Southern California **Bridge News**

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by John Jones



Our summer regional in Long Beach will be June 30 through July 6. See the flyer in this bulletin. The site will again be the Long Beach Hilton. Carolyn Hannas is our tournament manager 424-473-0888. Give her a call for details and parking tips. It's close to the beach, and the tournament is very near Restaurant Row on Pine Street in Long Beach, where fabulous restaurants of many different varieties can be found.

The 2025 D23 GNT was held Saturday May 3. There were 4 brackets: Championship (Open) – unlimited masterpoints, Flight A: 0 to 6,000 masterpoints, Flight B: 0 – 2,500 masterpoints, Flight C: non-Life Masters with fewer than 500 masterpoints. Walt Schafer was the GNT Coordinator. Brandon Sheumaker was the director and the site was the Long Beach Bridge Club. Attendance was low this year partially due to an inaccurate rumor that the event had been called off or would not count. Congratulations to the winners: Open Flight: John Jones (captain), Roberto Scaramuzzi, Ed Piken, Michael Piken and Mark Leonard. Peter Knee will replace Michael Piken in representing the team in Philadelphia. Flight A winners were: Yongkang (Jeffrey) Huang (captain), Ming Hu, Hanna Zhang, and Chi-Chong Yu. Second in Flight A were Peter Kavounas (captain), Richard Parker, Clint Lew, Stephen Anderson, Bill Taylor and Terry Hane. First in Flight C were: Margit Hillebrand (captain), Amanda Moores, Carolyn Byrnes, and Paul Chen. Good luck in Philadelphia!

Congratulations to Mitch Dunitz and Alex Kolesnik for being named coaches for the USBF Junior teams in preparation for their world championships.

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Regional Director's Report

by David Lodge



Since I just embarked on an 8 day fishing trip out of San Diego on the luxury fishing vessel, the Royal Star, typing on an IPAD on rolling boat is somewhat difficult. So everything you see below is being copied from the National Board of Directors report created by Cindy Shoemaker, vice president of the BOD.

FINANCE

In February 2025, the gain from operations was $159k, exceeding the budget by $81k but falling $39k short of the 2024 figure. Monthly revenues reached $1.32M, $45k above the $1.127M budget. Expenses were $1.16M, which was $36k (or 3%) below the budgeted $1.2M.

Year-to-date (YTD), the gain in net assets totaled $257k. This is $364k greater than the budget but $186k less than the $443k YTD gain from the previous year.

The balance sheet remains strong, featuring $9M in investments and $5.8M in deferred revenue from future membership expirations.

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PRESIDENT continued from page 1

I am again requesting help in identifying players who were displaced by the LA Fires. We have $1994 in our fire relief fund, thanks to the wonderful help we got. Funds came in in cash, check, Zelle, and from the ACBL Charity game organized by Margie Michelin and Ellis Feigenbaum. Donations came in from La Fetra BC, South Bay BC, Pasadena, and some were mailed directly to Stan Holzberg. We appreciate all the donations! Please contact me at president@d23acbl.org.

DIRECTOR continued from page 1

MEMBERSHIP TRENDS

As of February, while overall membership showed a decrease from 130,602 last year to 124,076 this year, YTD figures indicate a positive trend with a 25.77% increase in new members and a 27.27% increase in new guest members.

GROWING THE GAME

Two exciting initiatives, the ACBL Community and Jump Start Bridge, are actively working to invigorate the bridge community by engaging current players in new ways and cultivating the next generation of enthusiasts. These programs are of significant interest as they strategically address membership engagement, support local clubs, and the long-term vitality of bridge.

ACBL COMMUNITY

The ACBL Community empowers players to support their local F2F bridge clubs while enjoying online competition and earning special Masterpoint rewards. This central hub connects players from local clubs, the ACBL Clubhouse, and Community Games, fostering a vibrant bridge community. Importantly, a portion of every game entry fee in the Clubhouse directly supports the player's local club. By participating in the Community Club, players actively invest in and strengthen their local bridge communities, ensuring the continued vitality of F2F bridge.

For details, go to https://www.acbl.org/portfolio/daily-online-games/

JUMP START BRIDGE

Jump Start Bridge, an initiative led by Patty Tucker, introduces bridge to middle and high school students, fostering skills such as critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, and social development.

The program is garnering significant interest, particularly among teachers attending gifted children conferences who are actively seeking enriching curriculum for their students. This enthusiasm is fueling the program's impressive growth.

Tucker attended the final session of the Memphis meetings to update the Board on the successes of Jump Start Bridge. As of mid-March, over 100 dedicated volunteers have contributed more than 3,000 hours, connecting with nearly 2,000 prospective teachers at 20 gifted children and math conferences nationwide. As a result, 411 teachers have registered, successfully bringing the game to over 18,000 students across 236 cities in 35 states and two Canadian provinces. The program is poised for further expansion, with presentations scheduled at major upcoming educational conferences in 2025.

Jump Start Bridge provides teachers with valuable standards-aligned resources, ongoing support, and incentives like stipends and free supplies. Students benefit from exciting opportunities to participate in championships, summer camps, and youth games.

While challenges such as funding and volunteer recruitment remain, the program's impact continues to grow. Jump Start Bridge's partnerships with the ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation are vital, and Tucker emphasizes the significant role of community support in further expanding its reach. I ndividuals can contribute through donations, volunteering, program promotion within their networks, and advocating for bridge in school curriculums.

For details, go to https://www.jumpstartbridge.org/.

MEMBER RETENTION

During its meetings, the Board favorably received a proposal for a Ranking Rewards Program to acknowledge and incentivize member progress. This initiative aims to reward dedication, strengthen local communities, increase tournament participation, and enhance member loyalty through benefits for reaching milestones such as Life Master. Implementation will involve developing a communication plan, partnering with local organizations, and creating a tracking data base.

INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE

The Memphis meetings provided an opportunity to increase awareness and understanding of the organizations involved in fostering bridge internationally. Officials from the World Bridge Federation (WBF) attended the Wednesday morning session. Their presentation included an overview of

current WBF structure and goals and their plans for the future. While unable to attend in person, the Presidents of the Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF) and the Federation of Mexican Bridge (FMB) joined the presentation via Zoom, providing an opportunity for active participation. A representative from the United States Bridge Federation (USBF) was on-site.

COMBATTING ONLINE CHEATING

The ACBL continues to utilize EDGAR (Everyone Deserves a Game Above Reproach) to detect online cheating. Since February 1, 2024, 12,089 players have been submitted for screening, with a total of 37,875 examined. Approximately 700 players identified by EDGAR have been charged, and the current online cheating rate, which includes all players (members, non-members, and inactive accounts), is between 2.5% and 3%. Screening of all online players is hoped to be completed by year-end. Disciplinary actions have included Fast Track Discipline (303 players), Negotiated Resolutions (45), Expedited Disciplinary Panels (9), and Institute of Bridge Arbitration resolutions (26), with 20 resignations to avoid discipline and other cases pending.

APPEALS AND CHARGES

The Appeals and Charges Committee Chair reported on one approved Negotiated Resolution for Ethical Violations identified by computer-based cheating detection. An appeal of a May 2024 Expedited Disciplinary Proceeding decision was heard in February, and the original decision was affirmed. ACBL management issued two Suspensions Pending Hearing in March for players competing in the online regional tournament under extraordinary circumstances.

To view Hearing Reports and the Under Discipline List, go to https://www.acbl.org/.

Hope to see you at D23's regional.

FYI Part 9
Arcane Bridge Points
by Bob Gruber



Is There a Surefire Way to Find a Stuck Card?

You pull your hand from a board, and in accordance with Duplicate Law 7B2, you count your cards face down. Yes, it's a law to count your cards face down! The director can assess a procedural penalty for failure to count your cards. If and only if you count 13, do you look at the faces of the cards. If you come to 14 or more, you call the director for her to try to establish the proper distribution. If you come to 12 or less, it's a miscount, or a stuck card or, rarely, an absent card. You want to recount in a way that discovers which of the 3 situations it is. Can you do it? Yes, almost always—surefire is not certain, but very close. Here's how:

Count the cards one at a time (face down), firmly squeezing each card with the thumb and forefinger. While maintaining the pressure, slide your thumb across the top of the card. If two cards are stuck and your pressure is sufficient, the cards will separate.

(*Editor's Addition: two points: first, don't squeeze TOO firmly! Dealing machines do NOT like bent cards! Second, make it a habit to count the shape of the hand when you first look at your cards. Too often, a card gets stuck after you've counted 13 face down. Remember, 4-4-2-2 hands are very hard to bid accurately.*)

Did You Call the Ace or the Eight (8)?

If a suit in dummy has both the Ace (A) and the eight (8), when declarer calls for the Ace (A), some players hear eight (8) instead. And the opposite is true; when declarer calls for the eight (8), some players hear Ace (A). Adopting a small terminology change will eliminate this confusion:

When calling for the Ace (A), say "Big Ace."
When calling for the eight (8), say "eight spot."

What Do A+ and A- Equate to in Matchpoints?

Sometimes a director will say, I'm assigning Average Plus (A+) to N/S and Average Minus (A-) to E/W. What does that mean in terms of matchpoints? Ave+ is 60% of the top matchpoint score on the board; Ave- is 40% of the top matchpoint score.

Note that these matchpoint percentages "balance," that is, they add to 100%. Stated slightly differently, the N/S matchpoints plus the E/W matchpoints should add to top on the board. (Very rarely, the director deliberately assigns scores that don't balance.)

What is ¼ Board or ⅓ Board in Matchpoints?

If the director says I'm assessing a ¼ board (procedural) penalty, how many matchpoints is that? And where is it shown? The director divides top on the board by 4 to arrive at the penalty in matchpoints. This calculation is done to 2 decimal places. You won't see it on a regular recap, which is what is usually produced, but it does show on a full recap and on a List report. There will be an extra column labeled "Adjust" to the right of the SCORE column

A procedural penalty of ⅓ board is dividing top by 3 and calculating the answer to 2 decimal places.

Do We Get Any Matchpoints for a No Play?

A no play feels inherently unfair. Especially if the opponents were late finishing the last round. And even more so if you feel your play is superior to the opponents*. But what does it mean in terms of matchpoints? It means you neither lose nor gain in the race for matchpoints. How is that the case?

Unless the director has assigned a score, at the end of the game, ACBLscore computes the percentage you achieved on the boards you did play. It then multiples that percent times top on any boards on which you received a No Play. No Play boards (and/or their calculated matchpoints) may not appear on the recap, but even if the matchpoints don't show, they are included in your game total.

(*Depending on the opponents and the particular board, not playing it might be good for your game—you won't get a bottom—or it might be bad for your game—you won't get a top. But you can't tell. Sometimes strong players bid a close game or slam that no one else bid, but distribution dooms it to fail and the opponents get a top. Sometimes weak players don't bid a good game or slam that fails but was bid at every other table so the opponents get a bottom. There are other scenarios in which strong players get bad boards and weak players get good boards. The point is, you don't know if you'd get a beautiful little chick or egg on your face.)

What Happens When a Late Play Doesn't Get Played?

A Late Play that is never played gives the same result as a No Play.

How Do You Tell If It's Table 6 or Table 9?

Table Markers made today tend to spell out "six" and "nine." They also rotate the text 180° so it reads correctly from the South position as well as from the North position.

But older table markers used the numeric form only and didn't rotate the text, so a table marker looked like Table 6 from one direction and Table 9 from the other. Which direction was correct? Some table markers had an underscore, so that told the story, but was easily missed. In the absence of any indicator, the correct table number is read from the North direction. Also, some older table markers put a dot after the 6 and the 9, thus: "6." and "9."

Can Dummy Revoke?

An urban myth has contributed to the mistaken belief that dummy can't revoke. The myth is that everyone is responsible for dummy. Not true! Only the declaring side is responsible for dummy.

In rubber bridge, it used to be true, but not anymore.

In duplicate bridge, it was never true.

Logically, why in the world should the defenders be responsible for dummy? Aren't Declarer and Dummy enough?

It's likely that the "No Automatic Trick Adjustment" for a revoke that resulted from a failure to play a penalty card (only defenders have penalty cards) or failure to play any card belonging to dummy contributes to perpetuation of the myth that dummy can't revoke. But the failure to play such a card is a revoke, it's just not subject to an automatic trick adjustment. It is subject to redress for damage. If the non-offenders were damaged by the revoke by dummy, the Director is obligated to assign an appropriate, adjusted score.

FYI Part 10
The Case of the Bridge Game Murder
by Bob Gruber

In 1929 in Kansas City, Missouri there was a real-life murder over bridge. One telling of the tale is that a husband-and-wife pair playing in a small stakes game in their apartment started arguing heatedly. The wife got a gun, accused the husband of trumping her Ace, and shot him dead. At the trial in 1931, the jury ruled it justifiable homicide. Well, part of that story is true and part of it is pure fiction. So, let me set the record straight.

The well-to-do Kansas City residents John G. Bennett and his wife Myrtle Adkins Bennett planned a leisurely Sunday, September 29, 1929. The day was to include golf, dinner and bridge, all with their neighbors Charles and Myrna Hoffman. In the morning the men played a round of golf at the Indian Hills Country Club, then returned home for lunch. After lunch, both couples went to the links to make a foursome. When dusk halted play, they all went to the Bennett apartment for dinner.

After a scrumptious meal, they adjourned to the Bennett living room and broke out the bridge cards for a small stakes game. The couples played as partners, the Bennetts versus the Hoffmans. The Bennetts took a healthy early lead, but after midnight, as the Hoffmans began to pull ahead, the Bennetts began to bicker. In the ultimate hand, John failed to make his four spades contract and chose to blame Myrtle, accusing her of overbidding.

Myrtle, in turn, called him "a bum bridge player." The argument escalated from there until he stood and slapped her in the face several times. "Only a cur would hit a woman in the presence of friends," stated Myrtle Bennett. John Bennett retorted, "I'm going to spend the night at a hotel, and tomorrow I'm leaving town on business." As he packed, he asked his wife to get his gun that he took on trips for protection. She got it, but instead of giving it to him, she shot at him twice, missing both times. John headed for cover but didn't make it as the next two shots didn't miss. He staggered and fell dead.

At the trial in 1931, a different story was presented. John was painted as a violent, abusive husband. Myrtle acted in self-defense. The jury deliberated 8 hours and brought back a not guilty verdict. The prosecution's assistant said, "It looks like an open season on husbands."

Since the bridge bug was sweeping the nation at the time, the trial garnered national press coverage. Ely Culbertson, the P.T. Barnum of the bridge movement, watched the trial closely from New York and proffered the theory that John Bennett might still be alive if only he and his wife had been playing the Culbertson system.

The 36-year-old Myrtle Bennett lived for another 61 years. She never remarried; she never had kids. She worked as executive head of housekeeping at elegant hotels and continued to play bridge. At the time of her 1992 death, Myrtle Bennett's estate was valued at more than $1 million. In a sad bit of irony, with no direct descendants, she left the bulk of the money to family members of John Bennett, the husband she had killed more than six decades before.

District 23 Unit Presidents

The Presidents of our nine Units in District 23 do a lot to make *your* bridge experience better. They seldom get any thanks or even recognition. To help redress that imbalance, here is a list of the current incumbent Unit Presidents:

Unit	President
553 – Glendale-Verdugo	Adam Barron
556 – Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley	Paula Olivares
557 – Long Beach	Leo Dittemore
559 – Pomona-Covina	Tom Lill
561 – San Fernando	Joan Rubin
562 – West Los Angeles	Jordan Chodorow
564 – Downey-Whittier	Kent Burrell*
568 – Torrance-South Bay	Carol Decordova

* Kent has resigned, but the election to replace him has not yet been held.

The Teacher's Corner

Case for The Defense
by Daniel F. Oakes

This month, we're going break down a couple of bread and butter type hands that you might see any time you're at the club. Nothing magic or spectacular; like a lot of things, success at bridge is less about finding brilliancies and more about not messing up the easy(ish) ones. Ready?

The opponents have a simple auction: 1NT (16-18) – 3NT. Partner is on lead and finds the ♥5. This is what you see in dummy and your own hand (you're sitting East):

	♠J53 ♥84 ♦AQT84 ♣J43	
♥5	♠Q9742 ♥KJ9 ♦K2 ♣987	

Declarer plays dummy's low heart and follows with the 2 under your King. You continue with the Jack of hearts (high from a remaining doubleton), and Declarer plays the 6, partner the 3, and Dummy the 8. You play your last heart, and Declarer wins the Ace as partner plays the Queen. Declarer discards the ♣3 from Dummy. Declarer then leads the ♦9 and runs it to your King.

1. What did partner's ♥5 show?
2. What did partner's ♥3 at trick 2 show?
3. What did partner's ♥Q at trick 3 show?
4. What do you do at trick 5, after winning the ♦K?

Playing a pair game (where overtricks matter a lot in normal contracts), the opponents have this auction, with you and your partner staying out of it: 1♣ – 1♠; 2♠ – 4♠. You (West) lead the ♥Q, and dummy comes down (see next column):

We'll go a little deeper into this hand, do your best to follow along. Dummy and partner duck the ♥Q (Partner playing the 9 and Declarer the 8). You try another heart, but Declarer ruffs. Declarer draws two rounds of trump with the K and A, partner following,

	♠KQ76 ♥K64 ♦KJ9 ♣Q64	
	♠82 ♥QJT72 ♦A653 ♣53	

then leads a diamond from hand. You duck, and Dummy's J loses to partner's Q. Partner tries the ♣J, losing to Declarer's K, and Declarer plays three more clubs – one to Dummy's Q, one to his own A, and a 4th one ruffed in Dummy (Partner following). You discard hearts on the last two clubs. Declarer ruffs the ♥K, and leads another diamond toward Dummy's K9. So far, you've won two tricks – Partner's ♦Q and your ♥Q. We're at trick 11, and you're down to Axx of diamonds. You can take the A and hold declarer to 4, or you can play low and hope for the best. Declarer hasn't played this hand particularly well; the right decision is worth 75%, and the wrong decision is worth 25%.

5. What's your play?

Answers:

1. Partner's 5 of hearts was his 4th best heart, letting you count the suit using the Rule of 11.

2. Partner's 3 of hearts was to show you that he had another one lower than the 5. Since Dummy had the 4 and Declarer played the 2 at trick one, you know that the 3 is Partner's only heart lower than the 5, so Partner had 5 hearts to start with, and Declarer had 3.

3. Declarer finally played the Ace of hearts; after this trick, only Partner will have hearts left. Partner also knows that you don't any hearts left, and he knows that you know that he knows you don't have any hearts left. Attitude and Count don't matter in the heart suit, so what message could partner possibly give you that might be helpful? When Attitude and Count are known or don't matter, the spotlight turns to suit preference. Partner is hoping that you have the ♦K (which you do), and he's trying to tell you how to reach his hand so he can cash those last 2 good hearts. By playing his highest heart, partner is telling you his entry is in the high suit, spades. If he had a club entry, he would play his lowest remaining heart.

4. Play a spade to partner's Ace; Partner cashes two hearts to go with the two you took earlier, your King of diamonds, and the Ace of spades, and Declarer is "two in the goo," as Anaheim Bridge Club regular Joe Swain used to say. If you played a club, declarer took four clubs to go with the Ace of hearts and four diamonds – making 3NT.

5. Why do I say Declarer hasn't played this hand particularly well? He could have put you to the diamond test *before* giving you a complete count on the hand. Declarer had five spades (surely he's not leaving a trump in partner's hand just for fun), four clubs, one heart, and therefore *three* diamonds. Nothing magic; just paying attention and subtracting from 13. Declarer has the ♦K9 in Dummy, and he's missing the Ace and *possibly* the T. If he has the T, it doesn't matter; the Q and J are gone; he'll lose a diamond to your ace and win the other diamond. If he's missing the T, then if you grab your ace, he'll score the King.

If you play low, he has to guess whether to play the King, hoping you have the Ace, or finessing by playing the 9, hoping you have the T. If he guesses wrong, Partner wins the T and you'll get the A later – down 1. If he gets it right by playing the King, no harm no foul; you know he still has a diamond left, and since he can't ruff or pitch it, he'll lose it to your Ace later. But if you grab your Ace, Declarer can't possibly go wrong.

Of course, you should be trying to count out the hand along the way – every time partner or declarer shows out, you know exactly how that suit divided. If you wait 45 seconds then play low, Declarer isn't going to misguess; you may as well tell him you have the Ace of diamonds, you're just wondering whether or not you should take it.

Playing with Screens

by Yongkang Huang (Jeffrey)



The D23 players made impressive successes in the 2025 Spring Memphis NABC. In addition to Mitch Dunitz & Iftikhar Baqai's great win of the national NAP Championship Flight (also congrats to Bob Shore and Mark Leonard's great finish of 11th place in the same event), and Jeff Grotenhuis & William Taylor's good finish of 14th place in the NAP Flight B, Connie Kang and I made ourselves the semi-finalists of the 0-10,000 Knockout Teams (teamed up with Ping Hu & Henry Shi from Illinois). This is not only a great achievement with 29.00 masterpoints (including 2.90 platinum) but also our first experience playing with screens in the NABC.

Our journey to Memphis did not start well. We found ourselves second-to-last in the 0-10,000 Swiss Teams. On the second day, we were buried in a regionally rated Top-Flight Swiss Teams game.

However, despite being seeded No. 14 among the 18 teams, we found our games in the 10K Knockout.

The first round was a three-way knockout where 18 teams were divided into six groups. We eliminated the team seeded No. 2 by 31 - 29 in a 14-board match. Our victory comes with two game biddings (a 4♥= from us, and another game from our

teammates). We lost to the other team (Team Vander Zanden, Seeded No. 7) by 18 - 24 and were placed 2nd among the three teams.

The second round was another three-way knockout divided into 4 groups. We were grouped with Team Rockoff (the ultimate winner of this event) and Team Chen (who later became the champion of 0-2,500 Swiss Teams). All three teams had fantastic junior players on their teams. I had to face "Ace in the Desert" Kyle Rockoff and the youngest life master, Andrew Chen.

In this fierce battle between the next-generation players, I made two amazing decisions. First, before the sessions started, I decided to switch seats and not play against Kyle. We both play in the USBF U-31 group and know each other very well, and I would rather not play head-to-head against him. Second, I got a 3♣x -2 (-300) sacrifice against Team Chen, where my teammates successfully found the game and recovered +620 for me. This board significantly changed the table of the entire group, making the three teams end up in a cruel three-way tie. We topped the group, Kyle came in second, and Team Chen was unfortunately eliminated.

In the QF, we faced Team Vander Zanden again. With the confidence we gained after the first day's match, this time we led the opponents comfortably by leading 38 - 18 after the first 14-board half. Starting from the second half, the opponents started to desperately try bidding aggressively. Their tactic did not work. Instead, the opponents found themselves getting all minus results after the first 7 boards, and were forced to admit "we're getting more and more desperate in this game," even before the end of the match. We eventually won the QF by 106 - 50 and qualified for the SF.

We are the only "underdog" who made it to the semi-final, while the other three teams are exactly the top-seeding teams (Nos. 1, 3, and 4).

Starting from the SF, the teams moved to the screen room, which was set for the Vanderbilt Teams. After all the excitement, we had to face Team Rockoff again. This time, Kyle had the seating right in the first round. With no hesitation, Kyle decided to sit on my table and took me head-to-head, and made me unable to make any further magics. On the other table, our teammates started and ended the game with some mistakes, so we found ourselves in a terrible defeat to the ultimate winner by 28 - 99.



Nevertheless, finishing the 3rd/4th Semi-finalist is a great achievement for both me and Connie. We both take bridge games seriously and want to achieve the final stages in national events, therefore this finish is a good start. Our goal is to repeatedly make ourselves to the screen events in the future.

Later, I got some other top finishes in other regional-rated events. I stayed in Memphis until the last day and back to LAX with lots of top D23 players who stayed until the last day, including Jeff and John.



The semi-final was recorded and uploaded to NABC's YouTube channel. Feel free to watch the recordings through the following links:

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=MuQXulaF2uY

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=VAgE087GIHg

89th Annual BRIDGE WEEK IN LONG BEACH CALIFORNIA

JUNE 30 – JULY 6

TOURNAMENT HIGHLIGHTS

MONDAY JUNE 30 Reception for Workshop 11:30 AM
Special gifts – Bring your Q & A
"FREE WORKSHOP"12:00 – 1:30 "Power up your Game"
Presented by Marjorie Michelin – Grand Life Master

Guest Speakers Tuesday – Saturday
GOLD RUSH PAIRS
MINI SOLOWAYS
SWISS TEAMS

Tournament Manager: Carolyn Hannas 424-473-0888
carolynhannas1952@gmail.com

Hospitality : Laura Gastelum lauralgastelum@gmail.com

Partnerships: Liz Ryan eryan311@icloud.com

SIGN UP GENIUS
Look up partnership possibilities or add Your name to an event you want to play in.
Scan the code

Director in charge: Ken Horwedel

District 23 President : John Jones
Regional Director: David Lodge



HILTON LONG BEACH
701 West Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, CA

Room Rates

$158.92 Double
$167.18 King
Use code 905
1-800-774-1500
Price includes mandatory stay charge Excludes taxes

Parking at hotel $17.50 limited spaces
Valet $40 Additional parking info:
carolynhannas1952@gmail.com

Monday June 30, 2025

Reception for Workshop	11:30AM -12:00PM
Marjorie Michelin WORKSHOP	12:00 -1:30PM
299er Pairs	2:00PM
Aft. Side Series (1 of 6)	2:00PM
Strat. Charity Pairs(1 sess)	2:00PM
Charity Bracketed Teams	2:00PM & 7:00PM
Strat .Charity Pairs (1 sess)	7:00PM

Tuesday July 1 2025

AM Side Series (1 of 5)	10:00AM
Gold Rush Pairs	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Stratified Pairs	10:00AM & 3:00PM
BCD Bracketed Teams	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Mini Soloway (4 session)	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Qualifying event top 4 play Wednesday	
Guest Lecture	2:15PM
Aft. Side Series (2 of 6)	3:00PM

Wednesday July 2, 2025

AM Side Series (2 of 5)	10:00AM
Gold Rush Pairs	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Stratified Pairs	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Bracketed Teams	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Mini Soloway Finals	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Guest Lecture	2:15PM
Aft. Side Series (3 of 6)	3:00PM

Thursday July 3, 2025

AM Side Series (3 of 5)	10:00AM
Gold Rush	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Stratified Pairs	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Bracketed Teams	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Mini Soloway (4 session)	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Qualifying event top 4 play Friday	
Guest Lecture	2:15PM
Aft Side Series	3:00PM

Friday July 4, 2025

AM Side Series (4 of 5)	10:00AM
Gold Rush Pairs	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Stratified Pairs	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Bracketed Teams	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Mini Soloway Finals	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Guest Lecture	2:15PM
Aft. Side Series (5 of 6)	3:00PM

Saturday July 5, 2025

AM Side Series (5 of 5)	
Gold Rush Pairs	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Stratified Pairs	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Bracketed Teams	10:00AM & 3:00PM
Special Show	2:00PM
Aft. Side Series (6 of 6)	3:00PM

Sunday July 6, 2025

Fast Pairs	10:00AM and TBA
Bracketed Teams	10:00AM and TBA

Gold Rush – No one over 750

Stratified Pairs 0-2500/2500-5000/5000+

Director Determines Final Strats

Mini Soloway 4 Sessions 2 Qualifying Top 4 teams in each bracket play finals,

Card Fees $18 per Session
Except Sunday $46 for all games
Includes Buffet Lunch

Sanction 2507114

District 23 Rank Changes April 2025

Junior Master
Linda L. Alazzawi
Susie B. Armstrong
Kay Bailey
Jonathon Eastman
Ronnie Hon
Joseph Pittman
Roberta Preskill
Dharshan Sutharshana
Shantha Sutharshana

Club Master
Kay C. Aiken
Robert Hunt
Virginia L. King
Yefrem Kozin
Marcia Kutrieh
Colette Paul

Sectional Master
Kristen Blockhus
Eric D. Kaplan
John A. Kilmer
Amanda J. Moores
Kavita Nakra
Marilyn S. Schmitter
Libby Tigner
Ken Weber

Regional Master
Susan Morishita

NABC Master
Tracee G. Dezzutti
Maurice W. Parker
Rita L. Van Lierop

Bronze Life Master
Debbie Hamilton

Silver Life Master
Sharon J. Beynon
Lisa A. Walker

Ruby Life Master
Jeffrey D. Goldberg
Jeffrey Hartmann

The Puzzle Page

Bridge Jeopardy
by Tom Lill

Category: Victor Mollo's "Menagerie" Characters

And the answer is …

$100 – Regarded as a genius, he cannot understand why he is so grossly underrated.

$200 – He rarely knows what he is doing or why he is doing it, but hovering over him is the best Guardian Angel in the business.

$300 – This player is so subtle, he can false-card with a singleton.

$400 – This player knows the Laws backwards, and would sooner invoke them against himself than not invoke them at all.

$500 – The first member of the stronger sex to be admitted to the Griffins, she radiates good will to all humankind except the male half.

(Solutions to Bridge Jeopardy are on page 15. No peeking!)

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Submitted by Tom Lill

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Around the Units in District 23



Pomona – Covina by Tom Lill

www.acblunit551.org

La Fetra Games: Tuesdays and Fridays, 8:45
Individual: June 7, 10 a.m., Ontario
Club Championships: June 10, 13, La Fetra
The Longest Day: June 20, La Fetra
Unit Team Game: June 14, 10:00 a.m., Ontario
Unit Pairs Game: June 27, 11:00 a.m., Ontario
Unit Board Meeting: 10:15 a.m. before the game

In the May Individual, Kitty Moon destroyed the field with a 75% whopper! Nony Bernal was a distant second. Judy Mogharbel and Dan Robinson tied for third.

Thanks again to Patrick Finley, for collating the masterpoint statistics for April:

1	12.22	Vic Sartor
2	11.78	Patrick Finley
3	9.06	Steve Mancini
4	8.93	Roger Boyar
5	7.41	Ramona Hernandez
6	6.28	Fredy Minter
7	6.27	Mary Ann Wotring
8	6.25	Nona Stokes
9	5.92	Duane Woodman
10	5.54	Bill Papa

These totals include all La Fetra and Unit games, but don't include points won at outside tournaments or clubs, or in online games.

There were no promotions last month. Better luck next month! Of course, we have the Bridge Week Regional in Long Beach coming up in July.

Six of our Unit members (so far as I can tell from the results) attended the San Diego Regional, and brought home 45.2 masterpoints. The best single result was in the Thursday-Friday mini-Soloway, where Yours Truly and Judy Mogharbel, hitched to a local pair, finished second. It was an odd experience. In the round robin, our team won 5, lost 2, and tied one, but still placed third to qualify for the knockout stage. Five of those matches were decided by TWO or fewer IMPs! The team won the semifinal handily, but ran into a buzz saw in the final. A team we had beaten in the round robin (by a whopping five IMPs) just edged us out … by 54 IMPs. Well, I supposed that's better than losing by an IMP or two. At least they proved to be the superior team! In other results, Clint Lew finished 4/5 in the Friday bracketed teams, and third in the Saturday bracketed teams, to bring home 12.97 points. Judy and I brought home 9.31; Richard parker, with some success in Gold Rush and Fast Pairs, earned 7.30; Amr Elghamry got 5.76, and the remaining 0.55 points were earned by … well, he wishes to remain anonymous!

For our hand-of-the-month, here's one submitted by former Unit member Ho Ming Yim:

Crazy Bids. Crazy Swings. Crazy Declarer

by Ho Ming Yim

IMP scoring. All non-vulnerable.

Backstory: in the previous board, the opponents bid and made a vulnerable 6NT with 30HCP. Unless our teammates were similarly crazy, they would not be able to reach the same slam, so with just the previous board our team is probably already behind by -750 for -13 IMPs and I was feeling tilted.

RHO opens 1♦, alerted as 11-15HCP with 2+ diamonds. This is your hand:

♠AKJTx ♥QT9x ♦Axxx ♣void

I overcalled 1♠, LHO bid 1NT. Partner responds with 2♠. RHO bids 3♣, alerted as clubs may be longer than diamonds. I jumped to 4♠ and all passed.

Opening lead was a club. The dummy comes down with the following powerhouse:

♠98xx ♥Kx ♦JT9 ♣Qxxx

There was no point covering the club lead, so I played low on the board and ruffed in my hand. Based on RHO's 1NT response, the queen of spades is most definitely offside with a 3-1 split. Anticipating that I will have to ruff clubs again in my hand, the most suitable line of declarer play would be dummy reversal.

At trick two, I played a small heart from my hand and RHO jumped out with the ace and played another club again. I ruffed again in my hand. Now I played ♠A from my hand and found out that it wasn't a 3-1 trump split, but a 4-0 split instead. However, the board is already set up for dummy reversal. I pulled another round of trump, then played to the ♥K on the board, played another club from the dummy, then ruffed with the last trump in my hand. Now I played ♥Q from my hand, noticing that my LHO followed with ♥J, I pitched the last club on the board and continued with another good heart from my hand. RHO ruffed high with ♠Q, so I pitched a losing diamond on the board. RHO exited with another club, but since dummy is cleared of clubs, I can ruff the club, play a diamond to my ace, give up a diamond, and take the last trick with the last high trump on the board. When the dust settled, I lost one spade trick, one heart trick, and one diamond trick, making my contract.

Despite only having 20HCPs (with wasted values in clubs) and a 4-0 split in trump, the hand is cold for four spades for +420 with the proper line. At the other table, 4♠ was doubled and the opening lead was a diamond. Even with a diamond lead, the hand is cold for 4♠ if North can find the critical play of ducking the first diamond trick. In reality, North did not find the dummy reversal play and went down two for -300. The board resulted in a swing of +720 points for 12IMPs. Just enough to catch up to the missed vulnerable slam in the previous board.

(From Tom: *I thought you might like something besides one of my favorite semi-balanced hands!*)

Quote for the month: "Inside every old person is a younger person wondering "What the hell happened?" (Cora Harvey Armstrong)



Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley
by Beth Morrin

Sorry, nothing from Unit 556 this month.



Long Beach
by Lillian Slater

www.acblunit557.org
www.LongBeachBridge.com

Sorry, nothing from Long Beach this month.

Pasadena – San Gabriel
by Morris "Mojo" Jones
bridgemojo.com



Something remarkable happened in April. On April 16 the ACBL held their second charity game of the year.

In these games, clubs that participate around North America all play the same hands. The ACBL provides an expert analysis of each hand after the game. The players and clubs pay an extra fee that goes to benefit ACBL charities.

Top ranked percentage scores ACBL-wide and in each district get a share of a large masterpoint pool. The top winner in each district earns 10 (ten) full black masterpoints! The next four positions get a hefty amount as well.

It turns out that our club was the only one in the district that ran the April charity pairs!

Congratulations to John Barrow and Karen Arase who scored a cool 10 masterpoints for that game! Peter Jager and Andrew Rottenbacher picked up 7.5!

Moral of the story: run the game, and play in the game. You never know what might happen. ☺

Unit games are held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of most months at the Pasadena Bridge Club. Full game results are available on the results page for the Pasadena Bridge Club. Visit https://pasadenabridgeclub.com click on Game Results, then ACBL Live for Clubs.

To reserve your seat in a Unit Game, contact Miriam Harrington, (626) 232-0558, or miatpf@aol.com.

Our unit game on April 20 was renamed in honor of Dan Lubesnik, a long time bridge player and familiar face at the clubs and tournaments. Dan was in hospice care and passed away on the day of our game.

Dan played with Thompson Jin in the North American Pairs district final last October and qualified to advance to the finals in Flight B. Here are Thompson and Dan from that day.



Downey-Whittier

by Daniel F. Oakes

First things first: I mentioned in last month's article a hand that Eric Rodwell played. As promised…

♠97632
♥K2
♦A86
♣954

♠AQT84
♥A765
♦95
♣K7

Rodwell was South and opened 1 spade. After West doubled, North's raise to 4 spades ended the auction, and the ♦Q was led. Rodwell ducked the queen, which was good technique (do you see why?), and West played another diamond, declarer winning in dummy. What did he play next…and why? Answers coming at the end of the column, but first…

April was nice enough to give us five Wednesdays…on the 2nd of the month, we got a visit from Bob Rubin, who always brings good bridge and good conversation. He and Gabby Sill were first with 64.06%, and they needed just about all of it to take down John Petrie and Sankar Reddy by less than half a board, as that pair put up a 62.96% game. John Jones & Nancy Stebbins, Mike Ventri & Steve Hough, and Jack Rainsberry & Bill Skupen all topped 57% in a competitive game. Rainsberry & Skupen's score was good for 1st B, and Neil Rhodes & Raj Ramchandani were 1st C, at 52.31%.

On April 9, Mike Ventri & Dan Oakes were 1st N/S and 1st overall with 59%, just ahead of Rainsberry & Skupen for the overalls, as they paced the E/W field with 58.5% (also good for 1st B overall). Gabby Sill & Steve Hough were 2nd N/S, and Bob & Linda Krause were 1st B N/S and 1st C overall. John Jones & John Dobson were 2nd E/W, and Ramchandani & Rhodes were 1st C E/W.

April 16 saw Jon Yinger and John Dobson in the winner's circle with 65.10%, well ahead of 2nd place finishers (and 1st B) Ramchandani & Rhodes. Petrie & Reddy were 3rd, and Ventri & Oakes took 4th. Another Oakes, Shelby, was 2nd B with Ruth Salisbury.

On April 23, Yas Takeda and Robert Yu just missed cracking 70%, but their 69.44% was more than good enough to lead the way. Ventri and Oakes were a very distant 2nd with 55.73% (Some of our older readers may remember TwiceAPrince's 2nd place finish in the 1973 Belmont Stakes, 31 lengths behind Secretariat). Avice Osmundson and Kiran Kumar took 3rd, while Ramchandani teamed up with Dobson this time to take 4th as well as 1st B and 1st C. Rounding out the points winners were Terry Binns and Ivan Claman, 2nd B.

Ramchandani & Dobson returned to action the following week, and this time they took 1st overall by 10%, with a 63.19% effort. Ventri & Hough were 2nd, just ahead of Rainsberry & Skupen and also Petrie & Reddy. Less than ½ a board separated 2nd through 4th. Binns & Claman were 2nd B. Now, back to Rodwell…

First of all, he ducked the ♦Q opening lead because there was no way to avoid a diamond loser anyway, and he preferred to lose it to West; if he had won the ace, East could have won the defense's eventual diamond trick and possibly shifted to a club through the K, which might be a problem. In fact, East, knowing from the lead that partner had the ♦J, might have chosen to overtake with the ♦K anyway, to shoot a club through, but he didn't.

So Rodwell won the second diamond, and saw that he had four possible losers – the diamond he had

already lost, a possible spade, and two possible clubs. What Rodwell did at trick 3 was lead a spade from dummy to his Ace. You may have called that play, but getting right for the right reason is definitely an expert play.

Thinking about spades in isolation, the percentage play missing three cards to the king is to finesse. But Rodwell wasn't thinking about the spades in isolation; he was thinking about the whole hand. A doubleton in either E/W hand is about equally likely ("about" because the auction and even the opening lead affect the percentages somewhat). What Rodwell saw was that he could pick up a doubleton King in East's hand if he finessed, but he could also make the hand if West had a doubleton King of spades – he could eliminate the red suits by playing two wining hearts, then ruffing a heart in dummy, ruffing dummy's last diamond back to his hand, then ruffing his last heart in dummy. Having gotten rid of the red suits, he could exit with a spade, and West would have to either exit in clubs, setting up his king, or play a red suit, giving him a ruff & sluff to get rid of a club loser.

So playing to the ace gave up on picking up East's possible doubleton King, but that was a wash against the possibility of making the hand if West was the won with a doubleton King. The benefit to Rodwell's play was what actually happened at the table – the bonus chance that West had a singleton King of spades. He did, it fell under the ace, and Rodwell lost just a diamond and two clubs, making 4 for +620.

Rodwell lost IMPs when his teammates went for -800 in a 5 club sacrifice, but that's hardly his fault now, is it?

San Fernando Valley

by Alan Curtis

April's UNIT game was a fun, well attended and emotional event as we remembered the life of Sy Zemlyn. Not only was Sy a terrific bridge player (5,000+ master points) but we also discovered that he was a well accomplished artist and a poet! His widow, Carol was on hand and brought a few of Sy's paintings plus a book of limericks. This one was read to the group and too precious not to share with all of you:

I never should have finessed that Jack.
It's too late now; can't take it back.
The trump return has made it tough,
And ruined the plan of my cross-ruff.

I'm thinking with a frown
Looks to me that I'm going down
Ah, but there's a very slim chance
That might correct that circumstance.

It works! Lo and behold!
Skill is silver, but luck is gold!
I feel like one great grand grand master
Who just avoided a grand disaster.

I walk away, feeling proud,
When at the table I hear aloud,
Well, if the truth be told,
That hand always was ice cold.

Now I can see in clear hindsight
There's an overtrick if played right.

(by the one and only Sy Zemlyn)

Our next UNIT game will be held on Sunday, June 22nd which will kickoff the Longest Day week! The game will be held at the 750 club in Woodland Hills and start at 1pm.

Bridge Jeopardy Questions

$100 – Who is the Hideous Hog?

$200 – Who is the Rueful Rabbit?

$300 – Who is Papa the Greek?

$400 – Who is the Emeritus Professor of Bio-Sophistry, also known as the Secretary Bird?

$500 – Who is Molly the Mule?

Problem Solvers' Panel

This is an old edition. I am running late and didn't finish the new edition in time to make press. This originally was the May 2020 edition. For this column, Kitty Cooper and her late husband Steve Cooper, collaborated on their answers.

Panelists are: Mark Bartusek, Sid Brownstein, Kitty and Steve Cooper (answering together - I'll refer to their answers as "Coopers"), Ed Davis, Ellis Feigenbaum, Daniel Korbel, Mister Mealymouth, and Margie Michelin.

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
Both Vul

West	North	East	South
		1♥	???

You, South, hold: ♠AK52 ♥K9 ♦AQ864 ♣95

What call do you make?

(We begin with a problem with a nice 16 HCP hand, but no clear call. Marshall Miles, the late moderator of this column, would smoothly overcall 1♠. He believed in canape style overcalls. That brought its own style of problems but works quite nicely here. For the rest of us, we have to choose to make a very conservative pass, overcall a 15 – 18 NT, overcall 2♦, or double. Several panelists choose double. Those that double fall into three camps: 1) those who are planning to pass a 2♣ advance by partner, hoping that the extra values compensate for having only two small clubs, 2) those that are going to continue with 2♦ showing extra values, 3) those that play Equal Level Conversion (ELC) doubles and that double here is five or more diamonds with four spades. Some of our panel plays ELC and for them this hand is not much of a problem. I don't play ELC. I write my overcall range as 8 to 18 on my convention cards. So if I double and bid I tend to have at least 19 HCP or pretty close. Some of the panelists play ELC, and they yawned and politely doubled (their problems come when they have good diamonds with too much to overcall), but the rest of the panel has to decide how to handle the problem. I'll start with some panelists who don't play ELC.

Mealymouth: 2♦. Planning to compete in spades by bidding 2♠, and perhaps even 3♠, if necessary. I dislike doubling with such poor support for one of the unbid suits. A good hand for "Minimum Equal-Level Conversion," of course, but without a partnership agreement to play it I must not double, especially when the opportunity to convert won't necessarily come at the two-level, for all too often a double may lead to …a nasty rebid problem after West raises to 2♥ and North bids 3♣ as he would with ♠J832 ♥84 ♦K8 ♣KJT93. After 2♦, however, South has no problem bidding 2♠ when West's 2♥ comes round to him.

Korbel: Double. I don't want to lose the spade suit with a hand this strong. I think I'm just strong enough to bid diamonds over clubs if partner freely bids them (no ELC).

Bartusek: Double. Notrump might play very poorly with this distributional hand if we have only one heart stopper. I can't risk missing a spade fit by making a no-trump overcall. I'll rebid 2♦ over partner's 2♣ response to my takeout double showing a big hand. Note that this isn't really an overbid since K&R *(The Kaplan – Rubens hand evaluator. See Jeff's Goldsmith's excellent website* http://www.jeff-goldsmith.org/cgi-bin/knr.cgi) currently evaluates the hand as 18.4 (not even taking

into account the likelihood that the ♥K is probably behind the ♥A).

I think that Mark and Daniel are stretching a teensy bit when they present their arguments that this hand is strong enough to double and bid. It's a tiny bit short in my estimation. But it's close enough that I like that action better than any other action.

Feigenbaum: Double is the most flexible. I am a great believer in bidding where I live, *(you live in California, so bid here during the pandemic)* but that is not clear yet.

Michelin: Double. I would double here. If partner bids 2♣ I will correct to 2♦. 2♣ shows less than 9 HCP usually. Most of the time if I bid 1NT partner passes with spades and about 7 HCP and we go down two or three in NT. It seems I want to play in a suit contract unless partner shows values.

Brownstein: Double. I'll bid diamonds over clubs, an ELC.

Coopers: Double. If partner is so rude as to bid 2♣, we bid 2♦ showing diamonds and spades.

Davis: Double. It is close between double and 1NT but I think a takeout double is better if playing (my choice) that equal-level conversion of clubs to diamonds does not show a big hand. If RHO had passed, I would open 1♦ rather than 1NT for related reasons – more likely to reach the best part-score contract and also be able to play the right game when we have a game. The simplicity of a 1NT opening or overcall may appeal to some.

2

IMPs
N-S Vul

West	North	East	South
	1NT	2♦*	???

* Diamonds and a major

You, South, hold: ♠A9875 ♥K9754 ♦10 ♣K5

What call do you make?

Davis: Double. I play takeout doubles over their interference to 1NT when they make a two-suited bid and they are bidding one of their suits. On this hand, I am willing to play 3NT if we do not have a 5-4 major suit fit since the auction indicates suits may not be splitting well and that makes notrump look more attractive. If partner chooses to pass my double to 2♦, at least they won't be getting much in the way of ruffs in dummy as I have an easy diamond opening lead. If my methods allowed me to show 5-5 in the majors with a GF hand, I would choose that instead.

Mealymouth: 3♦. A request to bid the major that East doesn't have. I expect partner to understand this without prior discussion. Thanks for this fastball-down-the-middle.

Bartusek: 3♦. Initially Stayman without a stopper playing fast denies (*Lebensohl)*. I will probably follow up with 4♦ over partner's 3NT forcing partner to choose a major (it could even be best despite a 4-1 trump break). Admittedly 3NT might be a better contract. I think a better problem would have been on the next round.

Feigenbaum: 3♦. Stayman, I hope we can survive whatever partner bids or whatever I have made partner do, no doubt we will end up in our heart fit with a 5-0 break.

Brownstein: 3♥. I play Transfer Lebensohl (invitational or better at three level; here I bid 3♥, a transfer to spades then 4♥ to play in a major.

Coopers: 3♥. Invitational or better transfer to spades, part of Rubensohl *(I believe that Rubensohl and Transfer Lebensohl are identical, different names for the same treatment)*. If partner rejects by bidding 3NT we will transfer to hearts, although it's not totally clear if we do that by bidding 4♦ or by bidding 4♥. Bridge would be a lot better if the enemy didn't bid in our constructive auctions.

Korbel: 3♠. I'm going to insist on a suit contract here. If playing Transfer Lebensohl I would start with 3♥, then continue with 4♥ over 3♠ or 3NT to show 5-5. Not playing Transfer Lebensohl, I'll start with 3♠ and then try 4♥ if I don't get raised.

Michelin: 3♠. This is a hand for partnership agreements. I could start with 3♦, usually Stayman (Stayman without a diamond stopper if playing Lebensohl). If partner bids 3NT, I'll bid 4♦ pick a major. However, if no partnership understanding exists I'll try 3♠, forcing, and if partner bids 3NT I'll bid 4♥.

3

IMPs
E-W Vul

West	North	East	South
	1♦	2♥	???

You, South, hold: ♠A85 ♥82 ♦1043 ♣AQ1065

What call do you make?

This aggravating problem has no good solution. The following calls were suggested by the panel: pass, double, 3♣, 3♦, 3♥. All of them are seriously flawed. Pass shows no values when you have a decent hand. Further, it doesn't end your miseries. What are you doing over partner's reopening double? Double is fine on HCP, but the obvious problem is that you are a spade short of a normal negative double. If partner responds 2♠ and you bid 3♣ is that a game try? 3♣ is fine on shape and suit, but it is game forcing. You are about a queen light of a minimum. 3♦ is fine with 10 HCP, but you are a diamond short, even two diamonds short of what you would like to have. 3♥ shows diamond support, asks for a NT stopper, and is a definitely an overbid.

Mealymouth: Pass. In tempo. No "Negative Double" without a fourth spade. No 3♣ response without a better hand. Second choice: 3♦, but not even close, with neither a necessary fourth diamond nor a desirable high diamond honor. Pass and (probably) go plus on defense. *This problem was given to me by one of my online students. She elected to pass and heard partner reopen with a double. What now? She tried 3♣ and played there, missing a game when partner had a rather poor 18 HCP and choose to pass her 3♣ call.*

Davis: Double. No bid fits this hand well. I don't have many options so I'll choose a takeout double and pass if partner bids 2♠. I hope that partner does not solve his bidding problem the same way I am solving mine, i.e., by indicating a four-card spade suit when holding only three of them.

Bartusek: Double. I detest making negative doubles without four of the other major in many auctions like this, but I see no alternative here. This is the least of evils. Passing will result in our side being shut out of a making partial too often, and a game-forcing 3♣ seems way too optimistic with such sterile distribution. Note that a heart tap will come in the short trump hand if we play in spades. *(Good point, assuming there is a short suit. Sometimes it will be a 3-3 fit though).*

Brownstein: Double. Double isn't perfect but the least of evils; if partner bids 2♠, I bid 3♣.

Korbel: Double. Not ideal, but what else can I do?

Michelin: 3♣. I am sure that if I double, I'll be playing my 3-3 spade fit. I am going to overbid and bid what I am looking at, 3♣. It is forcing to game or 4 of a minor. I have two tens and with luck 3NT will make. I have tolerance for diamonds. I am ready for partner to be disappointed in me.

Coopers: 3♣. Tough problem! If we double, the enemy will surely bid 3♥ or 4♥, followed by partner's spade bid intending to play a 4-3 (won't he be surprised!). That leaves us - reluctantly bidding 3♣.

I like the 3♣ overbid better than any of the other actions.

Feigenbaum: 3♥. I don't like it *(if you like my problems, am I trying hard enough?)* but I bid 3♥.

4

IMPs
E-W Vul

West	North	East	South
		pass	pass
pass	1♣	1♠	1NT
2♦	X	pass	???

You, South, hold: ♠9764 ♥KJ10 ♦J104 ♣A96

What call do you make?

OK, time for true confessions. I didn't intend this problem! How did it get here? There were two problems. As I was putting the problems together for the panelists I did some cut and paste to get formatting correct (tougher than it might seem given that different browsers and different email carriers have somewhat different default formats). I wound up with a hand from a former problem, and an auction from the intended problem. The errors weren't over; I had a typo in the intended auction. Talk about the bread landing butter face up. What could have been an illegal auction or a ridiculous one turned out to be a plausible problem. Yes, 1NT is not everyone's choice on the given mis-problem, but it's plausible. It's one of the calls a good player might make if the problem had been given that way. Not the best problem I have ever presented, but luckily not an absurd one. The panelists had to struggle a little with the meaning of the double.

Feigenbaum: 2♥. Who thought of these hands? *Honestly Ellis, nobody really, I just goofed! But have fun with it!* I hate this! I bid 2♥. Partner should know I only have three, I didn't double 1♠.

Korbel: 2♥. I assume this double is just value-showing and I do not like my honor structure for defending.

Bartusek: Pass. I assume that partner is making a penalty double here holding something like 3=3=3=4 or 2=4=3=4 with 14 HCPs, but I'm not very optimistic with partner's spade honors in the slot (at least -180 isn't game). Admittedly a 2♥ call might be the winner. I would have made a more practical raise of partner's minor on the first round (which would have made follow-up actions easier). This view is supported by the large vote totals in similar auctions in The Bridge World's MSC on both Dec. 2019 holding ♠xxx ♥Qxx ♦Kxx ♣KQ98 after 1♦ - (1♠), and Sept. 2017 holding ♠x ♥Txx ♦AT9xxx ♣Kxx after 1♣ - (1♥). *(The Master Solver's Club examples indicate that it is possible to try to raise a minor opening with only three trumps occasionally in difficult situations. However, neither of Mark's examples would tempt me to try 1NT. In this problem 1NT does look like a reasonable try in a difficult situation. I know that Mark has one former partner who would respond 1NT on the given hand in complete tempo. Who? See Mealymouth's answer!)*

Mealymouth: Pass. Ah, I see I bid 1NT on a *Marshall Miles Stopper* ("Any holding in a suit is a stopper if the opponents don't lead it!"). *(That would certainly be Marshall's approach. (It was infuriating how often he would get away without having a full stopper in the opponent's suit. But let me bid NT without a full stopper and the opponents would happily run their suit on me.)* I'd have bid 2♣ (a Tony Lazzeri Raise, "Throw the ball to Leo, he's so smart he'll know what to do with it!") in a flash at my first turn, but having made my bed earlier, I see nothing better than to sleep in it now. *(I believe that is a reference to New York Yankees baseball players during the Babe Ruth – Lou Gehrig era. Lazzeri was a terrific infielder and hitter for the Yanks and Leo must be Leo Durocher, better remembered for his ~~mouth~~, er Lip, (sorry Mealy, I shall not use the word "mouth" in vain)).*

Brownstein: Pass. I hate bidding 1NT but pass is worse; this is a penalty double. I pass.

Davis: Pass. This problem should have been "What should South do over 1♠?" *(Definitely a reasonable problem).* My answer to that question would have been to make a double since I have no interest in having the opening spade lead coming through whatever partner holds in spades. It is possible that 1NT or even 3NT would have been a good contract if played by partner but that we will take one fewer spade trick and also lose a tempo if I am declarer in notrump.

As it is, on this auction I've shown a balanced hand with about this shape and strength albeit with something better than 9xxx in spades. This makes partner the captain as he is in the best position to make the subsequent bidding decisions. I suspect that this hand is making its way into this column because Captain

North does not know what to do so he is making a takeout-penalty double (the very latest new gadget when partner thinks he should do something but doesn't know what it is). Of course, it is certainly possible that I am being too cynical and North is making a fine penalty double, i.e., just what he should do with ♠AT ♥Axxx ♦K9x ♣Kxxx.

Some think they are in trouble).

Michelin: Pass. Partner is not making a one-suited take-out for hearts after I didn't make a negative double, he didn't rebid clubs, jump in clubs or reverse into hearts. He has a good hand. Maybe he wants to know if I have a diamond stopper for 3NT. I showed a spade stop and I am passing because I showed my values. I was a passed hand. I am prepared for -180 or -280.

Coopers: Pass. At least they're not in game.

5

IMPs
E-W Vul.

West	North	East	South
		4♥*	???

* Stronger heart preempt available

You, South, hold: ♠KQ109 ♥5 ♦A98643 ♣105

What call do you make?

(Some think this is a non-problem).

Bartusek: Pass. I must have malware in my email app, because I received this problem instead of a real problem #5.

Korbel: Pass. You must be joking. This isn't even close to a bid. Switch the diamonds and spades and it'd be more interesting.

Mealymouth: Pass. Yes, I know that East's 4♥ opening is a command for me to bid something whenever I have a singleton or void in hearts. When I put my hand down as dummy in 5♣, I'll apologize to both East and North, offering the lame excuse that I thought my ten of clubs was the ace.

(Others think it is closer but still pass).

Brownstein: Pass. I hope partner does something.

Coopers: Pass. We would probably double in balancing, but not here.

Davis: Pass. I'd probably double 1♥ but pass if they opened any higher number of hearts on my right (at least if playing equal-level conversion of clubs to diamonds does not show a strong hand).

(And a husband and wife agree (sort of) on a problematic double. Both of them are apparently using a life line. Ellis wants the director (on himself) and Margie wants the partnership desk; except we all know that at any tournament she is at Margie becomes the partnership desk for the experts and advanced players).

Feigenbaum: Double. I have a 9 count, preempts work. Now that I have tanked for 30 seconds I double and wait for the director call.

Michelin: Double. I have shortness. I am doubling and hope we don't get to 6 after correcting clubs to diamonds. In my heart of hearts I know pass is probably correct, but I am making an aggressive double. I see -1100 in my future and the partnership desk for me. Oh wait, I am the partnership desk! No problem.