



By John Swanson
Mission Viejo, Calif.



Our panel this month is comprised of Ifti Baqui, Rick Roeder, Marshall Miles, Jill Meyers, and Mike Lawrence ... all of whom have contributed before. They are Southern California locals except for Mike, who lives in Nashville – evidently hoping to become the first country music singing bridge teacher.

Making a first time appearance is Chris Larsen, an outstanding player and teacher. Chris does not sing, but he has been known to break out into Norwegian when he becomes particularly exasperated with one of his partners.

Problem 1.

None vul, IMP scoring

♠AJ965 ♥A4 ♦J1065 ♣J10

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| North | East | South | West |
| Pass | Pass | 1♠ | Pass |
| 2♣* | 2♦ | ? | |

* = Drury

J.S.: Despite the slightly subpar high card values, this hand is worth a 2♦ rebid showing a full opening bid. But East has decided to get into the fray. What do your possible rebids show?

Lawrence: 2♠. Confirms a minimum but playable opener. I suppose a double is possible but why bother, when they have better homes in two other suits?

J.S.: Maybe they do and maybe they don't, and maybe they won't be able to find another home. Why not double and find out? Certainly this is a suitable hand to defend with if partner sits for the double.

Miles: Double. Despite not having an opening bid, this is a great hand for defense. If partner leaves the double in, we can probably get a 300 point set instead of a dubious part-score. Is there any reason why the double shouldn't be for penalty? We have already found our fit (in spades).

Larsen: Pass. For me that shows a weak hand; I presume pass is forcing.

J.S.: I agree that pass shows a weak hand. But wouldn't you open 1♠ in any position? Wouldn't you, Marshall?

Roeder: Pass. This hand is so-so on offense but a bit more promising on defense. You really don't mind anything that pard does in pass out seat. The only close decision is what to do if pard doubles.

Ostensibly, a double would show only three-card support and good defense in context. I would pass a double and hope that pard has a diamond honor.

J.S.: Evidently Rick wants to defend only if he can set the contract four tricks.

Baqui: Pass. Choices are pass or double. Game is possible with partner holding ♠Kxxx ♥xxx ♦x ♣AQxxx or something similar. I don't have much wasted in diamonds and a double will discourage partner from exploring game. A pass will allow partner room to make a game try, say 2♥ or 3♣. I have an easier accept over 2♥ while it is a bit less clear over 3♣.

J.S.: The panel and I are not getting off to a good start this month. I have seen some of the stuff that Ifti considers a third seat opening 1♠ bid. I don't believe that partner should be forced to bid again if he has done

his all with a minimum, three card Drury response. A double might cause partner to think you have more high cards in diamonds but it shouldn't discourage a game try. And you haven't taken up any bidding space with the double. If partner does make a game try and you don't know whether to accept or not you can make a counter try.

Meyers: Pass. I don't have enough defense to double.

J.S.: All right, if you say so. But you certainly have enough offense to bid 2♠.

Problem 2.

North/South vul, IMP scoring

♠64 ♥64 ♦Q9765 ♣AQ93

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| North | East | South | West |
| 1♦ | 2♦ | ? | |

J.S.: There isn't much to this one. As Ifti puts it:

Baqui: I have a 2½ diamond raise and the choices are to bid a conservative 3♦ or to show a hand with limit raise values or better. The preferred method to do that is to bid 2♠ (higher suit cue bid shows fit).

The distribution is less than ideal so I would settle for 3♦; I would bid 2♠ with a singleton in either major.

Roeder: 3♦. Seems straight-forward regardless of your Michaels defense. I prefer 2♥ to be limit raise or better with clubs and 2♠ to be limit raise or better with diamonds. This hand is no limit raise.

Miles (and Larsen): 3♦. Looks normal.

J.S.: Won't anybody push a little? I would not be comfortable with a 3♦ call knowing that I had left some fuel in the tank and then hear, almost certainly, three (or four) of a major at my left.

Lawrence: 2♠. Limit diamond raise. A question of evaluation.

Perhaps 3♦ is enough.

Meyers: 2♠, showing a limit raise in diamonds. I don't have the right distribution to bid 4♦.

J.S.: The aggressive bid is the more successful on this deal. Your partner will bid a diamond game after a limit raise. It doesn't make with your skimpy values but the non-vulnerable opponents don't know that, and will bid on to the five level, down one.

Problem 3.

None vul, IMP scoring

♠AQ76 ♥Q1087 ♦109 ♣AK7

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| East | South | West | North |
| Pass | 1NT | Pass | 2♣ |
| 2NT | ? | | |

Ifti: 3♣. Here is an opportunity for partnerships to refine their methods by having differentiation between 3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ responses; in absence of specific agreements, I would settle for 3♣ to show interest in competing with both majors.

J.S.: That seems right on to me. 3♦ should be a stronger hand with both majors. 3♥ or 3♣ would be a good hand with one major only. Pass with a minimum holding zero or one major and double if East has made a serious mistake.

Roeder: Pass. No reason to be active with your majors. You have a minimum. Pard can double to show cards. Pass caters to partner bidding with "get out of Dodge

before the posse arrives" yarboroughs and club shortness. The three level is not safe opposite such a hand because pard could be as short as four-three in the majors.

J.S.: At least we know where the "pard" comes from now. You've spent too much time in Dodge.

Miles: Pass. Partner could have a very weak hand with short clubs, in which case he planned to pass any bid I might make. He is very unlikely to have an invitational or game-forcing semi-balanced hand since East must have a very distributional hand with both minors.

Partner's most likely hand is a 4-5 in the majors (garbage Stayman). If so, and if he has six to eight points, he will probably bid 3♥. If he is weaker than that, he should pass. If he has a strong hand (which is unlikely), he will probably double, and I will bid 3♣, which ought to be a cue bid under the circumstances, and let him bid three or four of his better or longer major.

J.S.: Pass seems a bit of an ostrich call to me. You have a chance to tell partner what your 1NT opening looks like and he will be able to place the contract. If he does have a truly hopeless hand it will include at least one four-card major, and you will be quite unlucky to encounter a double from West - he doesn't know what high cards partner has for his unusual 2NT bid. The strong reason to take action is just the hand that Marshall expects: five-four (or maybe six-four) in the majors with invitational values. Partner may not be comfortable bidding over West's forthcoming three-of-a-minor bid and even if he does you won't know whether to bid game or not.

Larsen: Might not turn out well, but I bid 3♥.

J.S.: Better than passing in my view, but it withholds from partner the information that 3♣ would afford.

Meyers: 3♣. I have both majors, I hope this gets the message across; I would bid 3♥, but I am concerned partner would raise me on three for lack of minor stoppers.

Lawrence: 3♣, return Stayman. Made this one up just now, but it does have appeal. Perhaps 3♦ should show better clubs than diamonds. Perhaps 3♣ should show a minimum in this family and 3♦ a maximum in this family. The only question is whether North will understand, and that he will accept that my bid does not show a maximum. Dreaming here?

J.S.: I'm dreaming right along with you. I could have done without that suggestion that 3♣ might be showing your side values, though.

Problem 4.

None vul, IMP scoring

♠J63 ♥KQJ7 ♦AQ76 ♣A4

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| East | South | West | North |
| 1♠ | Dbl | Pass | 2♥ |
| Dbl | ? | | |

Baqui: 3♥. I see choices as redouble, 3♥ or pass. With good hearts and a good hand an eventual raise to 3♥ seems quite reasonable. So with that thought in mind, I like a direct raise to 3♥ for its preemptive value.

J.S.: I would go so far as to say that 3♥ is a preemptive bid; that with an invitational hand you should cue bid 2♠.

(But partner wouldn't be barred from bidding 4♥ over 3♥ if he has a hand close to an initial jump to 3♥.)

Miles: 3♥. It is safer to bid it right away than to bid it next round. If we are too high, it will be hard for either opponent to double when I have such good trumps.

Meyers: 3♥. I don't play this forcing, but it shows extras. I don't want to redouble because if they bid 3♣ I don't have enough to double, and if they have a club fit I don't want them to find a fit. I think we are making 3♥ or going down one.

Larsen: Redouble, hopefully shows good hand with hearts.

J.S.: The question is: if you redouble and then bid 3♥, is partner invited to bid 4♥ on with, say, a six-count with five hearts?

Roeder: 3♥. In competition, this has about the same value as a "2 2/3" heart bid in the absence of the double. If pard has a yarborough, this bid has some preemptive value.

Lawrence: 3♥. A redouble technically shows a good hand with three hearts. I have four-card support and no wish to get in-

volved in inferential sequences.

J.S.: I'm convinced.

Problem 5.

None vul, Matchpoint scoring

♠A65 ♥AKQ1084 ♦A64 ♣5

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| East | South | West | North |
| 1♠ | Dbl | Pass | 3NT |
| Pass | ? | | |

Baqui: 4NT. Choices are 4♥, 5♥, 4NT and 6♥, with the last bid being the most optimistic. My personal favorite is 4NT as the value bid, showing my strength without committing to slam. 5♥ is a close second, except partner might think I am asking for a spade control. An argument can be made that a 4♥ bid here should be virtually forcing due to the original double.

J.S.: Ifti has been quite considerate to list all the possible calls on each problem so I don't have to do it.

Larsen: 4NT, natural and invitational. Pass is my second choice.

Lawrence: 4♥. I am worried that partner has a bunch of clubs that he thinks will be tricks along with a spade stopper and a side card of some sort. But he might also have some kind of real hand.

I bid 4♥, which must be interpreted as showing a good heart hand that was too good to bid hearts initially. My controls may allow us to make a slam, but I think I will need a bid from partner to get there. I have trumps and aces, but worries about lots of slow losers ... to say nothing about the specific worry, spades.

Meyers: 4♠, and then whatever partner does I follow with 5♥, which is a slam try in hearts.

J.S.: Your controls are so good and the hearts suit is almost solid. These invitational bids are asking a lot of partner - what could he hold to bid on with?

Miles: 4♠. I suspect East of having psyched, although partner might have solid clubs and the guarded king or queen of spades - which still means East has psyched. I'd like to bid Blackwood or Gerber, but I don't think either bid would mean what I want it to mean.

I suspect that we belong in a grand slam, but a cue bid followed by 6♥ may get further action from partner - not too likely when I have all the top trumps.

J.S.: I use a jump to 5♣ over natural 3NT bids as ace asking (both 4♣ and 4NT are natural, the latter always being invitational). You can borrow it here if you like.

Roeder: 6♥. Very difficult. You want to be in slam; 6♥ is the spot if pard has a hand like: ♠KJ10x ♥Jx ♦KQxx ♣QJx. However, in most layouts, you want to be in 6NT (or even 7NT if the 1♠ bidder has a sense of humor). Other than the above construction, it is very hard to give pard hands where he lacks both the ace and king of clubs.

The problem with being in 6♥ is when West leads a club to partner's ace and the spade shift is ruffed at trick two. I'll guess to bid 6♥, with the hope that pard will be able to correct to 6NT a few of the times when it is right to do so.

J.S.: The panel has covered the options quite well. What contract do you want to be in on this actual layout? (And what else could partner do over the takeout double but bid 3NT - 3♣ is woefully inadequate):

♠J953
♥93
♦8
♣AKQJ109

♠—
♥J652
♦109532
♣7432

♠KQ10872
♥7
♦KQJ7
♣86

♠A65
♥AKQ1084
♦A64
♣5

After a club (or diamond) lead and despite the 4-1 trump split, a heart slam will make on any intelligent line of play. An opening spade lead would defeat 6♣ (West will ruff and shift to a diamond), but East might lead ♦K, so the club slam might take 13 tricks. On a diamond lead, 6NT by either North or South is a trick short because of the unlucky heart division.

