



By Marshall Miles
San Bernardino, Calif.

Our October panelists are Fred Hamilton and Steve & Kitty Cooper, District 17; Rose Meltzer, Gene Simpson and Harvey Brody, District 21; Mark Itabashi and Jon Wittes, District 22; and Eddie Kantar, guest panelist from District 23.

All of these hands are from the WBF pairs (sometimes called the "Little Cavendish.") The scoring is by using the IMP scale, averaged against every pair sitting in your direction. Therefore zero is the median - a push - and you can gain or lose IMPs on each board.

Problem 1.

North-South vulnerable
You, South, hold

♠4 ♥A3 ♦98532 ♣AJ1096

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

What is your call?

COOPERS: Pass. Don't much like it with such poor trumps, but we have a stiff in pard's suit and aces. Not clear that we have a game anywhere except maybe clubs, but 11 is a lot of tricks to try to take.

We've gone minus 180 before, and it's not a disaster at IMPs.

HAMILTON: 4♣. We can almost surely set 2♦, but your holding will not prevent the declarer from scoring six trump tricks and perhaps a side trick. You may beat it one or two tricks, only to find you could easily make 6♣. I think this is an underbid, but it aims at where the profit is. If pard passes, I still expect to go plus, and if he cue bids I am in slam. I will pass 5♣, but not be surprised if we made six even then.

Even 7♣ is possible!

KANTAR: 4♣. I don't think we can beat 2♦ enough, and we may have a slam!

WITTES: 4♣. There is a very good chance we have a game on this hand (possibly even a slam). Partner could have as little as ♠Axxxx ♥Kxxx ♦— ♣KQxx, and at this vulnerability, we don't rate to get rich defending 2♦ doubled with the texture of my diamond holding.

ITABASHI: 4♣. Even if we are beating 2♦ a trick or two, which is not guaranteed, I think the chances of having a vulnerable game outweigh any desire to defend.

SIMPSON: 3♦. I have to show some values; we could have slam.

MELTZER: 3♦. While it's tempting to pass, there's too much of a chance you and partner have a club game or slam. You're prepared to bid 4♣ over 3♥ or 3♠.

BRODY: 3♦. Over partner's response I will bid 4♣. Obviously, I think we have a game, possibly a slam.

M.M.: The par result was to bid 5♣, making five, instead of settling for a 300 point penalty - a gain of 7 IMPs. But I prefer a 5♣ bid to a 4♣ bid. At least, if you bid a game, you will gain if it makes. If you bid 4♣ and partner passes, you are bound to get a poor result, since you will have lost your 300 point penalty.

Problem 2.

Both vulnerable
You, South, hold

♠9 ♥K1043 ♦AQ106 ♣AQ73

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| Pass | Pass | 1♥ | Pass |
| 2♣* | Pass | 2♦** | Pass |
| 2♠ | Pass | 3♥ | Pass |
| 4♥ | Pass | Pass | ? |

(*) reverse Drury (**) full opening bid

What is your call?

MELTZER: Pass and lead ♠9: why tell declarer how to play the hand?

ITABASHI: Pass. I love to double, but here partner will have close to nothing. After your opening lead you will likely have no good options, and you will tip declarer on how to play the hand when he might have gone down otherwise.

If LHO is 6-4, good luck beating it.

BRODY: Pass. You don't want to tip off the trump position when partner has a probable Yarborough.

WITTES: Pass. After leading my stiff spade, I rate to be endplayed every time I get in. Give dummy one of the minor suit

kings and/or a minor suit singleton, which is highly likely on this auction, and a double might be just what declarer needs to make an otherwise difficult hand.

SIMPSON: Pass. Of course, double could be profitable, but I have seen hands like this blow up in my face too many times!

COOPERS: Pass. We would have liked more information about the opponents' methods: Could LHO have bid 2♠ fit showing? We really do not expect them to make this and would double a weak opponent. We are presuming reasonable opponents in this event, even though LHO's bidding makes little sense.

KANTAR: Double. If they make it, they make it. If I tipped them off, I tipped them off. I still have to look at myself in the mirror the next day.

M.M.: South was a very good player who doubled, and I made the contract when I probably would not have if he had passed. But I'm still not sure whether a double or a pass is the percentage action. After all, I was trying to stop in 3♥, and partner didn't bid game over 2♦. So let's hear the reasoning directly from the doubler himself!

HAMILTON: Double. I do not think you should let this kind of opportunity go by. Spades and hearts won't split, and at least one of the minor suit kings should be on your right. However, I held this hand against Marshall, and my double allowed him to make it - but only because I defended poorly. If I had shifted to the ♦Q from AQ10x, I could have reached partner with ♦J to get my spade ruff!

Problem 3.

Both vulnerable

| | |
|--------|--------|
| West | East |
| ♠AK43 | ♠QJ62 |
| ♥AKJ32 | ♥Q1084 |
| ♦94 | ♦A6532 |
| ♣K7 | ♣-- |

| | | | |
|-------|----------|-----|------|
| 1♥ | Pass | 3♠* | Pass |
| 3NT** | Pass | 4♣ | Pass |
| 4♥ | All Pass | | |

(* mini-splinter, undisclosed shortness
(**) where is your singleton or void?

Assign the blame for missing slam.

WITTES: West 100%. East cannot be blamed at all. If partner has a lot of club wastage (AKJ, for example), even the 4-level might be in jeopardy. Although West has the wasted ♣K, the rest of the hand is very solid. Surely a 4♣ bid would not place the hand in jeopardy.

HAMILTON: West 80%. Responder must have good fitting side cards with nothing in clubs, so despite the wastage with the ♣K, opener has a fine hand and should make a forward-going bid. 3NT is commonly used at the expert level as a move toward slam, as we are committed to play in the major. Here it merely asks for the singleton, so was not available as a slam suggestion. Still, opener must bid 4♣, as slam is still quite possible. Perhaps responder should have bid 5♣ to show the void, as opener's inquiry for shortness did indicate some interest. East 20% for not showing the void.

ITABASHI: 70% West. I think with the shape and controls, West should make a further try with 4♣. But - since the 3NT bid showed some interest in going on - I give East 30% for not bidding 5♦ over 4♥, which would imply a club void.

MELTZER: West is mostly at fault. After learning of club shortness, West should still bid 4♦ as a "Last Train" move. [Editor's note: this is a treatment many experts use to express further slam interest without getting past game].

Also, West could have tried RKC to find out about ♥Q, and then bid 6♥.

BRODY: East 50% for not showing the void in clubs, West 50% for not looking for a perfect hand holding no diamond controls. In other words, no blame.

KANTAR: The problem was not using a direct response of 4♣ to show a void. Given that this convention was not available, it is difficult to pinpoint where either party did anything terribly wrong.

COOPERS: East 65%. No one did anything terrible. The void makes the East hand just a little too good for a mini-splinter. Hard to fault West for not moving, although it is clear that his partner is likely to have both major suit queens and some diamond honor cards, so if ♠Qxx ♥Qxxx ♦AKxxx ♣x is a mini-splinter in their system, West must accept 35% blame for not making a further move.

Master Solvers Panel

SIMPSON: East 90%. In my experience, splintering with a void is a bad bid, unless your hand is sub-minimum. This hand is very good for a mini-splinter.

M.M.: The major difficulty is that neither the players holding these hands nor the panel knew what I meant by a mini-splinter. Obviously, in this sequence it is not an invitation to game, since it forces to game. My idea was to use it on hands like ♠Axxx ♥Kxxx ♦Jxx ♣x or ♠xxx ♥AJxx ♦x ♣QJ10xx. You don't want to bid less than game on hands like these, since (a) they may make game opposite a minimum and a good fit, and (b) you want to preempt the opponents. So this splinter shows poor hands for slam by definition. But if opener has a good enough hand, a slam is possible (as compared to ♠xx ♥KJ10xxx ♦Qx ♣xxx, for example). Rather than show where one's shortage is, (which will help opening leader and may even help the opponents to compete), you conceal it unless partner has an interest in slam, in which case he can ask where the shortage is. And a regular splinter shows a stronger interest in slam.

If you agree with my definition, I think the responding hand has enough strength and controls for an ordinary splinter. So if opener was interested in slam but not strong enough to keep trying when he discovered the shortage was in clubs, on the actual hand responder might bid 5♣ or 5♦ over 4♥. If responder had a singleton club and my concept of a mini-splinter, the hands could hardly add up to a slam over a 4♣ bid, so why should opener tempt partner by cue bidding?

That said, I suspect that Eddie's treatment is a better solution to the problem.

Problem 4.

Neither vulnerable.

| | |
|----------|---------|
| ♠AKJ3 | ♠— |
| ♥862 | ♥— |
| ♦KJ10742 | ♦— |
| ♣— | ♣— |
| ♠9762 | ♠— |
| ♥AK9 | ♥Q107 |
| ♦A9 | ♦Q865 |
| ♣K1083 | ♣AQ974 |
| | ♠Q10854 |
| | ♥J543 |
| | ♦3 |
| | ♣652 |

| | | | |
|------|----------|------|-------|
| East | South | West | North |
| 1♣ | Pass | 3NT | 4♦ |
| Dbl | All Pass | | |

All players play inverted minor raises.
Result: +1400 for East-West

Rate each player's bidding on a scale of 0-10 (10 being best)

WITTES: East and South 10. Nothing is wrong with their bids. West 0. 3NT is a terrible bid with four clubs, all prime cards, and a tenuous spade holding. We could be playing 3NT, going down, when we are cold for a club slam, which on the actual hand is obviously the case.

North 0. 4♦ is an extremely dangerous position to take. Partner is very likely to have a very weak hand with a lot of major suit cards, and if it's right to bid, we could be going down a ton in 4♦ when four of a major would fare much better. In fact, I would pass with the North hand at equal or unfavorable vulnerability. I might be tempted to bid at favorable, but if so, would want to bring the majors into play.

COOPERS: East 10, South 9, West 4, North 0. East and South did nothing wrong. East did well to double and South can't know to run from 4♦ doubled (except that he played with North before!) West made a dreadful bid of 3NT with a hand slam positive for clubs and no spade stopper - not even to remark about the 4-card major. We can't imagine why North would bid when his partner is marked with almost nothing and his defensive prospects are so good.

BRODY: North 0 for making a terrible 4♦ bid; East 10 for just bidding his hand; South 10- for not guessing to make an SOS redouble. West 5: he made a very bad bid, but give him points for being lucky.

KANTAR: East (3) for doubling 4♦ when the opponents figured to have a ten card spade fit. South (10). What is South supposed to do, run to 4♠ or redouble? West (2) There must be a better way to bid the West hand than to jump to 3NT originally. Personally, I might have bid 2NT (forcing) and the opener shows shortage (by agreement) by bidding 3♠, which puts us back on the right track. This convention has worked time and again, but 2NT has to be

forcing for it to work best. North (2). 4♦ is a matchpoint bid. Running to 4♠ would have worked, but who would do that?

HAMILTON: I detest the treatment of 2NT over partner's opening minor as non-forcing, as it gears your system to stop in 2NT, which is a really poor idea at IMPs. The other part is it makes responder jump to 3NT with random 13-15, when that may easily be the wrong contract and the room for investigation is gone.

That said, I think either 1♠ or an inverted raise would be a better bid than 3NT.

The 4♦ overcall in this auction was unreal! The 4♦ bidder got the beating he deserved, and the flimsy opening bidder and his partner got a gift from the heavens that their bids did not really merit.

MELTZER: If North bids at all, it should be 4♣ as a general take-out, and then correct 4♥ to 4♠, showing a 2-suiter where the spades are shorter than the diamonds. This avoids getting to many wrong contracts.

As for the other players, East and South just bid their hands, and West's dubious bidding went unpunished.

SIMPSON: I think the actions speak for themselves: North got the huge minus he deserved, and East-West got lucky.

M.M.: I must apologize for distorting this problem by leaving out a round of bidding. The bidding actually went 1♣ pass 1♠ pass; 2♣ pass; 3NT 4♦; double (all pass). At least on that scenario North had some excuse in that he hoped to get a spade lead and find short spades and at least two diamonds in his partner's hand. And I think the 1♠ response was atrocious; why bid a non-suit with a good hand? Maybe it is OK at matchpoints to inhibit the lead and make overtricks, but not at IMPs. In the problem as given, I don't agree that the panel should give ANY points to West for his bidding. The fact that it turned out well is no excuse for making two bad bids which buried a laydown slam! I think the bidding should go 1♣ by East, 2♣ by West, 3♠ (splinter) by East, after which West should not let the bidding die short of 6♣.

Problem 5.

North-South vulnerable
You, South, hold

♠5 ♥83 ♦AK852 ♣KQ1098

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| 1♦ | Pass | 1NT | 4♣ |
| ? | | | |

What is your call?

WITTES: 5♣. Tough problem. If the opponents are making 4♣, this bid is clear-cut. We are marked with a nine or ten card minor suit fit, and under the best scenario, can make five of a minor, and surely, under the worst scenario, will go down no more than two. Problem is, they may very well be going down in 4♣, while we are also going down in five of a minor.

MELTZER: 5♣. They obviously have the majors, so take out insurance against a double game swing.

KANTAR: 5♣. Partner figures to have clubs, so how bad can this be? We may push them to 5♣.

BRODY: 5♣. We either have a good game, or a good sacrifice.

COOPERS: Pass. Why is this a problem?

Why do we need to go minus when they may well be going minus? Sure, partner might have the right hand for 5♣, but it is more likely that he does not.

ITABASHI: Pass. We probably will have a fit in a minor, but that still doesn't mean that bidding will work out. Partner still has a bid, and I think more bad results will result from bidding here than good.

HAMILTON: Pass. A tough decision, as we have a 9-card fit assured in one of the minors. Still, we might lose four or five tricks and get killed, when we could nick 4♣ a trick. Bottom line is the color is wrong for saving. Yes, we might even make five of a minor, but I would need a little more to commit to that level at this vulnerability.

SIMPSON: Pass.

M.M.: My partner bid 5♣ and the next hand (Gene Freed) doubled with - among other things - ♠AJxx and ♦Qxx, resulting in an 800 point set vs. -450 in spades. I thought my partner bid too much, but everyone we asked afterwards would have bid 5♣, not expecting it to be doubled.