



Master Solvers Panel

By John Swanson
Mission Viejo, Calif.

Our September panelists are just as "august" as our August panelists were: Ifthi Baqai and Rick Roeder, recent District 22 GNT winners; Jill Meyers, perennial District 23 GNT winner (plus who knows how many National titles and a half dozen or so International women's team and pair titles); Mike Lawrence, three time Bermuda Bowl champion and arguably the leading bridge author and teacher in the U.S.; and Marshall Miles, who was a leading player and author when I started playing in 1957, and has barely slacked off. He has written some of the best material to appear in The Bridge World in the past couple of years. Marshall is on leave of absence as moderator, but he has agreed to hang around as a panelist.

Problem 1.

None vul, IMP scoring
As South, you hold

♠J ♥A43 ♦AK8532 ♣AJ5

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
?			

BAQAI: Choices are 3♦, 2♣, and 2NT: I take 3♦ as the best descriptive bid, though I would prefer a bit more robust diamond suit.

JS: If you held a robust diamond suit in addition to a bunch of aces and kings, 3♦ would be a significant underbid. Another possible call is 2♥, advocated by Ed Davis. This bid announces a strong playing hand and allows more bidding space than 3♦ to investigate multiple strains, but has the drawback of dangerously overstating your heart length.

ROEDER: 3♣. Was this problem submitted by Eric Kokish or one of his acolytes? This 3♦ rebid is so middle-of-the-road that only disciples of fancy 2♣ rebids would think otherwise.

LAWRENCE: 2♣. Would bid 2NT with the ten of hearts. Hate bidding 3♦ with this good a hand ... but with this poor a suit.

JS: I don't believe Mike is anyone's acolyte and don't think of him as a fancy bidder either, just someone looking for the best call. At the table I bid 2♣, hoping partner could scrounge up a notrump bid. It seemed likely there would be an advantage having the lead up to her hand. But now I am leaning towards 2NT, even without the heart ten. It has the simplicity that Rick is striving for and announced stoppers in the unbid suits.

MILES: 2NT. Most players would bid 3♦, but I have stoppers in the unbid suits and the rough equivalent of 18-19 balanced points. If I bid 3♦, what is partner supposed to bid with ♠AKxx ♥xxx ♦xxx ♣xxx, or ♠Qxxxx ♥xx ♦Qx ♣xxx?

MEYERS: 2♦. If one of my jacks were a diamond I would bid 3♦, but my suit is not good enough to bid 3♦, and my hand is diminished in value by having only one spade. I would not argue with bidding 2♣ with the intention of raising a 2♦ preference to 3♦, but I would be sick if partner passed.

JS: 2♦ must be classified as "middle-of-the-low-road."

Problem 2.

Vul vs. not, IMP scoring
As South, you hold

♠— ♥AQ5 ♦A432 ♣A107543

North	East	South	West
1♣	2♠	3♠	4♠
Dbl	Pass	?	

LAWRENCE: Please, John, tell me that 3♠ was a game forcing club raise.

JS: That reminds me of a line from "A Few Good Men": "Please tell me their lawyer hasn't pinned their hopes to a phone bill." I didn't think I had to say that 3♠ is a strong club raise.

MILES: 5♠. If partner had passed I would have gambled on 7♣, since I don't see any way to find out what I need to know, and I think the odds are that partner will have enough to fill in the gaps. The double suggests that partner has wasted values in

spades. But I still have enough to try for seven. I won't cue bid a red ace since partner will worry about the one I don't cue bid. When I have two (or more) things to show, I cue bid neither (the same as when I have none).

ROEDER: 5♠. Pard would double 4♠ with a dog like: ♠Kxxx ♥Kxx ♦Kx ♣Kxxx. When this dog yields 2140, you need to bid more – or pard will bark at you. While 5♠ is the technically correct bid, there is merit to settling with a direct 6♣ call. Not only is it less likely that the opponents will save against a direct 6♣ than when you make a grand slam try, but pard is often going to have a very hard time bidding seven when it's right to do so, when one considers all your controls and six trumps.

JS: I consider 5♠ as wildly optimistic. Partner heard your 3♠ call and is looking at the vulnerability, yet believes it is better to defend at the four level. I'll toss out a possible hand for partner: ♠AK10, ♥xxx, xxx, ♣KQJx (which is very close to what she actually held). But back in the realm of reality:

BAQAI: 5♣. A typical hand for partner consistent with the bidding could be: ♠KQxx, ♥xxx, ♦Kx, ♣KQxx, and slam seems reasonable, but partner can hold 4-3-3-3 distribution with about the same HCP and slam would not look good. I consider 6♣ a close second choice.

JS: Why is everyone guessing partner holds four spades? It would be nice for your hand because it means partner will have fewer red cards. But when my opponents bid like this they have ten spades.

LAWRENCE: Pass. Can easily see 800, and the double warns that clubs may not be as good a spot as I had hoped for. North did not have to double. There are a lot of 4-3-3-3 hands he can have that make sitting for this a huge plus. For the record, 4NT would be a slam try and would be the bid I would choose if I did not pass.

JS: Jill declined to answer because she knew the hand. That has never prevented me from dogmatically expressing my view. I like Mike's second choice, 4NT, expressing slam interest in spite of partner's double while allowing a screeching halt in 5♣. I was hoping for an objection to the initial 3♠ bid. I think 4♠ is better - showing a void and immediately expressing slam interest. The reason for 3♠ is to allow partner to bid 3NT, but your hand has too much potential for play in clubs to pass that call anyway.

For the record double would net 500, a small loss against the 600 available at 5♣, but substantially better than minus 100 in 6♣ when the heart finesse lost, as expected.

Problem 3.

Vul vs. not, matchpoints
As South, you hold

♠AQJ764 ♥K106 ♦Q8 ♣AJ

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	?	

LAWRENCE: 3NT. A sane descriptive guess. Perhaps it should be defined as showing six spades. Is this possible? No. I think not.

MEYERS: 3NT. Love my diamond queen, want lead coming to me.

MILES: 3NT. With my tenaces, I'd like to be declarer. Almost surely we will be able to establish enough tricks in either diamonds or spades.

BAQAI: It would help to know if partner had 2♦ available as a weak 2 opening or not. With my regular partners, I like to play 2NT here as forcing to enable more nuanced bidding. Otherwise I'll settle for 3NT.

ROEDER: 2NT (if forcing, as it should be); 3NT otherwise. This is the catalyst for a discussion of which of opener's rebids are forcing over 2♦. My thinking: 2♥ and 2♠ non-forcing; 2NT game force; 3♣ one-round force (can pass 3♦ rebid); 3♦ non-forcing.

The argument for 2NT forcing is that there are many more hands that need bidding room than hands which make exactly 2NT but not two of a suit. If you have a minimum with two or more diamonds, you can pass 2♦. With a minimum and diamond shortness you rebid spades or try a second suit. On this hand, 2NT forcing is invaluable since the best game could be spades,

diamonds or notrump from your side.

JS: Not much controversy here. It's good to see the Baqai-Roeder partnership in agreement. I like 2NT forcing also, but don't see the necessity of making it a game force. If responder rebids 3♦ opener should be able to pass. The primary reason for this problem was to determine what kind of hand is suitable for a passed hand two-over-one response. Does it still show about 10 HCP, or can it be made on a hand on which you don't want to pass in 1NT – something like ♠x, ♥Qxxx, ♦KJ9xxx, ♣xx? Rick went on to note:

ROEDER (continued): A consideration is what an initial 2♦ bid by the passer would have meant. If it would have been artificial, then it is possible for the 2♦ bidder to have a good weak two or even a hand like: ♠x ♥Axxx ♦AJ10xxx ♣xx that was unsuitable for a 2♦ opening bid. A bulky 3♠ rebid can keep you from getting to the best game of 5♦. This is why 2NT forcing is best.

Problem 4.

Both, IMP scoring
As South, you hold

♠Q4 ♥A4 ♦J75 ♣AKQJ73

East	South	West	North
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dbl	?		

BAQAI: Redouble, to show a max overcall with good suit. I would have preferred to double initially and follow with a notrump rebid at the cheapest level to get my playing strength across to partner.

JS: If partner has length in either pointed suit you could easily lose control of the auction after a takeout double. Your excellent club suit with scattered side values may be of little use in spades or diamonds.

ROEDER: Redouble. Al Roth's introduction of negative doubles was deemed the best development since sunshine in December in Detroit. While generally true, there are times that one corollary of negative doubles can feel like sunshine in July in Needles. Opener is obligated to reopen with any hand with shortness in overcaller's suit just in case pard holds a penalty double. After you let your powerhouse 2♣ overcall be known, pard is free to make a penalty double with club shortness and a smattering of values if the opponents run. If 2NT was natural, there might be merit in considering the auction but this auction should be reserved for good overcalls with secondary diamonds.

JS: The partnership is in tune, but I don't like the redouble any more than an original takeout double. Where are your defensive winners? For your cards to have full value you must play in clubs or notrump. There are many auctions on which a notrump rebid after a suit bid implies the suit you bid plus a secondary suit. I don't think this is one of them. 2NT would be natural here in my opinion. With clubs and diamonds you should pass, then bid 2NT later if you wish to compete.

LAWRENCE: 3♣. Dangerous? Probably. The problem is that if I pass, I will wonder if I should bid again later. By bidding 3♣ now, I give them a chance to make the wrong three level guess.

JS: You wouldn't have to guess whether or not to bid later. Your left hand opponent is going to pass 2♣ doubled.

MILES: 3♣. Theoretically this is risky since we could be doubled and held to seven tricks (or even worse if the clubs don't break). But it is unlikely that we will

be doubled with high cards and no trump tricks. I think the most likely result is down one, undoubled, but it is possible that the opponents will misjudge their hands and bid to a level that we can set.

JS: If you believe that this hand has too much offense to defend at the two level (which, as noted above, is a dangerous but reasonable view) the bid here should be 2♥, getting partner to declare notrump if feasible.

MEYERS: Pass. I don't have much more than I said I had when I made a vulnerable two level overcall.

JS: The only good part about passing here is that accurate defense will only set you 500 instead of the 800 possible in 3♣ doubled. Partner holds the singleton ♠10, but the defense can cash all their side winners and then uppercute you out of a club trick. Ugly, isn't it? However, the redoublers do have something going for them. Many partnerships do not have an agreement about when the pass of a redouble is for penalties, so opener may panic and run. I think the rule should state that a pass BEHIND a redoubler is a penalty pass.

Problem 5.

Vul vs not, IMP scoring
As South, you hold

♠K74 ♥K ♦J8753 ♣J1074

North	East	South	West
1♥	Pass	1NT*	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

(*)=forcing

BAQAI: Pass. I am not sure I can improve the contract so I'll settle for a pass.

Miles: Pass. I realize that we could be cold for game in clubs or notrump, but it is unlikely. There is an additional danger (in raising to 3♣) because partner may have been forced to rebid a three card suit.

ROEDER: Pass. Your best remaining spot may well be 2NT, but I see no way to get there as a 2NT rebid by you would show 10-12 HCP. If pard had a 4-5-2-2 Flannery hand and "had" to rebid 2♣, the bridge gods have punished him by making him declare the hand. Advocates of false preferences should be ashamed of even thinking of bidding 2♥. In this age of massive acceptance of plastic surgery, let's please, please keep a few things real.

JS: If I didn't know better I would think Rick was the victim of a bad nose job. Something that's real in my world is the ten IMPs awarded for bidding and making a vulnerable game. Unlikely on this deal, yes. But by bidding 2♥ you give partner, who could be holding a difficult to bid 17 HCP hand, another chance to bid (which you will welcome).

LAWRENCE: Pass. Seems clear. Will read up on the news when I get the answers.

MEYERS: 2♥. Partner could be 4-5-2-2; even if partner had three clubs, my ♥K looks awfully nice.

JS: The unlikely 2♣ rebid by partner holding a doubleton club is not a strong reason for bidding 2♥. (Although it is possible to lay out hands for partner holding three clubs where 2♥ has a better chance of making than 2♣.) I agree with the panel that, in general, 2♣ will be a better contract than 2♥. The point is that it is worthwhile to give up this small, nebulous advantage for the times partner holds, say: ♠AJ ♥Axxxx, ♦x ♣AQxxx and you roll into the cold club game (after 1♥ - 1NT; 2♣ - 2♥; 3♣ - 3♠; 4♦ - 5♠).

Hand of the Month "With a Little Bit of Luck"

By Joel Hoersch
Editor, District 22 Forum

(Note: This month's hand is a fictional account of the first day's adventures of bridge expert Henry Huddle and his protégé, Eliza Bidlittle, as they sit down to play in the Blue Ribbon Pairs. The subhed of this article reflects the name of one of the major songs featured in the musical comedy "My Fair (Little Old) Lady," which will be the centerpiece entertainment at the NABC Nationals in San Diego in November.

To discover how that event finally develops for this Pygmalion pair, be sure to attend a performance of that production!

North
♠AQ7
♥J4
♦95
♣KQ10964

(Huddle)
♠10985
♥92
♦QJ7432
♣3

(Eliza)
♠KJ4
♥A10632
♦86
♣AJ2

South
♠632
♥KQ87
♦AK10
♣875

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