



(Continued from page 3) of his values well placed.

JS: Reese and Bird awarded 5♦ the top score, even though it would have been defeated with a thoughtful spade lead. 3NT has no play, but partner would remove it to 4♦ with his 3-1-4-5 minimum.

Problem 3.

None vul, IMP scoring As South, you hold

Hand layout for Problem 3 showing cards for West, North, East, and South.

Mohan: 4NT. I've never seen this hand: what do we have here, long running clubs and a doubleton spade honor on my right (we might make slam against that hand), or a five-card weak two bid and some similar holding on the right? How about 4NT, then 5♦ if partner (unexpectedly) bids 5♣? Hope I'm not wrong, or this could be gruesome!

JS: I have seen this hand - I did see this hand - at the table, but not as a competitor. I was kibitzing the finals of the 1969 Spingold at the Ambassador Hotel. Bob Hamman had this problem after his partner, Mike Lawrence, overcalled a weak two bid. Reese and Bird made an important observation, missed by Hamman and evidently by our panel. North has jumped to game at equal vulnerability with a doubleton; he is planning to make, and the five little spades are unlikely to be a deterrent.

Bourke: Double. This is more of a 'where are we going' bid as opposed to a penalty double. Partner has a void in spades and is likely to bid on.

Bertens: Pass. Horror, double will be take-out (points). What do I know? We play that partner could bid 3♣ as mini-Michels, not game forcing. So it sounds like partner has a single suited hand. (maybe 0634, or something like that). I would like to bid 4NT and correct 5♣ to 5♦, but we play this as a not-too-strong 5♦ bid. (Wish we would play it as exactly this hand.) I give up, I pass. Say partner has something like: ♠Void ♥AQxxxx ♦xx ♣Kxxx. Then he has a normal 3♥ overcall and we will not make anything. But, with that hand we maybe should save. Aargh, help! My vote still will be for passing, but I think double and even 5♥ will be not too bad either.

Zmudzinski: 5♠. I hope they didn't psyche. Tough hand. Double wouldn't be 100% for penalty. Partner could have: ♠Void ♥AQJxxx ♦xxx ♣KQxx. Now five-level contracts are in big trouble. I cannot pass and wait for balancing by partner because 4♣ will probably be passed out. So I'll take an optimistic view. If the auction continues 6♣-6♦, I hope to be in a good position with the heart fit. If partner holds: ♠Void ♥AQJxxx ♦Kxxx ♣Axx, grand slam is cold. JS: Make a note that Lawrence and Zmudzinski should not be partnered. Mike held: ♠Void ♥J109532 ♦72 ♣AQ543. At the time I was horrified that he would enter with such poor defense and a weak suit. Forty years later I merely regard it as an overbid. Hamman doubled in 1969 and declarer, Ira Rubin, made an overtrick. At the other table Stayman passed 2♣ with Lawrence's hand but then felt compelled to compete with 4NT over 4♣. This could have been set 900 (old scoring) with a logical trump lead, but was down only 500. I go along with the Reese-Bird evaluation here: the difficult pass gets 5; double 2; with just 1 for the other calls.

The error Lawrence made on this hand was not in the bidding, it was on lead - the ♥J, using coded leads where the jack is top. There is no reason to lead high on this hand and give away your holding to declarer. If the queen is in dummy it will be played on the lead of a low heart. If Rubin had finessed in hearts on opening lead (dummy held AQxx) he would have lost the first four tricks.

The Lawrence-Hamman partnership did not last another year (this hand was not the cause: the Aces won the 1969 Spingold by over 100 IMPs). Mike told me recently that not nurturing his partnership with Bob was a big mistake in his bridge career.

Problem 4.

East-West vulnerable, IMP scoring As South, you hold

Hand layout for Problem 4 showing cards for West, North, East, and South.

\* red suits \*\* invitational or better in spades What is your plan as South?

JS: Without any specific information it is safe to assume that North doesn't hold a lot of high cards. But just a smattering could be enough to stop slam. The heart ace alone would be enough. Your defensive worth is difficult to evaluate.

Mohan: 4♥. How do we bid diamonds and show the stiff heart so partner can judge the defense? Maybe I can get doubled at 4♥, then run to 5♣, then double 6♣ to show no defense. My brilliant partner would know he can lead the heart ace (if he has it) and give me a ruff, so his judgment will be, as usual, impeccable.

JS: This bit of fantasy is, no doubt, the result of living in the thin air of Mexico City. Even if we get by the part about partner's impeccable judgment, there is the matter of the opponents cooperating in the auction.

Bertens: 5♦. No plan. If eventually my right-hand opponent bids 6♣, then I will double, suggesting in our partnership that I want to save. If they stop in 5♠ I will let them play there.

Zmudzinski: 5♦. Maybe I can double 3♥ for a lead, then bid 5♣, but I am missing my time for a cigarette.

JS: This reasoning does not usually appear in a bidding forum.

Bourke: 4♦. It's close between this and passing until E/W reveal where they are headed. 5♦ will likely drive them into a slam, and then I won't know what to do.

JS: We don't know what to do now and won't later, so simply bid 5♦ (or 4♦) to preempt a round or two from the auction and hope the opponents don't know what to do either. They have yet to resolve if the responding hand is better than a limit raise. The action at the table was most amusing. South tried the effect of 3NT which, of course, has no effect at all. West, holding: ♠AQ9874 ♥A1094 ♦Void, ♣K83 made possibly the worst call in the auction by bidding 4♣ rather than cue bidding 4♦. But South came to the rescue and bid 5♦. West promoted his void and continued on with 5♠. When this came back to South he knew a good save when he saw one and bid 6♣. West's diamond void evidently was getting better and better so he bid 6♠ (yes, the same player who had bid only 4♣ over 3NT). South, recognizing that he had pushed the opponents into an all too likely making slam, saved at 7♦. West passed this

around to East, who applied the coup de grace by bidding the cold grand in spades.

Reese-Bird gave this as a problem after 5♠ Pass Pass, and justifiably awarded the actual 6♦ a zero. They didn't say anything about the previous 3NT call, which also deserved a zero.

Problem 5.

None vul, IMP scoring As South, you hold

Hand layout for Problem 5 showing cards for South, West, North, and East.

Hand layout for Problem 5 showing cards for South, West, North, and East.

Mohan: 2♥. Hoping for responder's inquiry relay (2♠) so I can show a three-card raise with extras (3♦). Over the next relay asking for shortness (3♥), I will bid (3NT) Romex, showing a stiff club. If partner bids cooperative KCB (4♣) I will be pleased to show two with queen of trump. Of course, in real life partners always pass 2♥.

JS: Romex responses to short suit inquiries (developed by George Rosenkranz) are: 1st step, no shortness; 2nd step, clubs, etc.

Bertens: 2 Dearts. If not allowed, then 2 Hiamonds. [JS: Not surprisingly, I can't find the Reese-Bird awards for 2 Dearts or 2 Hiamonds]. Bertens (cont.): OK then, change my vote to 2♥. If partner bids then I have few problems describing my hands. (2♠ Relay, 2NT=3♥, 3♣ Relay, 3♦=singleton club etcetera.) I don't mind 2♦, but I don't like overbidding 3♦ with a bad suit.

Zmudzinski: 2♥. In Poland this shows one trump more and three high card points fewer. In Standard American I think this is an unsolvable problem.

Bourke: 2♥. A slight underbid, but then everything else is either too weird (1♠), too wacky (3♥) or too wrong (2♦).

JS: The 1♠ bid would have been much more popular a few years back when we hadn't developed the tools necessary to distinguish among the various kinds of hands which should begin with a single raise of partner's response. Reese-Bird gave the old, weird 1♠ call the top award, 2♥ or 3♥ second best with 3 points and diamond bids 2 points.

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