

Bridge News

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by John Jones

GNT Dates and Site Likely to Change



D23 had plans for the GNTs to be held on April 6 and 7. There were some unavoidable snags. GNT Chair Walt Schafer has sprung into action and is close to having the problem solved. The most likely scenario is that the GNTs will be held on

Saturday April 13 and Sunday April 14 at the Long Beach Bridge Center, 4782 Pacific Coast Highway, Long Beach (562)-498-8113. The details haven't been finalized as of this writing, but watch for a flyer on the district website.

We had an ALACBU meeting at 10:00 AM on January 20. It was intended as a hybrid (live and F2F) meeting, but the heavy rain prevented many from traveling. Add some miscommunication and it wound up being essentially an online only meeting. Quorum was reached with most units being represented. The minutes will be posted online by Lillian Slater, Secretary.

Our new webmaster, Rita Vanlierop, is off to a great start. She has reestablished our website. She has also established new email addresses for all the district officers. Mine is president@d23acbl.org

I never formed a D23 Ethics Committee this year. I would have if the need had occurred. However, as of Feb. 1, 2024, all new ethics charges go through the national recorder and national committee. Unless there was a charge made before Feb. 1, the districts no longer handle any ethics committees. Units ceased to hold Ethics Committees a few years back.

On a personal note, I am just getting over a mild case of Covid. This delayed me getting my newsletter items in. Thank you to Tom Lill for his

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Regional Director's Report

by David Lodge



EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach). What is EDGAR? How does it work? Is it reliable? How does the use of EDGAR tie into discipline? Who will be subject to having their results analyzed by EDGAR?

EDGAR is a computer based bridge cheating detection device. I'm featuring EDGAR in this article because today, February 1st, is the actual start date for the use of EDGAR by the ACBL. It's taken close to 2 years from the introduction of EDGAR to the ACBL Board of Directors and management to come to fruition. Most of the delay in implementation was related not to the efficacy of the software, but to business issues. The BOD and management are fully confident in the reliability of the product. Jeff Edelstein, the ACBL National Recorder, who has been working with EDGAR on a test basis for a considerable time has seen what he believes may have been a few false negatives, but has yet to see a false positive (a situation in which EDGAR concludes that an innocent pair/player are cheating). EDGAR works by looking at a statistically valid sample of a number of hands played online. It looks at a number of "markers" and compares the percentage of successful outcomes to the known percentages of non-cheating expert players. The markers involve a number of defensive actions and some bidding. Examples: opening leader underleads an Ace to find his partner with King doubleton; opening leader leads an unsupported Ace to find his partner with singleton; opening leader wins first trick and shifts to new suit and "hits" partner at a far greater average than the best players in the world; opening leader makes unusual lead that works perfectly in spite of having a

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understanding! Tom does a marvelous job as newsletter editor. I also have a new dog (Goerge and Alex both died in the last three months). Anyone who wants to meet my new dog Moana (6-year-old Golden Retriever) come to South Bay Bridge Club on a Monday or Wednesday evening. Laura Gastelum and I will be teaching a class on competitive bidding (intermediate level) on Mondays at SBBC at 10:15AM starting Monday February 12. Call SBBC for more details.

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normal lead of partner’s bid suit; opening bidder passes game forcing bid; either bidder stops short of normal level based on combined holding or carries on to level higher than indicated by combined holdings and bidding to date.

EDGAR is only for use in online play. As in the world before EDGAR, pairs/players suspected of cheating online will have their results analyzed. Remember that there must have been a large enough population of hands to look at in order for there to be a valid sample. Additionally, groups of players will go through an EDGAR evaluation. These include anyone connected with the ACBL, all ACBL employees, members of the BOD, etc. And they won’t just be looked at once. They’ll be subject to a periodic review, maybe quarterly. Other groups of players, possibly segregated by masterpoints will be reviewed. The luxury of having EDGAR is that we can look at massive amounts of data.

You’re stopped for speeding which the officer determined through the use of a radar gun. You’re assumed to be guilty. You can try to overturn the assumption if you can demonstrate any one of a number of conditions existed that rendered the radar gun ineffective. EDGAR works the same way. You will be presumed to be guilty. In cases of players with less than 2,500 masterpoints, you will be subject to automatically imposed disciplines. These are referred to as FAST TRACT DISCIPLINE (FTD). What happens to someone is dependent primarily on one’s level of expertise. Keep in mind that you will be subject to the penalties appropriate for the higher ranking member of the pair, so if you have 100 masterpoints and you’re playing with a partner with 2,300 masterpoints, you will be subject to the 2,300 masterpoints penalties. The least experienced players will actually be given a warning. More experienced players will fall under 1 of 3 levels of ever-increasing severity; level 1=6 month suspension, level 2=1 year suspension, level 3=2 year suspension. In all cases the players will be on probation for 4 years and will forfeit 20% of their masterpoints. If you are a more experienced player with in excess of 2,500 masterpoints, you will not be eligible to FTD, in which case you can either enter into a Negotiated Resolution with management or have your case submitted to

arbitration to be conducted by the IBA, the Institute for Bridge Arbitration.

Your BOD was faced with a decision. Do we commit significant resources to bringing EDGAR on board in the hopes of being able to dramatically increase the number of determinations of cheating or do we not do anything significant, save the money and go along at the same not very satisfactory pace of rooting out cheating. Opting for the former was influenced by awareness that online play is not only here to stay, but likely to become more significant to our combined tournament and club activity.

Next month we’ll take a look at the state of ACBL; its present net worth, its results from 2023, the 2024 likely results and the state of membership.

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New Life Masters in District 23
submitted by Mike Marcucci



David Peim – Oct 12
Unit 568



Nina Huang – Dec 23
Unit 559



Patti Monroe – Sept 23
Unit 561



Kim Ebner – Dec 23
Unit 559

The Puzzle Page

Bridge Jeopardy *by John Jones*

Category: Starting with N (each term begins with the letter N)

And the answer is ...

- \$100 – The partner of South.
- \$200 – The highest scoring strain. The first trick is worth 40.
- \$300 – A double of an opponent’s overcall to show length in an unbid suit(s). Was called “Sputnik” for a while.
- \$400 – An opening bid of 4♣ or 4♦ to show a strong preempt in a major. This convention is another convention’s name spelled backwards.
- \$500 – In situations where verbal is (was) allowed, this two-word phrase is allowed in England instead of “Pass.”

Play or Defend? *by John Jones*

North

♠ void
♥ A Q 6 2
♦ A K 8 6 4 2
♣ J 4 2

West

♠ J 10 9 4 2
♥ J
♦ Q 10 9 3
♣ Q 10 3

East

♠ A 8 7 5 3
♥ 10 8 7 4 3
♦ 7
♣ 9 8

South

♠ K Q 6
♥ K 9 5
♦ J 5
♣ A K 7 6 3

Contract = 6♣

Opening Lead = ♠J

All players can see all the cards. Do you play or defend?

(Solutions to these puzzles are on page 5.
No peeking!)

February Rebus *by John Jones*

Well ... can *you* figure out what this says?



Solution to “Play or Defend?”

Answer: play. Ruff the opening lead. The key play is to immediately duck a trump (while there is still a trump in dummy if a spade comes back). If a trump comes back, draw the last two trumps pitching a heart from dummy. Play the Ace and King of Diamonds and ruff a diamond. A heart to dummy is the entry to play the fourth round of diamonds. Another heart to dummy is the entry to cash the two set up diamonds.

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

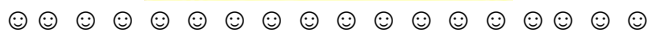
- \$100 – Who is North?
- \$200 – What is No Trump?
- \$300 – What is negative (double)?
- \$400 – What is Namyats (backwards is Stayman)?
- \$500 – What is No Bid (Pass and hearts sound similar with British pronunciation).



Submitted by John Jones



His owner sez he plays bridge... Do you believe him?



Rebus

New Minor Forcing

Have a good bridge rebus? Send it to johndjones44@yahoo.com

District 23 Rank Changes December 2023

<p>Junior Master Kay C. Aiken Eileen Cluge Robert Melworm Marcia L. Nicholson Moyna Simon Stanley T. Sugimoto</p> <p>Club Master Wayne Drayer Corkey Holt Stephen Reiss</p> <p>Sectional Master Jeffrey P. Johnson Vernetta Lieb</p> <p>Regional Master Wendy T. Kelley Susan P. Rosenson Peter S. Wong</p>	<p>NABC Master Helen Cooksey Eileen K. Feinstein Carolyn Gore Harkirat Randhawa</p> <p>Advanced NABC Master Peter P. Koenig Susan S. Koenig Caryn Mason Jon Yinger</p> <p>Life Master Kim Ebner Nina Huang Edward J. Nowacki Paul W. Poareo</p>	<p>Bronze Life Master Edward J. Nowacki Paul W. Poareo Andrew H. Rottenbacher</p> <p>Silver Life Master Merle P. Liebesman Karen S. McKittrick Frederick A. Reker</p> <p>Ruby Life Master Katherine M. Weisberg</p> <p>Gold Life Master Michael Marcucci Jojo Sarkar</p> <p>Diamond Life Master Maria C. Pendergast</p>
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Around the Units
in District 23



Pomona – Covina
by Tom Lill
www.acblunit551.org

- Individual:** February 3, 10 a.m., Ontario
March 2, 10 a.m., Ontario
Unit Game: February 17, 11:00 a.m., Ontario
Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game
STaC: March 19 and 22

Well, I must have been *very* tired when I compiled the list of Palm Springs winners. I completely overlooked Richard Parker, who scored 20.20 points to top the list. He was 232rd overall in the masterpoint list. So add one more player and 20.20 to the total list. Meanwhile, Art Weinstein gathered rather more points than I indicated: 13.78. I must have let my eyes cross. Sorry about that, friends!

FYI: La Fetra handed out a list of dates that will not be available to us in 2024. If you didn't pick one up (they were handed out during the games in December), mark your calendars for these dates:

- Friday, June 14 – La Fetra Center picnic
- Friday, November 29 – Day after Thanksgiving
- Tuesday, December 24 – Christmas Eve
- Tuesday, December 31 – New Year's Eve

For the June and November Fridays, we'll plan on holding a game where we play the Individual and Unit games. Which site it will be depends on the expected attendance – we have to pay rent for the Unit game site, but not the little room (5 tables maximum) where we play the Individual. So we will be asking for advance sign-ups for those two dates.

The January Individual was captured by Caryn Mason with 64.58%. In second we find Nancy Stebbins, then Peter Kavounas, Kiran Kumar, and Your Truly to round out the top five.

In the January Unit Game, Steve Mancini – Vic Sartor top honors, with a 61.31% effort. In second were Caryn Mason – Nancy Stebbins, followed by

Judy Mogharbel – Yours Truly

We have only one promotion to announce again this month. Caryn Mason is now an Advanced NABC Master. (For those of you unfamiliar with this rank: she'd be a Life Master right now had she joined the ACBL some years earlier.)

We had quite a few big games turned in last month. The top four were all by Fredy and Lulu Minter: 74.86%, 70.83%, 70.81%, and 69.44%. Next in the queue we find Mary Ann Wotring – Caryn Mason, 69.05, and Vic Sartor – Steve Mancini, 67.36. That completes the list of winners in January.

For those of you who haven't gotten the news: WE HAVE DEALING MACHINE! So now all games will have hand records available. It's a long story. Come on and play and I'll tell you all about it. It's a used machine, somewhat cranky, but that fits in with our Director.

This month's interesting hand is totally whacko. I've included it strictly for laughs. Since this is not the April issue, you can be sure this really happened. It occurred on BBO, and shows that when things go wrong, they *really* go wrong! I was South, the dealer, with E-W red. West was a human, East was a robot. You have to see the full deal to get the real flavor of what happened:

	<u>Partner</u>	
	♠ 10 8 6 3	
	♥ J 9 4	
	♦ Q J 10 2	
	♣ 5 2	
<u>Human</u>		<u>Robot</u>
♠ Q 7 5 4		♠ J 9
♥ 7 6 5 3		♥ Q
♦ 8 7 6		♦ A K 4
♣ K Q		♣ A J 10 9 7 6 3
	<u>Me</u>	
	♠ A K 2	
	♥ A K 10 8 2	
	♦ 9 5 3	
	♣ 8 4	

The auction started out normally, but went completely off the rails during the second round of bidding:

Me	Human	Partner	Robot
1♥	pass	pass	2♣
Pass	2♦ ¹	pass	2♥ ²
Pass	4♥ ³	pass	4NT ⁴
6♥ ⁵	all pass		

1. Well, LHO could have a constructive hand, with a diamond suit and a tolerance for clubs. That's how it appears at the moment.
2. Probably asking for a heart stopper, figuring West's 2♦ bid showed a real suit and some values, a fair number being outside diamonds.
3. Evidently, West did not see the opening bid, and thought the robot had opened 2♣. Wants to play in game in partner's "suit." At least, that's the only thing that makes sense to me.
4. This, I'm not sure about. Might be Blackwood, figuring partner to have a high spade card. Perhaps to play? Maybe the robot thought I had psyched?
5. Evidently, West still hasn't seen the opening bid.

Now you are asking, "why in Tarnation didn't that idiot South (i.e., me) double?" Three reasons: one, I didn't know how far down 7♣ would go (it would go down only three); two, I was so stunned by the auction, that I was partially paralyzed; three, I didn't think a double would make much difference at matchpoints (it didn't). Yes, I would double at IMPs.

I led the ♥K, which dropped declarer's bare Queen (remember, on BBO, the robot never declares when it has a human partner). Then I led the ♥A followed by the ♥2 over to partner's ♥J. Partner led a spade over to my King, whereupon I drew dummy's last trump. Now a club, whereupon declarer took ♣KQ and apparently forgetting there was still a trump out, the ♦AK. With 9 tricks gone, the situation was (see next column)

Declarer claimed (the clubs are good), but of course I rejected the claim. After a LONG huddle by declarer, I tried to claim only TWO tricks (yes, I had a TIA and forgot partner must have the ♦Q), but my claim was rejected! Declarer finally, after another huddle, played the ♣A. I ruffed, cashed the ♠A and led my diamond to partner's Queen. Partner had to surrender the last trick to the ♠Q, aw shucks. +700, a cold top. As a matter of passing interest, 3♥ makes. And yes, we get 800 defending 7♣X. So what?

I suppose it could happen to anyone. I've met the Human player on BBO before and (s)he is definitely not a Palooka. In fact, (s)he frequently beats

us like a gong. Just one of those days, I guess. But it was a nice belated Christmas present for my side!

Partner

♠ 10 8 6
♥ none
♦ Q
♣ none

Robot

♠ Q 7 5
♥ none
♦ 8
♣ none

Human

♠ none
♥ none
♦ none
♣ A J 10 9

Me

♠ A 2
♥ 8
♦ 9
♣ none

Quote for the month: "We pick politicians by how they look on television and Miss America on where she stands on the issues. Isn't that a little backwards?" (Jay Leno)



Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley by Beth Morrin

Unit 556 Board Nominations

Are you looking for an adventure of a new and different kind? Unit 556 is seeking members who are interested in running for the Unit Board. This is an opportunity to give back to the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley bridge community, meet new friends, and have an impact on changing things for the betterment of Unit 556 bridge players. If you wish to self-nominate, please contact Ruth Baker (rbaker1243@sbcglobal.net).

Nominations must be received by March 1st.

Our Face-to-Face game in Newhall is going well. We've picked up some new players. If interested in playing, contact Ruth Baker for a reservation since our space is limited.

Winners of the Friday F2F game:

Jan. 12		
N/S	May Abagi – Hani Abraham	63.10%
E/W	Carol Trenda – Gary Trenda	64.58%

Jan. 19
 N/S Bill Langlois – Donna Davidson 57.78%
 E/W Kathy Swaine – Rand Pinsky 67.82%

Jan. 26
 N/S Jan Ladd – Roy Ladd 67.56%
 E/W Carol Provost – George MacDonald 59.92%

Winners of the Saturday F2F game:

Jan. 6
 N/S Bill Langlois – Donna Davidson 61.17%
 E/W May Abagi – Hani Abraham 55.92%

Virtual Game Schedule

Monday: 12:15 PM Open game
 Tuesday: 6:15 PM Open game
 Thursday: 10:15 AM Open game
 Sunday: 12:30 PM Open game

Contact our club manager at
virtualclub@bridgemojo.com for reservations.
 ACBL has increased the minimum entry fee to \$5.
 Virtual games are now available to all BBO players.
 Invite your favorite partner to play with you in one
 of our games.

Big Virtual Club Games (65+%):

Thurs. Dec. 28
 Gerard Geremia – Rae Murbach 65.28%

Tues. Jan 2
 Ruth Baker – Roy Ladd 72.52%

Thurs, Jan. 4
 Gerard Geremia – Joseph Viola 66.85%

Sun. Jan 7
 Paula Olivares – Bill Brodek 66.28%

Tues. Jan 9
 Amr Elghamry – Dominique Moore 73.89%

Thurs. Jan. 11
 Kathy Swaine – Rand Pinsky 68.52%

Thurs. Jan 18
 Carol Ashbacher – Robot 67.13%

Mon. Jan. 22
 Bud Kalafian – Stephen Licker 68.06%

Tues. Jan. 23
 Amr Elghamry – Dominique Moore 68.98%

We are saddened by the loss of one of our
 players and friend, Gay Gipson who died, on January
 24, 2024, after a two-year battle with lung cancer.

Gay worked for 35 years for a large
 corporation headquartered in Pittsburgh as their
 International IT Manager.

Retiring in Santa Clarita with her wife and
 partner of 35+ years Sally Pearman, she took up bridge
 as a hobby. Starting in the Friendly Bridge Club's
 Beginner Game on Monday mornings at the Senior
 Center she advanced to the Open Game, became a
 Certified Director, and assisted the bridge community
 by running the Bridge Mates and scoring the games for
 the final years of the Friendly Bridge Club.

Her bridge partners remember her as a kind,
 warm and faithful friend as well as a calm, intelligent,
 and friendly partner at the bridge table.

She loved the Boston Terriers she had during
 her retirement years as well as cruising the world with
 Sally. There will be no service and her ashes will be
 scattered at sea.

Contributions in her name to
 BostonBuddies.org will be appreciated.

Next Board Meeting: TBA

Pasadena – San Gabriel by Morris “Mojo” Jones

bridgemojo.com



There are some great events
 coming up in February to celebrate
 Chinese New Year. The Pasadena
 Bridge Club is having club
 championship games all week
 Tuesday through Saturday, February
 6-10. That includes the open games
 on Wednesday and Thursday at
 11:00, and the Novice/Intermediate games on Tuesday
 evening and Saturday afternoon. Card fees are the
 same \$10, but masterpoints will be about triple the
 usual amount -- the same as a Unit Championship.

We're also putting on a full Chinese New
 Year's party on Wednesday, February 7! Margie Lee
 and friends will be decorating the club, and bringing in
 lunch. It should be a great time! Make your
 reservations early -- the club will be limited to 15
 tables at most for the party and game. Game time is
 11:00 AM, and we'll take a little extra time to party
 and enjoy lunch.

January's unit games were well attended, with 10-1/2 tables on January 7, and 12 tables on January 21. Winners in each direction:

January 7:

N/S: Karen Arase, Gitta Earll

E/W: George Wang, Frank Shih

January 21:

N/S: Connie Kang, Greg Tapia

E/W: Amr Elghamry, Dominique Moore

February's Unit Games will be on Sunday, February 4, at the Pasadena Bridge Club, and Sunday, February 18, at the Arcadia Bridge Center. Game time is 12:30 PM. With space being somewhat limited, reservations are required! Contact Miriam Harrington for a reservation, (626) 232-0558, or miratpf@aol.com.

We had some big rank changes in January!

- Life Master: Kim Ebner, Nina Huang
- Bronze Life Master: Andrew Rottenbacher
- Gold Life Master: Michael Marcucci

It seems like it was just last week that Kim Ebner was trying to catch on in a class of Bridge Basics 1 with me at Arcadia High School. Congratulations Kim! And Nina crossed that milestone in a flash as well!

Next month: the unit Membership Meeting, Party, and Game will be on March 3 at the Pasadena Bridge Club. Again, space is limited! Make your reservations soon with Miriam.



Long Beach by Lillian Slater

www.acblunit557.org

www.LongBeachBridge.com

Long Beach Bridge Center's locally famous bridge education and 199'er group kicked off the year with mimosas, delectable treats and, of course, bridge. Thanks, Rob Preece, for organizing a terrific way to welcome 2024 on New Year's Day!

Thanks to Rob, Fern Dunbar, Hank Dunbar, and Leo Dittmore for supporting this group

throughout the year. Bridge education and developing players are thriving in Long Beach. Hank's Bridge 1 class has 12 students while Bridge 2 has 19. Bridge 3 will start on Tuesday, April 9, for nine weeks.

Additionally, Rob's Monday morning class on assorted topics attracts 12-14 tables each week. For time-at-the-table practice, the Tuesday 199'er game averages nine tables while Wednesday typically has five. There are also 499'er NLM games on Wednesdays and Fridays at 12:30 p.m., as well as the unit games on the fourth Sunday of each month. A special shout out to Lynda Montgomery (wearing the party hat) who volunteers to support Hank's classes and/or as fill-in at the 199'er games.

Long Beach Bridge Center is excited to welcome new, developing, and advancing players to our club. Come play with us!





Problem Solvers' Panel

John Jones is moderator. Mark Bartusek, Sid Brownstein, Ellis Feigenbaum, Alex Kolesnik, Mister Mealy-mouth, Jill Meyers, Margie Michelin, Rick Roeder, Mike Shuster, and Jon Wittes are panelists.

As always, panelists are playing 5-card majors, 15 - 17 NT, and 2/1 GF. Beyond that, except where indicated, panelists may use any reasonable methods.

1

IMPs
None Vul

West	North	East	South
1♠	pass	pass	???

You, South, hold: ♠ AK ♥ AJ10542 ♦ K863 ♣ 2

What call do you make?

The best bid seems to be a three-horse race. The possibilities include: double, 2♥, and 3♥. 3♥ is not a preempt in passout position. 3♥ is normally described as intermediate. What it means is a solid overcall with a good six-card suit. Mealy-mouth calls it strong, but that appears to be semantics; he is on the same page as the other 3♥ bidders, and not arguing for a Goren game forcing treatment. This hand was submitted by Gabe Foster.

Mealy-mouth: 3♥. Regardless of how we play single-jump overcalls in the direct seat, in the passout seat they're strong. This hand is not quite strong enough for a strong jump overcall in the direct seat, but for balancing actions partner will expect us to be about a "trick light." As we'd bid 2♥ with substantially less, I'll push it with 3♥. Close, for if the ♥T were the ♥9 instead, I'd bid only 2♥.

Wittes: 3♥. With most of my partners, I play this bid as intermediate. My suit could be a little better, but I have six pretty good hearts and extra values.

Brownstein: 3♥.

Bartusek: 3♥. I wish my suit was a little better, but this describes my hand reasonably well. It also preempts LHO from introducing clubs which could be critical. Besides, I definitely don't want to do anything that would encourage partner to compete in clubs. I'm worried about missing a game if I only bid 2♥, and

I'm not completely comfortable doubling and then bidding hearts (my second choice).

Michelin: 3♥. This shows a 6-card suit with about this strength.

Ellis is the only 2♥ bidder, but he makes an important point – seven of the points are in the opponent's suit.

Feigenbaum: 2♥. Bid where you live! Yes, I have 15 HCP, but half my points are in the opponent's bid suit.

Is this hand too strong for 3♥? Some panelists argue for doubling. They are intending to bid hearts next, showing a hand too good to overcall in passout seat.

Meyers: Double. I would like to have more HCP but I feel like 3♥ (intermediate in 4th seat) is not enough – I also feel like I can handle the auction if I double, and the ♥T really seals the deal for me.

Kolesnik: Double. I think I am going to miss games by just bidding 2♥. Balancing actions are lighter by a trick. 3♥ in balancing position is closer, but I am too good for that also (take away my king of spades and I would bid 3♥). I'll double and then bid hearts to show this 5-loser hand.

Roeder: Double. 3♥ is reasonable, but double caters to hands like ♠xxx ♥x ♦QJxxx ♣Axxx. This hand is too good for a 2♥ balance.

Shuster: Double. This hand is too strong for 2♥ and too flexible for 3♥. Clubs? What, me worry?

<h1 style="font-size: 4em;">2</h1> <p>IMPs None Vul</p>	South	West	North	East
	1♣	pass	1♥	2♦
	???			

You, South, hold: ♠ Q982 ♥ 4 ♦ 102 ♣ AKQJ104

What call do you make?

Here the choices are 2♠, 3♣, a very conservative pass, or possibly some sort of a gadget with 2NT. How strong is 2♠? Does it show a full reverse or just extras? Another issue here is that double could be played to show four spades instead of a support double. What does the panel say?

Bartusek: 2NT. This depends upon system agreement and whether you play good/bad 2NT in this auction (some do and some don't). Some might say you have enough to bid 2♠ "in competition" while others say you don't. I would bid 2NT attempting to reach a 3♣ contract. Partner can always continue with 3♦ to let me further describe my hand.

Wittes: 3♣. I would usually have a little more for this bid, but my suit is so good, I think it's worth a 3♣ bid.

Shuster: 3♣. This is an important tactical hand type. I want to eat up LHO's cuebids and make sure partner knows I've opened based on a long club suit, as opposed to a weak NT.

Brownstein: 3♣. But I'm not crazy about my bid; pass may be best.

Mealymouth: 3♣. I cannot resist a strong six-bagger in what may well be a competitive part-score deal. This is less of a stretch than 2♠, and the huge discrepancy between black suits makes it the safer choice. But if you tell me I should have passed, I'll just hang my head and say, "You're right. Not strong enough to act again at this level."

Meyers: 3♣. I am not going to reverse on this hand. 3♣ shows values as no one is putting a gun to my head. I would be very happy if partner bid 3NT; and if partner does not have a diamond stopper and forcing values, I think we can still get to 4♠ if that is the right spot.

Michelin: 3♣. I have a choice to underbid or overbid. Pass is an alternative for the underbid and is probably right, but I am not passing. I don't like my stiff in partner's suit, which makes pass a good choice. I am not going to reverse in spades. I am going to bid 3♣.

Feigenbaum: 2♠. If double is support, then this is just one of the reasons I don't like support doubles. I bid 2♠ to try to involve partner because I am not arbitrarily bidding 3♣. I actually hate 2♠, but not as much as 3♣.

Kolesnik: Double/2♠. With most of my partners I like to play double shows four spades. Playing traditional support doubles, I would bid 2♠. This is just a tad light for a reverse, but I want to get to spades if partner has four and we have a game.

Roeder: 2♠. This is more forwarding-going than 3♣.

This was a hand from the recent Monterey regional. I held the hand in question in a Soloway KO match. I tried 2♠. My partner expected a full reverse and rebid 3♥ with 13 HCP and AKQxxx in hearts. I assumed that 3♥ was non-forcing and passed. The good news was that we were off four cashing tricks. The bad news was that neither table cashed the ♠AK and the ♦AK and we lost a game swing.

<h1 style="font-size: 48px; margin: 0;">3</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Matchpoints N-S Vul</p>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
	1♦	1♥	2♦	???
<p>You, South, hold: ♠ K92 ♥ 42 ♦ K87 ♣ KQ1084</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>				

Everything here is awkward. 11 HCP is a lot to not take any action, even if the ♦K is poorly placed. 3♣ would be forcing in some partnerships and show a better suit in other partnerships. 2NT is close on values if your overcalls are sound, but only has one stopper. Double would normally have at least four spades.

I'll start with the panelists that are going low.

Bartusek: Pass. I don't like anything, but it definitely seems too dangerous to bid vulnerable. I've always hated making negative doubles or responsive doubles without the appropriate major suit length promised.

Mealy-mouth: Pass. Ill-placement of the ♦K and poor heart support dim my prospects, and my clubs are not quite long enough or strong enough for 3♣. When partner overcalls, I hypothesize that he has a singleton somewhere, and that it's not in opener's suit. Here his most likely singleton is in clubs, but if it's in diamonds (almost as likely), I'm no happier. Was it my old partner William Shakespeare who said, "Adverse vulnerability doth make cowards of us all," or was it my other old partner John Donne?

Arguing for a natural invitational 2NT.

Brownstein: 2NT. This is natural and invitational.

Meyers: 2NT. I only have one stopper, but I have the values for 2NT.

Arguing for a responsive double.

Shuster: Double. I'd rather have five spades than three, but I have to do something. I won't be passing 2♠ should partner bid it.

Feigenbaum: Double. Matchpoints not being bridge I double as a blame transfer bid.

Kolesnik: Double. A very tough problem as no bid is perfect. I think I'll double and hope to survive. Over 2♠ I would bid 3♣.

Roeder: Double. This is somewhat offbeat, but I am worried that partner would take a 3♣ call as forcing.

Wittes: Double. I play 3♣ as forcing on this auction, and I'm not quite good enough for that, but I'm too good to pass. I would expect partner to rebid hearts rather than bid a three-card spade suit. If partner were to bid 2NT, I would raise.

Michelin: Double. I want to make a responsive double here and I am supposed to have four spades. I may lie and tell partner I thought I had four spades and four clubs and hope we are not playing online where I am caught. We will probably play our 3-3 fit.

I don't play 3♣ as forcing in this situation (both opponents have bid), so I would try that. My second choice is 2NT.

<h1 style="font-size: 4em; margin: 0;">4</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">IMPs N-S Vul</p>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>
	3♦	???		
<p>You, South, hold: ♠ 2 ♥ AK1042 ♦ AK ♣ AK942</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>				

This problem was used by Steve Robinson in his unit column about two decades ago. Robinson thought 4NT was best, but no panelist selected that bid. Double and a natural 4♥ were the normal choices, with 3NT, and a hideous 4♦ bid getting votes. Here the panelists did much better.

Mealy-mouth: 3♥. I'm hoping to get another turn. That's what I'd bid without a clear partnership understanding of the meanings of any alternatives. The auction isn't necessarily over. As for partnership agreements that could work here, over an opposing 3♣ or 3♦ opening, I like "Two-Fisted Michaels": 4♦ always shows the majors, 4♣ always shows the unbid minor and an unspecified major, for which a 4♦ advance asks. Anyone for 4NT? Not I, even if I thought partner would take it as hearts and clubs. Mr. Micawber said, "Six of a major down one? Bad luck. Five of a major down one? Bad bidding."

Shuster: 3NT. So I can go -200 instead of +1430. Why must they do this to me?

Bartusek: 3NT. Unless you play 4♣ as clubs and a major, you are stuck guessing. 4♦ is normally played as both majors. I don't like doubling because you have impossible continuations over 3♠ or 4♣. Note that doubling and then pulling 3♠ to 4♥ generally shows 3=5 in the majors (per some top professionals). 4NT probably shows hearts and clubs here (and may be best), but the 5-level might be too high if we have no decent fit with bad breaks present.

Feigenbaum: 4NT. This has to be clubs and hearts as I didn't bid 4♦ to include the spade suit. A queen in either of my suits should give reasonable chances for six. This is a little optimistic but life is too short to be worrying about a cashing ace and ruff on the go.

Roeder: 4NT. I may suffer with my decision more next round.

Wittes: 4NT. Best problem of this set. This should show clubs and hearts. I will cue bid diamonds over

partner's bid. If partner now cue bids spades, I will bid the grand.

Michelin: 4NT. If my partner and I are on the same page, this shows two places to play, big hand not including spades. I am sure Marshall Miles would have bid some number of NT to play. *I'm not convinced. As much as Marshall loved bidding NT (even without full stoppers), he loved getting his suits in on two-suited hands.*

Kolesnik: 4♣. I like to play non-leaping Michaels, and have it be forcing. So, I would have an easy 4♣ at this point. Not playing that, I would double and bid 4♥ over 3♠.

There are magazines, websites, and newsletters that have expert bidding contests like this around the world. The leading contest is the Bridge World's Master Solvers' Contest (MSC). A significant difference is that in the MSC panelists are required to use the Bridge World Standard system (like Standard American with lots of gadgets and agreements). In this column, panelists may use any agreements that they like. Sometimes there are times when panelists use nonstandard methods. This is one of them. I like letting panelists discuss pet treatments. Bartusek and Kolesnik both discussed Non-leaping Michaels, in which 4 of a minor would show a two suiter. Mealy-mouth discussed Two-Fisted Michaels. Both of those conventions are interesting ideas, but the scheme I like the best is discussed by Meyers and Brownstein (a married couple and a bridge partnership).

Meyers: 4♥. With my regular partners I play 4M over 3m shows a very good hand, with the major I bid and the other minor (4♣ would always show majors, 4♦ always good with one major). So, I will leave you with those thoughts and will bid 4♥.

Brownstein: 4♥. Jill and I play: double = takeout, 4♣=Majors, 4♦=one Major, 4♥ or 4♠ = at least 5-5 with clubs and obviously with good hands. This is much like Woolsey over 1NT.

<h1 style="font-size: 4em;">5</h1> <p>Matchpoints Neither Vul.</p>	<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
	pass	1♦	1♥	pass
	???			
<p>You, South, hold: ♠ J1065 ♥ 84 ♦ 972 ♣ AKQ8</p> <p>What call do you make?</p>				

The auction is only at the one-level, but is already a headache. There appear to be five viable paths: Pass, 1♠, 1NT, 2♣, and 2♥.

Roeder: Pass. The auction is not over. One of the beauties of matchpoints is that one need not worry about occasionally missing a close game.

Feigenbaum: 2♣. It's what I want partner to lead; I don't like it, but I can always bid 2♥ later. I certainly don't want partner leading a spade and they will never believe me if I pass and back in with a double over 2♦ or if West reopens.

Wittes: 2♣. Another tough problem! I have a little too much to pass. I play 2♣ as non-forcing constructive. The worst thing that could happen is playing a 4-2 fit. If partner rebids 2♥, I'm fine. If the opponents compete in diamonds, I've probably gotten partner off to the best lead.

Michelin: 1♠. I am very pedestrian here even though I don't want a spade lead. I think 1♠ is normal. A possibility is 2♣, showing the strength and lead directing by a passed hand.

Kolesnik: 1♠. I'll bid 1♠, as anything else is not quite right. I again hope to survive.

Brownstein: 1♠. This feels right and I hope partner doesn't pass.

Meyers: 1NT. It is either 1NT or 1♠, but I much prefer 1NT. If partner has real values they can raise and I don't have great spades.

Shuster: 1NT. Perfect. Except for the one thing.

Bartusek: 1NT. I have a balanced hand and nothing else to bid. Partner will usually have a diamond card on this auction since no diamond raise. Nothing else is remotely attractive to me. Pass is too likely to miss a game.

Mealymouth: 1NT without a Flicker (I never learned to ride a horse). Playing Weak Jump Overcalls (not that I ever would do so voluntarily), I must keep the bidding open lest my partner has a moose for his "taking it slow" 1♥ overcall and every other bid is worse than 1NT. Was it my old partner Marshall Miles who said, "Any holding in a suit is a stopper if they don't lead it," or did I make that one up myself?

Another Marshall reference! I don't recall Marshall ever making a statement to that effect, but I suspect he believed it!

I'm with the 1NT bidders on this one. I'm certain that Eddie Kantar would have tried 1NT here. He preached bidding your shape on hands like this.