiss:** 6♣. The question is whether we can reach 7♣ when it is cold and stop in 6♣ when that is our limit. If partner has five trumps headed by the queen, or six trumps without an honor, 7♣ would be in view - all he would need is the diamond ace. But I would expect him to employ a picture bid of 5♣ with excellent trumps rather than the ambiguous gentle raise. If he has only four to the queen in the trump suit, then he probably needs specifically the ace-queen of diamonds; and even then we might require something good to happen in either spades or diamonds. I don't think we can locate everything. If I were to cue 4♦, then (presuming he did not show the heart ace) 5♥, he might know what to do with respect to diamonds; but would bid the grand without the club queen.

**Miles:** 5♥. This bid must show grand slam interest with a void in hearts rather than a singleton. Otherwise you would use Blackwood. I think partner should bid 7♣ with: ♠x ♥Qxx ♦Qxxx ♣QJxxx because your 5♥ bid forces to 6♣ and invites 7♣.

**J.S.:** Exclusion Blackwood can be very useful when it comes up. (As with all Blackwood variations one must be confident in the partnership.) On this particular hand it is better to be playing the jump to 5♥ as an (old-fashioned?) splinter - in this case, surely a void.

**Meyers:** 4♦ hoping I don't hear a 4♥ cue bid in return. We could easily have a grand slam on this hand. If we were playing exclusion I would bid 5♥.

**Hamilton:** 4♦ or 4NT, whichever we use as Blackwood. I am bidding the grand with two key cards and the trump queen.

**J.S.:** Blackwood just doesn't cut it on this hand, exclusion or not. The diamond ace and the club queen is not enough to give the grand a sufficient play. The logical way to invite a grand (without the worry of partner's interpretation of 5♥) is to cue bid 4♥. If this gets a jump to 6♣ bid the grand; if not, cue bid hearts again showing the void and grand slam interest.

### Problem 2.

North/South vul, IMP scoring

♠AK8 ♥AQ ♦10653 ♣KQ75

North	East	South	West
1♥	2♠	?	

**Baqai:** Double, followed by a cue bid and, if the bidding methods permit, follow with

an invitation for slam in either notrump or a suit if a fit has been identified.

**J.S.:** That sounds like waving a wand and with a bit of magic we will arrive in the perfect contract.

**Hamilton:** Double. I think this is the best way to get more information from partner. If I could bid 4NT natural that would be perfect, but without prior agreement I would never try it out on partner.

**Meyers:** Double. There are a lot of bids that might work here. I think a negative double provides the most flexibility for subsequent bids and will hopefully disclose something useful about partner's hand.

**Janitschke:** Double. This is easy. If he bids a minor, I bid 3NT and he should get the idea that other contracts are in sight.

**J.S.:** A negative double followed by 3NT should indicate at least four cards in both minors, game going values, and a spade stopper. But it doesn't hint at 18 HCP and slam interest. It will take an unusual hand for partner to bid again. I prefer this idea which tells partner immediately that you hold game-going values:

**Miles:** 3♣, hoping to learn more about partner's hand. If he bids 3♥ or 3♠, I will bid 3♣. This is a hard hand to bid since I don't know whether or not we have a good trump suit. Slam will probably be good if partner holds good hearts, say ♥KJxxx or better, and not so good otherwise.

**J.S.:** A natural 4NT which Freddy wanted to use (but didn't trust his partner) gets right to the point.

**Weiss:** 4NT. I trust partner will realize this is natural, showing a balanced hand with 17-19 points. If I had Blackwood intentions, I would have to confirm the trump suit by cue-bidding first. My alternative is to double, looking for a fit in a minor. The difficulty is that I will not know what to do if I encounter one.

**J.S.:** My suggestion is to use a JUMP to 4NT after a preemptive jump overcall as natural, with about 17-18 HCP. This treatment does not guarantee success but it puts partner on firm ground for making a slam decision. No magic wands involved.

### Problem 3.

East/West vul, matchpoints

♠KQJ1096 ♥Q643 ♦A3 ♣7

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♣*	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♠**	Pass
?			

\*splinter: heart support, short clubs

\*\*asks for trump queen

**Weiss:** 7NT. The gist of the problem is whether partner guarantees that our side owns all of the aces when he tries for a grand by asking about the trump queen. The complicating element is match-point scoring. Sometimes partner might feel the need to check for a particular card, usually a king, to allow us to play 6NT when we are off an ace. While I prefer to maintain the simplicity of an absolute rule, I am not sure that partner is on the same wavelength. In this case, however, the concern is not relevant. Partner could not be considering a grand without the heart ace-king and the black aces. Presuming those cards allows me to count thirteen tricks.

**J.S.:** Most of the panel agrees with David in that partner needs all of the key cards before asking for the trump queen (or in other situations, a side king) when the inquiry alone has already forced to a least a slam. The lone dissenter:

**Miles:** 6♠. Partner was not necessarily trying for a grand slam. He might have held: ♠x ♥AKxxx ♦KQJx ♣Axx or ♠Ax ♥AKxxx ♦KQx ♣xxx and didn't want to be in even a small slam unless you had the queen of hearts. If he holds ♠Ax ♥AKxxx ♦Kx ♣Axxx, he will know to bid a grand slam over this bid.

**Hamilton:** 7NT. 5♠ promised all controls, so we have all the tricks. 7NT may make when 7♥ goes down on a bad trump break or an opening lead spade ruff.

**Janitschke:** 7NT. If he doesn't have all the keycards I don't know what he is doing. Perhaps we should be playing 4♠ as our keycard ask when hearts are trumps.

**J.S.:** That's a good idea for partnerships with very firm agreements on when it applies. Not such a good idea for those of us who have trouble remembering 1430.

**Meyers:** 7NT. My partner is looking for a



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