



Master Solvers Panel



By Marshall Miles
San Bernardino, Calif.

Our March panelists are JoAnna Stansby and Harvey Brody, District 21; Paul Ivaska and Jan Janitschke, District 17; John Swanson and Dayou Zhou, District 22; and Jill Meyers, guest panelist from District 23.

Problem 1.

Both vul, IMPs
As South, you hold

	AK	65	K752	J10865
South	West	North	East	
Pass	Pass	1	Pass	
?				

What call do you make?

IVASKA: 2. This whole set has a "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest" quality to it, in that I feel I'm playing in an insane asylum (to which I'm sure I was deservedly committed). To begin with, I would have opened this hand (with 1, intending to rebid 2). After all, it has 2½ defensive tricks and reasonable playing strength. The obvious disadvantage is that I might land in a 4-3 (or even 4-2) fit, but it's been my experience that this happens more often in theory than in practice. As it is now, I feel that this hand will usually play better in spades than in notrump, so I'm going to treat my AK-doubleton as the equivalent of (or better than) typical 3-card support. Of course, I'm assuming that we're playing Drury. [Hooray! This "in-mate" agrees with me! -M.M.] If not, I'll use a forcing INT to show a limit raise in spades. By the way, even when playing Drury, opener should almost never pass partner's semiforcing 1NT. [No, no. Apparently Paul really is crazy.] To pass, one should have minimum secondary values in a 5-3-3-2 pattern, e.g. K10xxx QJx Q10 KJx ... and even then it will often be wrong.

JANITSCHKE: 2. Drury. Makes the auction easy if partner doesn't have much of a hand. Yes, I know I should have more trumps.

STANSBY: 2. I'm bidding this whether it is Drury or natural. I don't want to bid either 1NT or 2NT, which would wrong-side our most likely game. We can stop in 2 when partner has a minimum. Otherwise, I am still hopeful of getting to 3NT from partner's side. If partner does not have the hearts stopped, then 4 on a 5-2 fit may be our best game.

SWANSON: 2. Drury offers a big advantage over 1NT with these cards. If partner retreats to 2 we will surely be in the best partscore. Over other calls I will show a balanced limit raise. I have no interest in a notrump contract unless partner bids it.

MEYERS: 1NT. Partner should bid over this if he or she has full values; if I weren't playing Drury 2 would be a consideration but I don't think I would bid that suit anyway; 2NT would be nice if natural but I play it shows clubs.

M.M.: Some people play that 2NT shows both minors. I play it as natural. Good 11-12.

ZHOU: 1NT, semi-forcing. No, I don't like the small doubleton in hearts, but I like 2 (Drury) even less. Partner might have opened a four card suit in 3rd seat, and ruffing hearts with the AK of trumps might not be fun either. This seems to be a hand where one would wish to have a natural 2 available. If the hand was just a bit better, I would have opened it.

BRODY: 1NT semi-forcing seems most sensible. If partner passes you probably don't have a game.

M.M.: I don't think a semi-forcing 1NT bid by a passed hand makes good sense. Suppose you open 1 in third position with Axxx x Qxxx Ax and partner bids 1NT. You don't like a 1NT contract, so you bid 2. Partner now bids 2NT. Of course, if you are playing 1NT as semi-forcing, you had better pass 1NT before things get worse. If your (opener's) hand were Qxxx Kx AJx Axx you would be delighted to play in 1NT, but you are supposed to bid 2 to show a real opening bid so that you won't miss game if partner has xx AQx Qxxx Kxx, but this gets you dangerously high or in a six or seven card fit when he has 7-10 points. I think both 2 and 2 (Drury) are better bids

with this hand. [Incidentally, when I first ran this problem a year ago, only John and Paul agreed with me. Now at least I am among the majority!] It's not likely partner has opened a four card major missing the ace and king. You would have no reluctance to bid 2 or Drury with three small spades. Won't the doubleton ace-king be at least as good trump support most of the time?

Problem 2.

Neither vul, IMPs
You are the dealer, but RHO bids 1 out of turn. You refuse to accept it, so his bid is cancelled and it is your turn to bid. LHO is barred for the rest of the auction. What is your call with

62 KJ1096 J98754 —

IVASKA: Pass. Again, to begin with, I would have accepted Nurse Ratchett's 1 opening to bid 2NT. Why shouldn't I have taken this opportunity to describe my hand, an opportunity which probably (which I say advisedly) won't be presented at the other table? As it is, I don't understand what tactical bid I should make. Left-hand Inmate will probably give away the strength of her/his hand anyway, so a tactical flight of fancy won't work often.

MEYERS: Pass. I have no reason to know what is right, so why bid in order to mess up the opponents? I could be messing up my partner as well.

SWANSON: Pass. I would open a bit light with appropriate hands in this situation, but no call other than pass is in the least bit descriptive. Partner should strive to bid in third seat with a reasonable suit and should pass with a balanced minimum. I understand that the ACBL has a restriction against special systems when there are bidding irregularities. That doesn't mean we can't discuss tactics.

ZHOU: Pass. I never took a class on how to take full advantage of various kinds of irregularities, but it feels right to let partner open her hand knowing that her RHO would have to pass whatever her LHO guessed to do. If playing Polish two bids I could open 2, showing a weakish hand with hearts and another suit.

BRODY: 2 is a reasonable call; however, a pass is also good.

JANITSCHKE: 2. The opponents probably have us outgunned, and at least partner will have some idea as to the nature of my hand if he has a good hand. If he doesn't have much, so much the better. If I pass, partner is all alone in this, and if the insufficient bidder decides to take a shot at 3NT I don't even know what to lead.

STANSBY: 2. I would do the same if RHO had not bid out of turn.

M.M.: No matter what I do, partner could act in third seat, and RHO will have a chance to bid again, but he will have to guess what to bid with no input from his partner. His most likely choices are 3NT and pass. The panel is divided on the best strategy to help our side in this situation, and I agree there is no clear-cut answer.

Problem 3.

Vul vs. not, matchpoints.
As South, you hold

	AK9852	K10752	J	5
West	North	East	South	
1	Pass	3 (weak)	?	

What call do you make?

BRODY: 4. I'm going for the home run.

IVASKA: 4. I'd like to describe my hand before the auction gets out of hand. I don't really see a reasonable alternative. Anything else would be overly cautious, and probably shortsighted to boot.

MEYERS: 4 (majors); I would like to have more HCP, but my distribution makes up for it.

STANSBY: 4; takeout for the majors. The drawback is that partner will bid hearts with equal length, but I feel that there is a greater danger in bidding 3 and having partner pass with short spades and longer hearts.

ZHOU: 3; longer and higher suit first. The late Evan Bailey would have doubled for sure. Reverse the major suit holdings and I would bid 4.

JANITSCHKE: 3. 4 could work out better if partner has four or five hearts, but (1) this is the suit I want led, (2), I'd rather play spades if partner is 3-3 in the majors, and (3), I don't necessarily bury us if part-

ner is weak without much of a fit.

SWANSON: 3. This is an underbid in regards to the minimum required in this situation. For that reason I have no objection to 4 or 4 (the call I would make at IMPs). 3 offers a bit of safety with a 4 call in reserve should partner try 3NT.

Problem 4.

N-S vul., Board-A-Match
You, South, hold

	7632	965	542	Q42
East	South	West	North	
1	Pass	2 *	Dbl	
Pass	?			

*When West bids 2, East says: "Alert. Game-forcing."

What call do you make?

IVASKA: Pass. Did my partner McMURPHY hear the alert? It doesn't seem likely that the opponents can make the three overtricks required to compensate them for their presumed game, and this might be the best method to find our way to a 5-3 fit (if, indeed we do have one) or, much better, slither entirely out of the huge penalty that seems to be in the offing. In any case, in the words of the late, great Dr. Frischauer, "I do not play ze hand." (He was Austrian, so the accent should be familiar to Californians). If 2 redoubled is passed back to me, as Terence Reese might put it, "I shall have to think again."

JANITSCHKE: Pass has some appeal. If they redouble, I'll run to diamonds, and partner might just work out that I don't want to be raised.

MEYERS: What is the reason for the annotation of East's announcement of "Alert, game-forcing?" Is that part of the problem? If so, I didn't realize we were supposed to be psychoanalysts. I think this is very close whether to bid 2 or pass. If I passed I would expect them to make it, but hoping no more than -180 or -380. If I bid and we end up in a 4-3 fit, I could be stuck with a worse score. Maybe when my partner doubled, I should have said, "Alert, hot water!"

SWANSON: Pass. I have played against these fancy systems before where some simple bid like 2 is a game force, so I am prepared. I don't think the holding of queen-third is sufficient for an inquiry by me of "Does 2 show clubs?"

BRODY: Pass. They would have to take a lot of tricks to make up for a game. If they redouble maybe partner will chose a place to play.

ZHOU: Pass. Okay, second hand this month that has to do with irregularities - in this case unsolicited explanation. I suppose this one has to do with the fact that many play 2 as totally artificial, and partner might have doubled to show clubs. If it goes all pass, then I can afford two doubled overtricks (-380). The most interesting scenario would be 2 doubled making five versus 4 making six, for just another push!

STANSBY: 2. Partner sees the vulnerability and knows they are in a game force. Hard to imagine pard with less than xx, AKxxx, AKxxx, x.

M.M.: This hand ended up in committee. The bidding started out as indicated, but did not end up that way. East bid 2 over the double - but before doing so, he kept asking me whether partner's double was for takeout or penalty. I said that we had only played together once before (plus practicing for the nationals on the Internet), and we had never discussed it. And I refused to state how I interpreted the double, since - among other reasons - gives the opponents an improper clue regarding my own hand. The director was summoned and I was sent away from the table while my partner was questioned. I don't know exactly what was said since I wasn't there, but I think the gist of it was (a) that we had no agreement; (b) if the bid was totally artificial - like Stayman or Drury - the double would be lead-directing, but we had never discussed a situation like this, and a complicating factor is that partner had no information about club suit length promised when he doubled. The practical problem is that if he asked whether the bid was completely artificial and how many clubs it showed, and then either passed or doubled, the opponents might well complain if a club were led.

The bidding continued 2 by East, pass, 2NT by West, 3, promising extra values,

pass 3, pass 4, all pass, and I led the queen of clubs. The director was called again (dummy had Kxx and partner had

AJ10xx, and our score was -420. Later the director told us the score was changed from -420 to -460, the score at the other table, since we hadn't given a complete explanation. He said if we hadn't discussed it, we should have discussed it. I thought that that was an unreasonable requirement, and I see that most of the panelists were uncertain as to the meaning. The double had to be either for takeout or lead directing. I thought, at unfavorable vulnerability, when the opponents showed game-forcing values, it was very unlikely partner would try to buy the bid for us. So it must be lead directing. Perhaps if I had held five clubs, I would have changed my mind, but the opponents were in as good a position as I to figure out why partner doubled unless we had an agreement. The opponents could have protected themselves in two ways. The careless alert with its (unsolicited) explanation should have been, "artificial and game-forcing." Then we would have had no reason to ask questions. And East could have passed the double. Whether I bid or passed would give the opponents a clue as to what I was thinking. There was another reason for passing with this hand. As Paul said, unless West had very good clubs, he could not afford to pass, since he would need three overtricks to score better than the game bonus, so if he wanted to play for 8 to 10 tricks in clubs he should redouble. We protested the director's ruling, and after 2½ hours of deliberation the committee restored the result at the table (-420).

Problem 5.

East-West vulnerable, matchpoints

West	East
3	AK107632
AK843	65
K8	63
AQ1062	96
1	1
2	2
3	3
Pass	

With the cards favorably located, East made six. Apportion the fault for missing game.

IVASKA: West 95%, East 5%. East could have bid 3 at his second turn, but that will generally get the partnership too high. 4 over 3 was clearcut. Indeed, West's pass was inconsistent with bidding over 2. If he felt that way about his hand, he should have passed 2, for which there is actually a very strong argument.

MEYERS: No blame. I had this hand in the Blue Ribbon Pairs. My partner bid 2 which is perfectly reasonable, as is 3. I passed 2, which is perfectly reasonable as is a raise to 3. My tendency would have been to bid 3 with the East hand, but the distribution is bad and it is matchpoints. I would clearly bid 3 at IMPs and would tend to bid 2NT over 2 at IMPs.

JANITSCHKE: Why should I assign any blame? Nobody did anything wrong. Sure, each partner had a little extra, but not enough to do anything different.

ZHOU: I don't think either player did anything unreasonable, not to mention that 4 could easily go down, too. If playing weak two-level jump shifts showing 4-8 or so (good treatment in my opinion), East's 2 bid is at least mildly invitational, and West might have bid game with a good hand. Without assuming this agreement, however, East might have considered rebidding 3, since 2 could be made on KQxxx and out. Therefore East gets 40%, West 20%, and the rest of the blame goes to system and the luck factor ... which in this case rewarded the optimists and punished the pessimists.

BRODY: East 100%. East might have bid 4 earlier ... or even when West bid 3, showing extra values.

SWANSON: East 95%. 2 is a hopeless underbid. West gets 5% of the charge for holding cards which make 4 a really good game.

STANSBY: East 55%. West's auction showed some extra values. Take away the K, and West would pass 2. If playing IMPs East would just close his eyes and bid a vulnerable game, but at matchpoints (where plus scores rule), East's 3 is far from terrible.