

Master Problem Solvers Panel



By Marshall Miles
San Bernardino, California

Our panelists for May are Josh Donn & Ken Barbour, District 17; Rita Shugart & Andrew Robson and Kit Woolsey, District 21; Dayou Zhou & Jon Wittes, District 22; and guest panelists Billy Eisenberg & Eddie Kantar, District 23.

Problem 1.

Matchpoints, vulnerability immaterial
You, South, hold

♠K8 ♥6 ♦K53 ♣AKQ5432

North	East	South	West
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT	Pass	?	

What call do you make?

DONN: 3♣ forcing. Slam could easily be making in clubs only, so I see no reason to blast 6NT or something. If partner bids 3♦ or 3♠ next, I'll be quite excited. If he bids 3♥, then I'll continue 3♠ and see where that leads.

ZHOU: 4♣, Gerber. I will bid 6♣ opposite two aces and probe for 6NT, 7♣ or 7NT opposite three. 3♣ (if forcing) is fine too, but I believe in taking control if I have enough information to do so.

WOOLSEY: 4♣, Gerber. At matchpoints we are very likely to belong in 6NT, and being scientific just doesn't pay off. I will stop in 4NT if we are off two aces, bid 6NT if off one ace. If we have all the aces I'll have to choose between the near laydown 7♣ and 7NT ... which might be cold or might have no play.

BARBOUR: 4♣. A jump to 4♣ over 1NT or 2NT should be Gerber. Three aces, I bid 7♣, relying on setting up partner's spade suit; two aces, 6♣; one ace, 4NT seems right.

EISENBERG: 4♣ or whatever is ace-asking. 4♣ should be asking, since 3♣ is forcing.

KANTAR: 4♣. I think this is Gerber, clubs agreed. (Roman Key Card Gerber?)

SHUGART-ROBSON: 4♣. This emphasizes the club solidity, plus shows our slammy values.

WITTES: 4♥. This should be a splinter, showing long, solid clubs and slam aspirations. 4NT should be to play over this bid, showing some secondary heart cards.

M.M.: Jon's bid was my choice, thinking that partner could evaluate his hand. If he didn't have much wasted strength in hearts, he would bid 6♣: otherwise sign off in 4NT. Opposite what I would have to rebid 2NT, seven would be unbidable, (unless I had the rare 18-19 HCP hand this bid could conceal.).

Problem 2.

Board-A-Match, neither vul
You, South, hold

♠J53 ♥A1084 ♦AQ843 ♣J

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

What call do you make?

WITTES: 2♦. Although I don't play 2♥ shows a true reverse on this auction, it should not show a dead minimum, and this hand certainly qualifies as a dead minimum, especially with a singleton in partner's suit.

ZHOU: 2♦. Seems pretty clear. I won't Pass 2♣ with a singleton. Yes, 2♥ might be a winner at B-A-M if we were lucky and could stop there. When in doubt, I make the IMP bid.

WOOLSEY: 2♦. Partner probably doesn't have six clubs, since he didn't open 3♣, so 2♦ figures to be a better contract than 2♣.

BARBOUR: 2♦. Close (Pass is also a good choice). But perhaps partner has 3-5 in the minors. If he has only one diamond, he probably has six or seven clubs, so 3♣ will be okay.

SHUGART-ROBSON: Pass. Since the overcall was not raised, partner's likely shapes are 3-3-1-6, 3-2-2-6 and 3-3-2-5. With the red suits being so bare, we respect our jack of clubs, and leave the bidding right there.

DONN: Pass. This could be our best spot (or at least the best one we can still reach), and anyway what I really want is the opponents to come back in, so I will give them the best chance to do that. My hand is not

the least bit shameful for play in clubs with two aces and the jack of that suit.

EISENBERG: Pass. The advantage is obvious.

KANTAR: Pass. Every problem set needs at least one joke. This must be it.

M.M.: With no negative double, no raise, and no notrump bid, I think North's most likely hand is a long club suit and not much else, in which case his hand will be of little value in any suit but clubs.

As it happens, 2♣ was the last makeable contract for either side.

Problem 3.

IMPs, North/South vul
You, South, hold

♠— ♥AKQ10643 ♦A1053 ♣K7

South	West	North	East
1♥	1♠	2♣	3♣
?			

What call do you make?

KANTAR: 4♦. I can't take any more time thinking about this problem. As it is, both my partner and my opponents have already gone home!

EISENBERG: 4♦. Too much to tell. Will bid at least 6♥.

DONN: 4♦. I really prefer to go slow with something forcing on a hand this big. Hopefully partner gives preference back to hearts so I can continue 4♠ and really get the party started. I am fully convinced that any other bid on this hand is in fact an error, since we are well placed with every useful piece of information which we leave partner room to show.

BARBOUR: 4♦. Clearly forcing. This should allow us to determine which slam to play. 6♥ must be icy, and 7♥, 7♦, or 7♣ are all still possible to reach.

ZHOU: 5♠. I will bid 6♥ over partner's likely 6♣ or 6♦. This should show a spade void and encourages partner to bid a grand slam with sufficient minor suit honor holdings. 7♥ was my other choice, but partner could be minimum with a wasted spade card.

WOOLSEY: 5♠. If partner doesn't have a strong club suit, he will punt with 5NT to see what I am doing, and my follow-up 6♥ bid will clarify my intentions. If he does bid 6♣, I'll probably take a shot at 7♣. Also, this bid will be helpful if West bids 6♣.

SHUGART-ROBSON: 5NT. Grand Slam Force in clubs, although we will convert 7♣ to 7♥. We are prepared to shoot it out facing ♣AQxxxx and little else.

WITTES: 5NT. (Grand Slam Force in clubs). I plan to correct 7♣ to 7♥, hoping partner has at least one heart and the jack of clubs or king of diamonds. I don't have room to explore whether hearts or clubs is the better trump suit. Over 6♣ I'll bid 6♥, and maybe partner will work out that with the ace of clubs (six long) and ♦KQ, he could bid a grand slam in hearts.

Problem 4.

IMPs, North/South vul
You, South, hold

♠— ♥A98654 ♦— ♣KQJ10862

North	East	South	West
1NT*	Pass	2♦	Dbl
3♥**	Pass	?	

*(15-17)
**shows maximum, not just four hearts.

What call do you make?

WITTES: 3♠. If partner bids 4♣ I can now bid 5NT (Grand Slam Force). Over this, we play graded response: 6♣ would show none, 6♦ the queen, and 6♥ the ace or king. So over 6♥ I would still bid seven, expecting partner to hold ♥Kxxx for the jump to 3♥. Even if the trumps are 3-0, partner could still have the jack.

DONN: 3♠. Obviously hoping for the 4♣ cuebid so I can follow with 5NT. Hopefully we have responses worked out to that where partner can show me the king.

BARBOUR: 3♠. On a good day, partner will bid 4♣. On a very good day, I will be playing with a partner who will subsequently know the responses to a grand slam force of 5NT (6♣ no heart honor, 6♦ the queen, 6♥ the ace or king, 7♥ two honors). I'm probably dreaming!

KANTAR: 4♣. Maybe we can get involved in a cuebidding sequence. If partner bids 5♣ I'll bid 5NT, GSF in hearts.

M.M.: If partner has the ♠A, would he cue bid it before showing the ace in dia-

monds or spades?

EISENBERG: 4♣. Need a club cuebid. Then bid 5NT. 6♣ shows the queen or less; 6♦ king or queen. 6♥ ace or king with length.

M.M.: I like Billy's responses to the grand slam force best: 6♣ denies the ace or king. If the 5NT bidder is only concerned about the queen or additional length, he can bid 6♦ to ask. 6♦ shows the ace or king. 6♥ shows either high honor with additional length (combined length of ten or more).

If trumps are the only problem you can always get to seven with three top honors, however they are divided, or with both the ace and king and a combined holding of ten trumps. (Of course, when your suit is a minor, you can't show everything).

SHUGART-ROBSON: 6♣. We are trying for a grand slam, asking partner to look only at his rounded suits.

ZHOU: 6♣. Hopefully partner will bid 7♥ looking at the king of hearts and the ace of clubs, since these suits are the only two we care about. If he has neither, too bad! However, my original (and probably more civilized) idea was to start with a 3♠ cuebid.

If partner bids 4♣, I would bid 5NT (Josephine), asking partner to bid 7♥ with ♥KQ. Otherwise, I will bid 5♥ asking partner to bid six with a good trump holding.

But the major problem of this approach is that in both cases, partner will think that the queen of trumps is important, while she really isn't that crucial.

M.M.: In case some of you are too young to know who Josephine was, (after all, Dayou will turn 27 later this year!), she was Josephine Culbertson, who is credited with inventing the Grand Slam Force.

WOOLSEY: 4♦. Might as well try to get a club cuebid out of partner. Incidentally, at IMPs I would have just bid 6♣ over 1NT, since it is almost impossible to bid this hand scientifically, and at this vulnerability there is grave danger that the opponents will have a profitable save.

M.M.: Exactly, Kit. This problem is more complicated than it appears. You KNOW that the opponents have a great sacrifice in

7♠, but since they don't know it yet, at this vulnerability it must be right to give up science to avoid that. At our table the opponents got to 7♥ and we thought our teammates were good enough to get there also. They did, but their early spade cue bid got doubled, and so the opponents sacrificed at 7♣, down four, for -800 and a huge loss. So whatever your hand does, it should avoid a cue bid in spades. The more direct the bidding, the less the chance of a sacrifice. My thought was to gamble on the ♠A and just bid 5NT directly. Since the opponents know nothing about your distribution (except for heart length), they are very unlikely to sacrifice over that. And which is more likely? That partner is missing the ♠A on this bidding, or that the opponents will find a sacrifice if you give them room to enter the bidding after you start cue bidding or show a two-suiter with interest in slam?

Problem 5.

IMPs, both vulnerable

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT	Pass	6NT	Dbl (end)

What would you lead from ...

♠75 ♥J98743 ♦9 ♣10732

BARBOUR: ♠7. Technically, the lead partner is asking for, probably with ♠K and a trick. Could he expect me to work out that South can't have 12 tricks without spades and therefore lead differently? If so, what does he want me to choose?

DONN: ♠7. What am I missing? Partner could have the first two spade tricks while they have 12 tricks outside. My talks with Marshall in the past make me think he will play this double as asking for a club, but I don't agree. If partner somehow has AK of clubs it's just too bad. He is more likely to want a spade lead than a club, and since I am leading a red suit most of the time with no double, I think that is how we should play the double.

WOOLSEY: ♠7. If I could be sure that South had a doubleton spade there would-



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