Southern California **Bridge News**

Volume 60, #11 November 2023 Published by ALACBU

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by John Jones



Welcome to November, one of my favorite months. It includes Thanksgiving, has excellent weather when much of the country is getting cold, great meaningful college football games, and the start of ACBL's Fall Nationals, which are being held in Atlanta this year.

By the time you read this, we will probably have solved our website problems. The October issue of the So Cal Bridge News was not posted in a timely manner. Apparently, there were multiple problems. One involved our previous webmaster not checking his email. Another problem may have been that we may have owed money to the online hosting organization. If you are reading this, those problems should be solved. We have a new webmaster, Rita Vanlierop.

We also have a new GNT coordinator, Walt Shafer. Thank you to Jeff Grotenhuis for his service in previous years. April 6 and 7 are likely to be the GNT dates for 2024. Stay tuned for more info. Ruth Baker is still our STAC coordinator and Morris (Mojo) Jones is our NAP coordinator.

If you would like to serve on any of our committees or be helpful in any way, please email me at johndjones44@yahoo.com.

The ACBL has officially ruled that either the old convention card format or the new convention card format are acceptable. The new format was very well done. The author was Danny Sprung, a Philadelphia area expert. He put the bids in the logical order, the same as would be found in a bidding box. He allowed for the card to show a variety of agreements over 1♣ and 1♦ openings, reflecting on the current trend for

PRESIDENT continued on page2

Regional Director's Report

by David Lodge



There's not much to report this month. The financial focus at the national level this time of year is creating and reviewing the 2024 budget. Our Director of Finance, Jennifer Webster, is new to our organization this year. Consequently, it's the first time she's had to prepare our budget. I'd hope to have had a draft prior to this months newsletter so that I could talk about some basic parameters and assumptions. That will have to wait until next issue.

Committees are meeting over the next several days so that the committee chairs can send in proposed motions and discussion items for our Atlanta meetings which start on November 20.

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advanced players to play increasingly interesting complex systems. He accomplished this task under an exceptionally difficult personal circumstance, his wife JoAnn Sprung was dying of cancer. Despite Danny's great job, the card was not universally well-received. It was a greater change than almost any we have seen in the past (I've been around since 1974, but saw the very simple convention cards that were used before that). It was confusing to many of our club players. Thus, the ACBL Conventions Committee will now allow players to "use either the "new" convention card that was approved in late 2021, or its predecessor, the "old" card, in all ACBL events". An intelligent compromise!

I am happy to say that there has recently been an increase in the number of sectionals in D23 The Pasadena Unit and the Long Beach Unit have run open sectionals. The Valley Unit ran a limited sectional. There are plenty of players who need silver points, so keep up the good work units. All of these utilized local clubs. This is a great idea. It helps the clubs, helps the players, promotes bridge, and raises money for the units. Well done!

District 23 Final for North American Pairs

By Morris "Mojo" Jones

We had 19 tables compete for the privilege of representing District 23 in the North American Pairs championships to be held this March in Louisville, KY.

In Flight A with 14 pairs the top qualifiers were:

Robert Scaramuzzi, John Jones
Iftikhar Baqai, Mitch Dunitz
Robert Shore, Paul Ryan

In Flight B with 14 pairs the top qualifiers were:

Jeff Grotenhuis, Giacomo Beretta
Zheng Zhang, Jack Chang
Dalia Hernandez, Robert Preece
Jim Brunet, Alexander Wiles

Flight C had 10 pairs competing, and the top qualifiers were:

Nina Huang, Ming Hu
Nancy Imbery, Joey Duree
Barry Sinsheimer, Jeanne Sinsheimer
Paul Chen, Michael Teng

Good luck to all in the championships in March!

If you competed in the finals, but did not finish in the top of your flight, don't despair! If one of the qualifying partnerships declines the invitation to the national championship, the next finishers in order will be invited to compete.

Next year's North American Pairs will begin on June 1, with qualifying games being held throughout June, July, and August. Contact your favorite club manager next summer to find NAP Qualifier games at your club.

AUDREY GRANT'S LATEST METHODS FOR TEACHING
IN PERSON OR ONLINE!

Better Bridge Teacher Accreditation



December 21-22, 2023

Pasadena Bridge Club
Morris "Mojo" Jones, Managing Director
https://pasadenabridgeclub.com
(626) 247-4457

ABA and ACBL Teacher Certification Program

District 23 Rank Changes September 2023

Junior Master
Patricia Croshere
Dennis G. Depauw
Kenneth Farhang
Corkey Holt
David King
Meera V. Kumar
Jerry S. Milliken
Susan Morishita
Kris Perry
Charlene Spero
Abdo Ali Tajik

Club Master
Guerry Collins
Marilyn L. Gelfand
William Gudish
Jennifer Pendry
Norma Silva

Sectional Master
Maida B. Hastings
Yongkang Huang
Peter Kavounas
Anita Weir

NABC Master
Margery Teller

Advanced NABC Master
Susan J. Briest
Rajath Shourie

Life Master
Patti Monroe

Ruby Life Master
Ivy S. Leight

The Puzzle Page

Bridge Jeopardy
by John Jones

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

And the answer is …

$100 – A method of asking for aces plus the king of trumps. Some pairs use the 1430 version and some pairs use the 0314 (pi) version.

$200 – A person who watches a bridge game.

$300 – A fancy version of asking for keycards in which the asking bid is one over 4 of the trump suit (4 Spades if Hearts are trumps).

$400 – His first name was Eric. He was Canadian, a great bridge theorist who invented several conventions, wrote and helped edit the Bridge World magazine, and coached Meckstroth and Rodwell.

$500 – A bidding system popularized in the 1960s. It contains the names of two men, Edgar, who edited the Bridge World magazine, and Alfred, the Los Angeles Times bridge editor.

Play or Defend?
by John Jones

North
♠ 10 2
♥ Q J
♦ A K J 10 9 3
♣ 10 8 2

West
♠ 9 6 5 3
♥ A 6
♦ 6 4
♣ Q 9 7 5 3

East
♠ J 4
♥ K 10 8 7 5 2
♦ 8 5 2
♣ J 6

South
♠ A K Q 8 7
♥ 9 4 3
♦ Q 7
♣ A K 4

Contract = 4♠

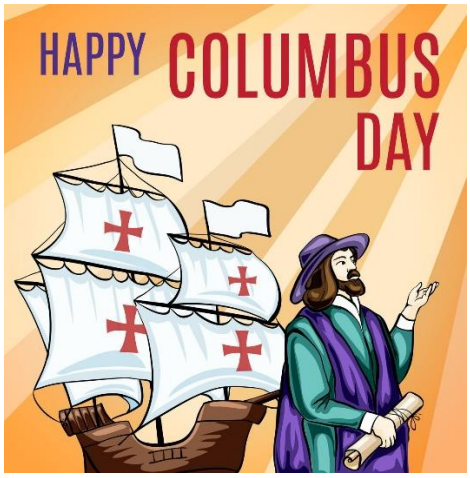
Opening Lead = ♣5

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

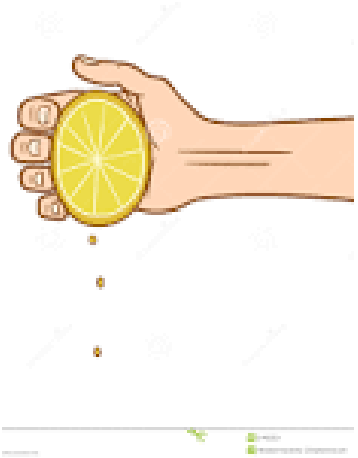
(Solutions to these puzzles are on page 5. No peeking!)

November Rebus

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







Solution to "Play or Defend?"

Answer: play. You insert the ♣8 at T1, and East covers with the ♣J. Now comes the critical play – run the ♠7. East wins the ♠J, and the ♠10 is still in the dummy to overruff a third round of hearts. It doesn't matter if West covers the ♠7 with the ♠9, you still duck and the position transposes. You can run the diamonds and the trumps by using the ♦Q as a hand entry.

"Rebus"

"Criss-Cross Squeeze

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

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

$100 – What is Keycard?

$200 – Who is a kibitzer?

$300 – What is Kickback?

$400 – Who is Kokish?

$500 – What is K-S (Kaplan-Sheinwold)?

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Submitted by John Jones



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Southern California Bridge News
Published monthly by ALACBU, Inc.
1800 Avenue of the Stars, 12th Floor,
Los Angeles, CA 90067
Phone: 310-440-4100
email newsletter@acblunit551.org
Editor/Designer. . . . . Tom Lill
Managing Editor. . . . . John Jones
Contributing Editor. . . . . .John Jones

Copy deadlines: the 23rd of the preceding month. Opinions expressed in the Southern California Bridge News are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of ALACBU, Inc., The Bridge News or the Editor. The Bridge News reserves the right to reject material it considers to be in poor taste or deems otherwise unsuitable for publication.

Around the Units in District 23



Pomona – Covina by Tom Lill

www.acblunit551.org

Individual: November 4, 10 a.m., Upland
December 2, 10 a.m., Upland
Unit Game: November 18, 11:00 a.m., Ontario
Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game
Club Championships: November 28, December 1
STaC: November 14, 17, 18 (Unit Game)

We have officially moved out of the Knights of Columbus. The parking here at ICH is better, even if it's only because you don't have to cross busy Route 66 to get to the playing area.

The October Individual was captured by Stephen Andersen, with 64.58% In second we find Tom Cusack, followed by Yours Truly tying Kitty Moon for third, then Linda Tessier, and finally Rose Roberts tying Ar Weinstein for the final spot in the masterpoints.

The final standings for the 2023 Individual Championship have been computed. Of the 30 people who played at least once, 12 qualified for the championship by playing at least six games. The top five:

Linda Tessier	57.6%
Stephen Andersen	57.2%
Kiran Kumar	56.7%
Tom Lill	54.9%
Art Weinstein	54.2%

The overall percentages are arrived at by taking a weighted average of each player's best six games, percentagewise.

In the October Unit Game, Susie Emminger - Gary Atwell too top honors with a 68.34% effort. In second were Judy Mogharbel - Kiran Kumar, then Vic Sartor - Bill Papa. Also scoring were Fredy Minter - Amr Elghamry, then Karen McCarthy - Karen Olin, and Richard Parker - Steve Mancini (first in flight C).

We have only one promotion to announce this month. Peter Kavounas is now a Sectional Master

The "big game" list for October features only three pairs. A competitive month! The big score of 70.14% was turned in by Clint Lew – Linda Tessier. The other two big scores – and just barely, at that – were turned in by Fredy Minter – Roger Boyar (65.74%), and Roger Boyar – Steve Mancini (65.17%). Other winners: Peter Kavounas, Bill Papa, Mary Ann Wotring, Vic Sartor, and Lulu Minter.

For this month's horror show I present two deals I had the pleasure (?) of participating in. They were the first two of the session, so as you will see, it was going to be a long one. So to speak.

With North the dealer, all vulnerable, you find yourself staring at these cards:

♠ KJ ♥ KQ965 ♦ AKJ10 ♣ K4.

Well, a bit better than the usual dreck I pick up. For better or for worse, after two passes, I decided to open a slightly off-shape 2NT (20-21).

Before I give the auction and the entire deal, just how many tricks do you think you might bring home with this rather nice collection? Think, think, think …

WRONG! You are going to make ONE trick! After my 2NT, LHO bid 3♠, which bought the contract. The entire deal was:

	♠ 62 ♥ J103 ♦ Q954 ♣ 6532.	
♠ AQ943 ♥ A874 ♦ 8 ♣ AJ10		♠ 10875 ♥ 2 ♦ 7632 ♣ Q987
	♠ KJ ♥ KQ965 ♦ AKJ10 ♣ K4	

The opening lead is irrelevant, but I think it was the ♦4. Since declarer can ruff hearts to get to dummy, and the club finesse is on (big surprise there), 12 tricks roll home. I made the ♦K, nothing else.

No one got to the icy 6♠ slam, somehow. I mean, the E-W hands *do* contain a whopping 17 HCP. The results were, (E-W) +260 (don't ask me!), +230, +170, +100, and somehow, N-S got to play 2♥, +110 for them.

And then on to the next board. This time you have a more modest collection:

♠ KQJ109 ♥ 8 ♦ Q974 ♣ 864.

Partner opens 1NT, RHO passes, you bid 2♥ (showing ♠s), LHO doubles (what, he thinks you can't make 2♥?), and partner bids 2♠. You think a bit but you do only have 8 HCP and only five spades. The hearts could be troublesome in a notrump contract, especially after that double. The complete deal is a bit of a surprise:

	♠ A8 ♥ A742 ♦ AJ653 ♣ A5	
♠ 642 ♥ KQJ95 ♦ K10 ♣ Q97		♠ 753 ♥ 1063 ♦ 82 ♣ KJ932
	♠ KQJ109 ♥ 8 ♦ Q974 ♣ 864	

With trumps 3-3 and the diamond King onside, 12 tricks roll in again. How often do you see +230 at all, let alone on consecutive deals? +230 was a touch above average, as the other scores were +490 (no, really!), another +230, a +210, and a +200. 16 across from 8 sure, surely an OBVIOUS 3NT hand. Maybe that pair found the secondary diamond fit … Or maybe North did not open 1NT. True, the North hand does have all four Aces, but oh, those intermediates!

Oy!

Quote for the month: "Being President is like being a jackass in a hailstorm. There's nothing to do but stand there and take it." (Lyndon Baines Johnson)



Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley

by Beth Morrin

Unit 556's Virtual and Face-to-Face games are going well. Again, if interested in playing on Friday, please contact Ruth Baker (rbaker1243@sbcglobal.net) as space is limited. There will be no F2F game on Friday November 10th as the Community Center will be closed in observance of Veteran's Day.

Winners of the Friday F2F game:

Sept. 29

N/S	Donna Davidson – Bill Langlois	59.39%
E/W	David Khalieque – Jerrod Mason	67.50%

Oct. 6

N/S	John Langer – Harry Randhawa	72.36%
E/W	Carol Provost – George MacDonald	58.08%

Oct. 13

N/S	Donna Davidson – Bill Langlois	64.18%
E/W	Ruth Baker – Bernard Seal	63.11%

Oct. 20

N/S	John Langer – Sara Seeley	60.42%
E/W	Ruth Baker – Bernard Seal	64.29%

Sad News: We are sorry to let you know that one of our long-time members and a former Unit Board member, Bob McBroom, recently passed away.

Bob was introduced to the game of bridge by his father when he was young. After graduating from college with a degree in chemistry he then served in the Peace Corps in Ghana, West Africa where he taught high school chemistry. After the Peace Corps he returned to California where he married Kathy Flynn. Together they went to graduate school in chemistry at UC Davis. They learned to play duplicate in Sacramento and Davis.

After graduate school Bob started a job in Anaheim working for U.S. Borax. There Kathy and Bob played in the Santa Ana club and various tournaments and became life masters. Bob also learned to direct there. After about a twenty-year hiatus (due to raising their children) they were finally able to play again and started playing in the Valencia Bridge club and other Unit 556 games. They had been playing online for a few years, so the move to BBO was easy for

them. Bob also directed a few games locally so the move to directing for our Virtual Club was easy for him. Bob mostly played with his wife, but also with another favorite partner, Dave White. Bob retired from Borax in 2007 when the company moved to Denver. He taught chemistry part-time at College of the Canyons in Valencia where his wife was also a full-time chemistry professor. They recently moved to Camarillo after Kathy retired from full-time chemistry teaching. In February 2023 Bob started a bridge club in their community, The Grove, and gave bridge lessons to about 20 residents. The Grove club is still active with about 12-15 people playing on Monday nights. Bob's bridge legacy lives on in the people he taught, partnered and played bridge with. We miss you, Bob.

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. Our regular games cost $4 (unless it is a special game series).

Big Virtual Club Games (65+%):

Sun. Oct. 8
Rae Murbach – Joseph Viola 67.59%

Mon. Oct. 16
Paula Olivares – Bill Brodek 69.52%
Greg Vernon – Robot 68.36%

Tues. Oct. 17
Khushroo Lakdawala – Temo Arjani 66.67%

Mon. Oct. 23
Gerard Geremia – Rae Murbach 66.98%

Next Board Meeting: Nov. 3rd

Pasadena – San Gabriel

by Morris "Mojo" Jones

bridgemojo.com



Save the date! The unit holiday party will be held on Sunday, December 10, at the beautiful Arcadia Community Center. Lunch and dessert will be served. The party will start at 12:00 noon with lunch followed by a bridge pairs game. (In other words, lunch is ½ hour before the usual Unit game starting time.) This year we're expecting delicious catering of tacos and treats, and we're lowering the cost to $30 per player. At this fee, the unit expects to spend a bit more than we'll take in, and that will be our holiday gift to the members. Of course there will be a bridge game, and it will be a Sectional Tournament at Clubs game!

We'll be sending a flier for the holiday party with more information sometime in the next few weeks by email, and look for fliers posted at the Arcadia Bridge Center and the Pasadena Bridge Club. Advance ticket purchase and reservations are required, so we can plan how much food and beverage to provide. Miriam Harrington will be taking reservations, or talk to any board member.

Our next unit games will be held on November 5 at the Pasadena Bridge Club and November 19 at the Arcadia Bridge Center. Game time is 12:30. Reservations are required! Contact Miriam Harrington at (626) 232-0558 or miratpf@aol.com to reserve your seat.

Winners from last month's unit games:

October 8:
N/S: Amr Elghamry, Dominique Moore
E/W: Mark Peters, Sin Orensztein

October 22:
N/S Paul Nason, Diana Borgatti
E/W Clint Lew, Stephen Andersen

Congratulations to new Junior Masters Kenneth Farhang and Meera Kumar, and new Club Master Guerry Collins!

Courses coming up at the Pasadena Bridge Club include Two over One game force on Wednesday evenings starting November 8, and Popular Conventions on Thursday evenings starting November

30. For full details, or to register, visit https://pasadenabridgeclub.com.

And don't forget, in December we're offering teacher accreditation for Audrey Grant's Better Bridge program. This program is well worth your time, and bridge needs teachers to share this delightful game with the world.

In conjunction with the Better Bridge TAP program, the club will be hosting a special one-day bridge seminar for newer players on Friday morning, December 22. More details in next month's update!



Long Beach
by Lillian Slater

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

Sorry, nothing from Long Beach again this month. Next month, if nothing shows up, we'll delete this placeholder.

Problem Solvers' Panel

Moderator: John Jones

John Jones is moderator. Mark Bartusek, Jordan Chodorow, Mitch Dunitz, David Grainger, Danny Korbel, Rick Roeder, Mike Shuster, and Jon Wittes are panelists.

I have made many dedications in this column during my time as editor/moderator. This time the column is dedicated to my best friend, George. George, of course, was my dog. Since I frequently took him to bridge games, many of you have met him. When I was the D23 Director on the ACBL Board of Directors, I was asked to fill out an information sheet. When I was asked about my life partner, I answered that was George and sent in his picture and bio. His picture and bio were placed on the ACBL Board of Directors page. After all, he was the one who lived with me, took me for a walk every morning, answered the door, protected me, was the smartest one in the family (and ate the most!). Those that have met him will remember how happy he always was and how pleased he was to be with bridge players! Thank you to all the players who petted him, brought him treats, and gave me advice about how to handle his illness. George passed away on October 30. His cancer had metastasized.

I normally thank my panelists and proofreaders in the November edition. Without them this column wouldn't exist. Panelists who have contributed this year include Wafik Abdou, Mark Bartusek, Paul Boudreau, Sid Brownstein, David Chechelasvili, Jordan Chodorow, Kitty Cooper. Ed Davis, Mitch Dunitz, Ellis Feigenbaum, Lynne Feldman, Ross Grabel, David Grainger, Alex Kolesnik, Daniel Korbel, Mister Mealymouth, Margie Michelin, Rick Roeder, Mike Shuster, and Jon Wittes. Thank you, panelists, you make amazing contributions with your comments and answers. The problems are deliberately challenging, making your job tough. However, you do a terrific job. My proofreaders include Gabe Foster, Chris Hitchcock, Bob McDonnell and Jo Melis. They are tremendous in finding my many errors and correcting them. They are superb! I also wish to thank my readers and those that give me hands. I hope you all have a great Thanksgiving!

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 Matchpoints E-W Vul	East	South	West	North
	pass	pass	1♦	pass
	pass	???		

You, South, hold: ♠ KQJ8 ♥ Q65 ♦ void ♣ J109863

What call do you make?

There appear to be four possible choices here: Pass, Double, 1♠, and 2♣. No panelist supported passing. Double allows partner to pass 1♦ for penalties; will that be good if it happens? A 1♠ call bids the suit one wants lead, but at the expense of bidding suits out of normal sequence (short suit first). 2♣ bids the long suit first, but may talk partner into a poor lead. What do the panelists think?

Wittes: Double. If I were not a passed hand, this bid would be more problematic, but I have support for all suits and reasonable distribution. Even if partner wants to pass, they can't play me for much more than I have.

Shuster: Double. Partner will probably pass it too often, but I refuse to bury the spades with 2♣.

Roeder: Double. This might get exciting if partner passes out the double, but who wants to be bored? Fortunately, my previous pass limits my hand. Pshew!

I like being a passed hand so that partner won't play me for too much and think double is best. Now for the 1♠ bidders.

Chodorow: 1♠. Who knows where the auction goes from here, but I'm not doubling with a void or getting partner off to a club lead from king and one.

Dunitz: 1♠. I want a spade lead if the hand does not belong to us and I'm reluctant to reopen with a double if I can't ever lead trumps through the declarer.

Leading off for the 2♣ bidders is a panelist who hates 1♠.

Korbel: 2♣. Long suit first. In my view, 1♠ is an abomination. I don't want to double 1♦ with no defense and a diamond void.

Bartusek: 2♣. It's too dangerous to reopen with a double holding a void. It's too likely that partner will pass for penalties, and I have very little defense. I will be able to either bid spades or make a takeout double of 2♦ next round to describe my hand reasonably well being a passed hand.

Grainger: 2♣. I have no desire to defend 1♦, doubled or otherwise.

The first three problems are from an old International Popular Bridge Monthly. Their panel included several international experts and world champions. including Billy Eisenberg, Eddie Kantar, Ron Klinger, Eric Kokish, Mike Lawrence, Andy Robson, Joey Silver, and Paul Soloway. That panel's votes were: 11 for 2♣, 6 for double, 4 for 1♠, and 1 for 2♦.

2

Matchpoints
None Vul

North	East	South	West
pass	1♥	double	2♣
2♦	2♠	???	

You, South, hold: ♠ AJ105 ♥ AK ♦ AKQ73 ♣ 93

What call do you make?

Interesting! RHO has an opening bid, LHO has a response, partner has a free bid, and I have 21 HCP? Are the backs of the cards all the same color?

Roeder: 3♥. When the opponents have bid more than one suit and 3NT is a possible destination, cue bids are telling, not asking. 5♦ may make but, in matchpoints, that is a mere detail.

Korbel: 3♥. I'll cuebid the suit I have stopped.

Bartusek: 3♥. My initial reaction was to just bid 5♦, but 3NT will be easier if partner has club stoppers. If I wanted a heart stopper from partner, I'd cuebid 3♣. When the opponents have bid two suits (hearts and clubs) you bid the suit you have values in.

Grainger: 3♥. Partner must have something, and everyone must have a lot of distribution for this bidding. Really doesn't take much to make a slam.

Dunitz: 3♥. Partner has values because he freely bid. I want him to bid 3NT with a club stopper. If he can't do that, we will end up in 5♦.

Wittes: 3♥. Partner bid freely over 2♣, so I won't stop short of 5♦. There are hands where 3NT could be right, and if partner bids it over 3♥, which isn't likely, I'll pass.

Shuster: 3NT. This needs the least from partner. I'm not worried about the clubs so much, as even if we don't have a real stopper, they are probably blocked for the opponents (RHO rates to be 5611 or 5602). An 11-trick game will often fail in the black suits though and I don't know how to get partner to judge correctly. So, I'll just do the practical thing.

Chodorow: 3NT. When we have game values and our fit is in a minor, we aim for 3NT. I have both of opener's suits and no way confidently to convey concern about clubs. When they've bid one suit, a cuebid is asking; when they've bid two suits, a cuebid is telling. But what about when they've bid three suits? I'll bid 3NT now and we can discuss it later.

The International Popular Bridge Panel voted: 6 votes for 3NT, 5 votes for double, 5 votes for 3♥, 2 votes for 3♣, 2 votes for 3♠, and 1 vote each for 4♥ and 5♦.

3

Matchpoints
Both Vul

South	West	North	East
1♠	pass	3♠*	pass
???			

* Limit raise with 4+ card support

You, South, hold: ♠ KQ7652 ♥ K3 ♦ AK752 ♣ void

What call do you make?

Shuster: 3NT. You need to tell us what 3NT means here. *Excellent question! There are several reasonable treatments for the meaning of 3NT. 3NT here is one of: Courtesy 3NT, Serious 3NT, or asking for shortness. Take your pick of those, because, for me, it is NOT natural.* If it is artificial, then that is my call. I wouldn't use exclusion - opposite the wrong diamond holding, a grand would be hopeless even with the major aces. Otherwise, I'd just bid 4♦ then 5♣ and respect a double sign off.

Dunitz: 4♣. This is my cheapest cue bid. If partner fails to bid 4♥, I will not quit. Slam could be cold or have no play. There should be safety at the 5-level.

The rest of the panel opts for 5♣. Danny didn't state whether he intends 5♣ as a splinter slam try or if it is Exclusion, but all the other panelists think their 5♣ bids are Exclusion.

Korbel: 5♣. I guess we could still belong in 5, 6, or 7, so I better be scientific.

Bartusek: 5♣. Exclusion RKC should tell me partner's useful controls. If partner shows two, then I'll be able to try for a grand by asking for third-round diamond control via a 6♦ bid. Admittedly if partner has only one ace, then I'll have to hope that we have no diamond loser in 6♠.

Chodorow: 5♣. Exclusion keycard (0314). If partner shows the major aces, will I bid a grand? You bet I will. Holding two cards in the round suits with two silent opponents, I'll back my judgment that an unavoidable third-round diamond loser is against the odds. Besides, as I always tell my students during their nervy and tentative slam auctions, when in doubt, bid one more. Give yourself a challenge and, if nothing else, at least you'll get a story out of it. We play bridge in part for memorable hands, and freak hands are the perfect time to let loose and go for it.

Grainger: 5♣. This is Exclusion. I'll take a shot at partner having an adequate diamond holding if they have one ace, but I can ask for third-round diamond control with 6♦ to get to 7 if they have two keycards.

Roeder: 5♣. This is Exclusion Keycard. If partner shows both major-suit aces, I will gamble that we do not have a diamond loser and bid the grand (it sounds like partner has some club length which implies that partner rates to have fewer than three diamonds).

Wittes: 5♣. Exclusion Keycard. If partner has club values, we might be too high, but anything else, and the 5-level should be safe.

I would play that 5♣ is a splinter, not Exclusion. However, I favor a bid that no panelist mentioned, 4♦. I like to make my first cuebid an ace or king in most situations. This helps partner with in and out evaluation. The international panel voted 15 votes for 4♦, 4 votes for 4♣, and 3 votes for 5♣.

4

Matchpoints
E-W Vul

East	South	West	North
1♥	pass	pass	double
pass	???		

You, South, hold: ♠ 10652 ♥ A1087 ♦ AK5 ♣ K6

What call do you make?

I'll start with a panelist who takes great note of the vulnerability.

Roeder: Pass. Hoping my ♥T is a perfect ten.

Shuster: 2♥. I'll follow with 3NT. I want to force game, but let partner know I have another strain in mind (usually spades.)

Bartusek: 2♥. If partner admits to holding a 4-card spade suit, then we're definitely playing 4♠. Otherwise I'll sign-off in 3NT.

Grainger: 2♥. I'll bid 2♥ then raise 2♠ to 4♠ or bid 3NT over anything else.

Dunitz: 2♥. Balancing doubles can be lighter. But I'm still forcing to game. Cueing 2♥ followed by 3NT should suggest more than one strain - giving us our best chance to get to spades when it is right.

Korbel: 2♥. I would have just overcalled 1NT on the previous round.

Wittes: 2♥. If partner bids 3 of a minor, I'll bid 3NT. If partner bids 2♠, I'll bid 4♠, and hope partner isn't balancing extra light.

I'm a little surprised that only one panelist bid NT, and that nobody overbid to 3NT (or quoted Bob Hamman).

Chodorow: 2NT. My style is to balance aggressively against one of a suit, so this hand, while quite prime, falls just short of a game force. With these major holdings, I want strongly to suggest playing in notrump. Partner will know that a minimum opener is well above her minimum for the double and will raise to game when it is good. I'll be happy to show my spades if she instead cuebids 3♥.

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IMPs
N-S Vul.

East	South	West	North
3♦	pass	5♦	double
pass	???		

* Normally exactly four spades

You, South, hold: ♠ KJ1094 ♥ KJ3 ♦ 863 ♣ 74

What call do you make?

In one aspect, this is a poor problem. I normally try to use problems that have at least three reasonable options. In this case there appear to be only two options: pass and 5♠. However, Rick did mention another choice, 6♠. The opponents might have to guess whether to save over 6♠.

Roeder: 5♠. 5♠ in most cases but 6♠ is a reasonable shot if you are desperados playing a team of Nickell's ilk (the theory being that your team will get ground up on the meat and potatoes hands so you will need some big gains to offset their expertise). Another consideration: If you are playing a team of exuberant juniors, their combined holding of ten Diamonds is not guaranteed. Pulling partner's 5-level double to 5♠ shows some strength and does not preclude partner from bidding on. True, I have presented your obsessively loyal readership with potentially conflicting inferences but as Al Roth famously said, "I would have to be at the table."

Wittes: 5♠. The way people pre-empt non-vulnerable these days, the 5♦ bidder is not 100% to have a fit, but my major suit values are too good not to bid 5♠.

Bartusek: 5♠. Seems like I'm stuck slightly overbidding in hopes that we can make a vulnerable game (or even a slam) instead of settling for just +300 or +500. With partner holding very short diamonds our hands should fit well. I'd pass holding only a 4-card spade suit. Hopefully partner isn't just making a penalty double with AK A and only a 2-card spade suit (e.g. 2=4=1=6). Preempts work!

Chodorow: 5♠. I play double is takeout through 4♠ and cards above that, so I don't have the certainty of a 4-4-1-4 or 4-4-0-5 template opposite. But with these spade spots, I ought not to need one. I expect us to have more equity in this hand (including a possible slam, if partner has the hand to raise) than we'll recoup defending at these colors. If partner does have a template takeout double, which she often will, as little as AQxx-AQxx-void-Axxxx gives us a probable grand and might be 300 on defense.

Grainger: 5♠. The third diamond is talking me into it. Would pass with two and another club.

Dunitz: Pass. This is not clear. I will pass and lead trump.

Korbel: PASS. No safety.

Shuster: Pass. How aggressive are my opponents? Are they under 60? There are some opponents against whom I'd bid here, counting on my partner for a diamond void. But for all I know, he has a doubleton.

I'm a chicken, I'd pass and take what I can get against 5♦. I normally leave in high-level doubles if I don't have a short suit.

*I normally don't include comments that my proofreaders make in the column, but in this case I thought the analysis that Bob McDonell made was worth sharing. Bob wrote "*For what it is worth, I agree with your Pass on problem 5. When you have to guess level, 11 tricks is a narrow target. Better to try for 12, for a better reward when you are right. I don't think you should bid 5♠ here unless you would be happy with a raise to 6, and I don't think I would be with this hand. Partner needs the flexibility to make his double with many not-so-suitable hands.