

## DISTRICT 4 MASTER SOLVERS CLUB

NICK STRAGUZZI, DIRECTOR

*There ain't no cure for the summertime blues.... Welcome back, everyone. With no perfect scores (a rarity for the D4MSC), this turned out to be a fairly challenging problem set. Let's see how the D4 Boys & Girls of Summer handled them. Remember, anyone can send in responses each quarter (if you're in the District 4 Top 100, you are automatically a Panelist), and problem submissions are always welcome.*

METHODS ARE 2/1 WITH "WALSH"

IMPS, NONE VUL.

♠-KJ9 ♥-AKQ75 ♦-J9532 ♣---

<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
--	Pass	1♠	3♥
??			

**1: What call do you make?**

CALL	PANEL	SOLVERS	AWARD
Pass	4	4	20
4♥	1	3	16
4♠	1	2	15
5♣	1	0	14
4♦	0	2	14

*Even in an uncontested auction against sober opponents, this would be a difficult hand to describe. RHO's overcall adds an entirely new dimension. Were it not for that pesky rulebook, I think we'd all be in agreement with Plan B of:*

BARRY PASSER: Pass. Plan B is to pull four Double cards out of the box at once and slam them on the table. What, you can't do that? Back to Plan A, then: pass and hope that partner reopens with a double. How else can you punish this undisciplined crap?

*I have a few suggestions, though they violate not only the Laws of Bridge but also the laws of most jurisdictions. Worse still, this problem arose on Bridge Base Online, where even the laws of physics would get in the way of whupping East upside the head. Bill Schmidt sent it in, and we'll get to his answer and the full results later. For now, let's see what we can make out of this situation.*

*Our District experts basically split into three camps: (1) Try for slam, (2) Settle for game, and (3) Hope to make East rue the day he was born. For the slam-seekers:*

**RAY RASKIN:** 5♣. We might belong as low as three spades and as high as the seven level. By using Exclusion Blackwood, I can get some information about diamonds and spades to get me closer to an informed guess.

*If you're in a practiced partnership and you've agreed that 5♣ is Exclusion and not a splinter, Ray's plan is risky but reasonable. Lynn Harris and Bob Browne tried 4♦ (Lynn: "It's at least forcing, though a pathetic suit"), while the rest of the slammers went with:*

**BARRY COHEN:** 4♥. Seems like an obvious start.

**CONNIE GOLDBERG:** 4♥. The opponents have effectively preempted me out of a more descriptive auction. I must tell my partner I have a game-forcing spade raise with defensive values to create a forcing pass situation in case they continue to compete.

**HOWARD WACHTEL:** 4♥. Showing spade support plus slam interest. No call is perfect, but this one seems to have the lowest chance of leading partner astray. I'm assuming we are playing that splinters are off over jump-interference.

**JOHN SCHWARTZ:** 4♥. If partner rebids 4♠, I'll follow with 5♣; if instead he rebids five of a minor, I'll bid 5♥. Defending three hearts doubled might be right, but this hand has slam aspirations.

*John's plan feels too aggressive; if partner tried to sign off over my cue-bid, I would put down the dummy in a flash and wish him luck. If you've got a sturdy constitution and you really want to shoot for the brass ring, the most aggressive action of all is:*

**BOB & JOANN GLASSON** (with **RICK OLANOFF** and **BILL FOSTER** "expecting" rather than "hoping"): Pass. Hoping that partner reopens with a double.

**DON DALPE:** Pass. In tempo, of course. With only three spades, our offensive potential is limited unless partner is very distributional, in which case he will bid a suit. Otherwise, he will double or I will be looking for a new partner who has played bridge before.

**PETE FILANDRO:** Pass. I'll go for the penalty, expecting it to be OK versus our hoped for +420 or +450. I don't see +980 unless partner has a moose because I have so little help for his minor losers. If West has four spades I don't even have a late entry to the heart winners. And, if East has seven hearts, there is a 50% chance that West has the void and ruffs the opening lead.

**RUI MARQUES:** Pass. Options seem to be either pass or 4♥. On a spade lead, three hearts doubled looks to be down a lot. With West being a passed hand, a reopening double is almost mandatory. If they find their clubs, I will show the spade fit and the picture should be clear for partner.

**DAVE WACHSMAN:** Pass. The key to this decision is that we are playing IMPs. I don't expect my teammate holding the East hand to preempt in hearts. This is relevant because North-South at the other table might go overboard without the knowledge that bad suit breaks are likely. Take advantage of this by passing!

*Pass was the plurality choice, and these folks make a good case for it. I prefer pass to any slam try, as my heart tops are likely to be good only for drawing West's trumps. For those willing to settle for a comfortable +420 rather than to try to hit the PowerBall, there's:*

**SAUL & ROSELYN TEUKOLSKY:** 4♠. The choice is pass or 4♠. However, it's not guaranteed that partner will be strong enough to reopen with a double at the three-level. The hand isn't good enough for 4♥.

*My heart is with the passers; my head, my gut, and my central nervous system are all with the Teuks. I just can't bear the thought of defending three hearts undoubled at IMPs. A good rule of thumb in these penalty pass situations is this: Suppose North made his opening bid and then got himself barred for the rest of the auction, by eloping with the director's wife or something. If East then passed, and you had one and only one call to give, would it be a game contract that you fully expect to make? If so, take your bonus and don't risk chasing down a big penalty. If not, live a little.*

*The last word, along with an eyewitness report of the actual outcome, goes to the problem's submitter:*

**BILL SCHMIDT:** 4♠. It's tempting to try for slam, but my heart ace-king-queen might be wasted opposite North's probable void. At the table, I tried 4♥, but failed the follow-up test by bidding 5♠ over partner's signoff. Partner bid the slam based on his heart void and had no play.

**IMPS, NONE VUL.**

♠-AQ96 ♥-K95 ♦-J9 ♣-K763

<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
1♣	Pass	1♦	1♥
1♠	3♥	Double*	Pass
??			

\* - "cards"; values but no clear direction.

## 2: What call do you make?

CALL	PANEL	SOLVERS	AWARD
Pass	4	8	20
3NT	3	2	17
4♦	0	1	12

*Ah, the ever-popular Spike Lee double: "Partner, do the right thing." Make no mistake: this is an indispensable tool in today's hyper-competitive auctions, and they're far more practical than the penalty doubles of yore. They do seem to lead to an inordinate amount of headaches, though. Our Panelists were split almost down the middle on this problem:*

**RAY RASKIN:** Pass. Another one of these hands that everyone is guessing on. We could be making (or going down in) anything from three no-trump to five of a minor, but a pass gives the best chance to earn a plus score.

**PETE FILANDRO:** 3NT. I'm not willing to sit for three hearts doubled at IMPs so I choose 3NT, a bid that shows "clubs and spades with no special extra length, hearts with a stopper, and diamond tolerance." (I tend to avoid notrump with singletons or voids). OMG, that's what I have!

**DON DALPE:** Pass. What else am I supposed to do? I guess I'm leading the  $\spadesuit J$  since partner is short in hearts, so a trump lead won't work. I have had big negative numbers before.

**CONNIE GOLDBERG:** 3NT. Although I agree with the  $1\spadesuit$  rebid, I think it usually shows more concentration and/or longer clubs. I have a stopper and a balanced hand.

**SAUL & ROSELYN TEUKOLSKY:** Pass. Then lead a trump. No other attractive choice.

**RICK OLANOFF:** 3NT. This may not make, but three hearts doubled certainly could.

**BOB & JOANN GLASSON:** Pass. Feels like it's time to defend, with no fit and no source of tricks for three no-trump.

*When I chose this problem for the set, I expected the Panelists to lean heavily towards defending and the Solvers to divide between passing and bidding. Exactly the opposite occurred, in fact. By a healthy margin, the Solvers took their chances with....*

JOHN SCHWARTZ: Pass. Hey, I too have values and no clear direction. Partner rates to have something like  $3=1=5=4$  shape. Five clubs as a contract seems a reach. Passing is a risk at IMPs, but three no-trump with one stopper about to be forced out on the opening lead seems more risky.

BILL SCHMIDT: Pass. No extra distribution, no source of tricks, and the LAW suggests only 16 total tricks.

LYNN HARRIS: Pass. A difficult problem. I envision North with  $3=1=6=3$  shape. My hope is that we'll score two spades, one heart, two diamonds and one club.

BARRY PASSER: Pass. And lead a low heart. Their nine-card fit won't produce nine tricks if I get their trumps out.

*The opening lead might be crucial. Passer and the Teukolskys lead trumps, while Dalpe, Bill Foster and Barry Cohen will try the diamond jack. This might be one of those uncommon deals where the best defense is to lead hearts at every opportunity, sacrificing your natural trump trick to stop any chance of a cross-ruff.*

RUI MARQUES (with DAVE WACHSMAN): 3NT. Pass is an option, but the risk/reward ratio seems not very good. I've shown clubs and spades; now it's time to show the heart stopper and a balanced hand.

*I hadn't considered it until Connie brought it up, but the time to show this hand-type was last turn. As it says at the top of every D4MSC article since Henry Bethe's directorship, our "methods are 2/1 with Walsh." If partner had a mini-*

*mum and four spades, he'd have responded 1♠. Ergo, either he has fewer than four spades, or else he plans to bid again in which case we can still back into a 4-4 spade fit after our (correct) 1NT rebid. This is precisely why we're playing Walsh in the first place, no? Thus, South violated system and this problem shouldn't have been posed to the MSC at all. I'll have the Problem Editor flogged. Ouch.*

*The club's lone wolf on this problem is:*

HOWARD WACHTEL: 4♦. Here again, every possible call has drawbacks. I assume that West is showing a four-card preemptive raise. My bidding promises four clubs and four spades, so my partner's failure to support either of my suits suggests that he has no more than six black cards, possibly fewer. He has no more than one heart, so I don't expect to make three no-trump on a heart lead. A typical shape for North is 3=1=6=3; that is, partner certainly has at least five diamonds and probably six. He probably didn't want to bypass 3NT without hearing from me. A penalty pass might be considered at matchpoints, but not at IMPs.

*Unfortunately, partner could be 3=1=5=4 as easily as 3=1=6=3. It would be convenient, albeit insane, if 4♣ were pass-or-correct. No, the auction went off the rails with the 1♠ response. Don't worry, though, I'm taking care of the perpetrator. Ouch.*

**MATCHPOINTS, N-S Vul.**

♠A109873 ♥-3 ♦-2 ♣-A~~X~~832

**3: What is the lowest club card for "X" that you require to open this hand 1♠ in first seat?**

CARD	PANEL	SOLVERS	AWARD
Jack	3	5	20
Queen	2	4	18
Nine	2	1	17
Ten	0	1	12
King	0	0	8

*This is a straightforward polling question. My frequent partner Barry Cohen is a strong adherent of the Rule of 20: add your high-card points to the length of your two longest suits, and if the sum is 20 or more, you have an opening one-bid. I'm a bit of a skeptic, as I think it leads to opening some hands that should not be opened while passing others that should. Anyway, I wanted to see how many of our District experts were in Barry's camp. Guess who wasn't?*

BARRY COHEN: Nine. The Rule of 20 says I should have the jack, but with Six-Five I will Come Alive.

*Oh well, at least now I know which adage takes precedence. Also needing only the club nine to open 1♠ are:*

**RAY RASKIN:** Nine. Since I am most likely to treat this hand as completely offense-oriented and will probably not sell out until at least the five level, I would just as soon have as little defense as possible. That way I don't have much of a chance to take an unexpected trick that makes a potential sacrifice a "phantom".

**DON DALPE:** Nine. To tell you the truth, I would not consider passing with this shape and both long suits headed by aces. The spades are marginal for my view of an unfavorable first seat preempt. I would probably open 1♠ when that "X" was even smaller.

*Everyone else requires an honor. It's gratifying to see that no one answered the king, with which we might be closer to a jump-shift than a pass. The decision boiled down to a choice between quacks. For the court of Her Majesty:*

**PETE FILANDRO:** Queen. With any lower club, I would open 2♠.

**CONNIE GOLDBERG:** Queen. The jack-ten would also suffice.

**HOWARD WACHTEL:** Queen. So that the hand has two-and-a-half quick tricks.

**BILL SCHMIDT:** Queen. A distributional open with a five-loser count is okay, but that's where I'd draw the line.

*For the troupe of The Knave:*

**RICK OLANOFF** (with **BARRY PASSER**, **BILL FOSTER**, and **JOHN SCHWARTZ**): Jack. The jack fits the Rule of 20, and that's my usual standard.

**DAVE WACHSMAN:** Jack. I have two quick tricks and a Losing Trick Count of six, thus an opening one-bid is justified, but the presence of the club jack would improve my prospects for making a spade contract.

**RUI MARQUES:** Jack. The king or queen would make this hand a clear opening; the jack is the borderline. I wouldn't be happy to show only a pair of aces and a pair of tens in the post-mortem.

*Marital Discord Dept.:*

**SAUL & ROSELYN TEUKOLSKY:** Jack. This is our compromise answer. Saul says the ten and I (Roselyn) say the queen. Despite the six-five shape, it always seems to go sour when I open so light, with just two aces and no other face cards.

*I was the lone Solver who chose the ten, incidentally. Saul, if you need a partner after this, drop me a line.*

**MATCHPOINTS, E-W VUL.**

♠--- ♥-KQJ1085 ♦-KQ432 ♣-J2

<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
--	--	Pass	Pass
??			

**4: What call do you make?**

CALL	PANEL	SOLVERS	AWARD
4♥	6	5	20
1♥	1	5	15
2♥	0	1	12

**RICK OLANOFF:** 4♥. Transfers the opponents to 4♠.

**LYNN HARRIS:** 4♥. I think I should be able to make this, and I would like to dissuade west from bidding.

*"Take me down to the Paradox City / Where the bids are bold and the cards are pretty...." Can a massive preemptive opening salvo actually make it easier for the vulnerable opponents to find a cold game or profitable sacrifice? These days, when it comes to four hearts ("Transfer!"), maybe so. Welcome to the modern bridge jungle. Still, it's not like any other opening bid is a walk in the garden. Guns or roses, folks: what will it be?*

**DAVE WACHSMAN:** 4♥. Let's make it difficult for the vulnerable East-West to reach their optimum contract. Four losers opposite a passed partner may well produce a game.

**RAY RASKIN:** 1♥. Many would open 4♥, but that might get us way too high or to the wrong strain when partner is long in diamonds.

**DON DALPE:** 4♥. I decided to go with the transfer. I'll decide later what to do over their expected 4♠. If I could be sure that CHO wouldn't get in my way, my close second choice is 4NT, planning to confuse all three opponents.

**SAUL & ROSELYN TEUKOLSKY:** 4♥. The best chance to buy the contract.

**BARRY PASSER:** 1♥. This is enough. I want to be able to rebid 4♦ and then give partner the opportunity to double a spade contract. If I open 4♥ and the auction continues, say, (double)-pass-(4♠) to me, I won't know whether to bid or pass.

**RUI MARQUES:** 4♥. I am not walking on eggshells on this one. If the opponents venture 4♠, I'll proceed with 5♦.

**HOWARD WACHTEL:** 1♥. The hand is too strong for a preempt.

**BOB & JOANN GLASSON:** 4♥. We're not worried about missing a slam opposite a passed partner.

**BARRY COHEN:** 4♥. Seems pretty clear.

*I chose 1♥ with no particular conviction. I suspect at the table I'd open 4♥ more often than not. Deep down, I'd love to try a cunning pass, but it's a big position and nobody else so much as suggested it. Are there any other passive-aggressive options?*

BILL SCHMIDT: 2♥. This one would depend on the opponents. Against strong players, I'd try 4♥. With typical opponents, I prefer to start low. I might get a chance to mention diamonds below the five-level, or even buy the contract. That would be less likely when East-West are known to have excellent judgment.

*As Don observed, perhaps the opponent it most depends upon is our old favorite: the dull-looking one in the middle. If partner is the sort who would open 2♠ at favorable vulnerability on any excuse, including hallucinations, the more likely the opponents can bid and make a spade game no matter how many hearts we open. In that case, we might be better off starting low, planning to get both of our suits in. Conversely, if partner is more conservative, 4♥ seems best. The opponents could be unable to bid 4♠, or if they do, they might be running smack into a buzz saw.*

*We'll finish with a sweet anecdote about one of District 4's most legendary historical figures....*

PETE FILANDRO: 4♥. A middle-of-the-road bid; probably the plurality field choice. I expect any heart call will end with the opponents in 4♠, because partner did not open 2♠. His average spade length will be about three, so the opponents have ten spades and half or more of the deck.

I have a sneaking admiration for the "Treadwell Bid" of 2♥. About 35 years ago while Marie and I were having dinner with Dave, we discussed a similar hand. Dave said he opens two of a major and freely bids five of a minor to show his non-vulnerable six-five over the opponents' vulnerable game. Ever since, we've called this sequence the "Treadwell Bid". By the way, one nice plus of opening 2♥ is the small chance that partner doubles 4♠ with something like queen-jack-ten-fifth of spades and an ace, stopping me from bidding a costly unilateral 5♦.

*Even after all these years, Dave casts a long shadow around these parts.*



**MATCHPOINTS, BOTH VUL.**

♠-Q4 ♥-A85 ♦-Q432 ♣-J876

<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
--	1♦	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	(All Pass)	

**5: What is your opening lead?**

CALL	PANEL	SOLVERS	AWARD
♥5	4	4	20
♠Q	1	5	17
♣6	2	0	17
♦2	0	1	12
♥A	0	1	12

*Well isn't this peachy? To heck with setting the contract: all that any good matchpoints player wants to do here is get off lead without blowing a trick. One strategy, attractive to totally hopeless opening leaders like myself, is to place the ♦Q and ♣J face down on the table, shuffle your other eleven cards, and pick one at random. For those who prefer more definitude in their outcomes, our experts make a case for all four suits. Diamonds first, sort of:*

HOWARD WACHTEL: ♦2. The auction suggests that East has club length, so that's out. If our agreement is to lead fourth-best versus notrump, I'd choose an honest diamond, leading "through strength". A heart lead would only confuse my partner. If our agreement is third-and-fifth, I'd try the ♥5.

*Even in 2016, the old whist standard of fourth-best leads still rules the roost. I agree that East's suit, if any, is most likely clubs. Two panelists are undeterred.*

**BOB & JOANN GLASSON:** ♣6. Fourth from our suit. Partner didn't overcall in spades, so the ♠Q is unlikely to be a winner.

*Rick Olanoff also led a club, without comment. I hate leading from jacks, and I really hate leading clubs after the auction starts 1♦-1NT. But, at least we have something vaguely resembling spots there. Our other three suits look like Twigg after a crash diet. Maybe we should try finding partner's length?*

**CONNIE GOLDBERG:** ♠Q. Although I really have no strong conviction. Whatever I lead will fill me with dread. *[No argument here. - NS]*

JOHN SCHWARTZ: ♠Q. Everything else is unappealing. Partner has at least four spades. Perhaps she has five to the jack and an entry.

BARRY PASSER: ♠Q. A total crapshoot. Partner is more likely to hold cards in spades than clubs, given the 1NT response.

RUI MARQUES: ♠Q. This might be terribly wrong, but the queen rates to be onside for declarer and it might yield a trick if declarer shows up with ♠AK10 in dummy. Minor suit leads seem suicidal, and a heart looks riskier than a spade.

DAVE WACHSMAN: ♠Q. Even though partner did not overcall 1♠, this seems less likely to benefit declarer than any other lead. Partner has 4 or 5 high card points at most, which isn't enough to overcall at the one level. Top or bottom at match-points; the ♠Q lead might strike gold.

BILL FOSTER: ♠Q. My convention card notes that against a notrump contract, a major suit lead may be short.

*The spade queen could work great in Rui's layout. Or, it might hit ace-king-low-low in dummy opposite declarer's jack-nine-low, whereupon partner, holding ten-fourth, will spend the rest of the play mentally plotting your demise.*

*Unless someone discovers a fifth suit pronto, that leaves us with only hearts.*

PETE FILANDRO: ♥5. Our only hope for a plus is to hit partner with king-queen-long in hearts (or king-jack-long and a favorable layout.) If that doesn't occur, at least I have led something least likely to blow a trick.

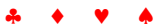
RAY RASKIN (with BARRY COHEN): ♥5. Because low from unsupported queens or jacks are most likely to blow a trick.

SAUL & ROSELYN TEUKOLSKY: ♥5. This was the hardest of the five problems. The heart lead needs to find less with partner to be right; for example, if dummy has king-jack-low and partner has the queen. Leading the ♠Q might look attractive, but we'd need two honors from partner for that to be successful

DON DALPE: ♥5. A spade seems too aggressive and I have too many diamonds to consider a club lead. Using my preferred leading system, I'd choose the eight-spot.

BILL SCHMIDT: ♥5. 1NT tends to show clubs, so a major suit lead is mandatory. This isn't a weak enough hand to try to hit partner's suit with the ♠Q.

*This is another odd auction. Generally, opening one banana and then jumping to 3NT shows a long, solid suit with a few outside cards. That doesn't jive well with our holding the ♦Q. With 18-19 HCP and a balanced hand, West would tend to rebid 2NT. Perhaps he has a 3=4=5=1 or 4=3=5=1 20-count and isn't about to give East a second chance to pass below game, but even then, he might have reversed. A club might be right after all. In fact, a club switch at trick two might be just as good. The only person to suggest leading the ♥A to have a look at dummy was Lynn Harris, who ultimately settled on the ♥5. The only fool to have actually chosen it was yours truly. Incidentally, the opponents had eleven tricks, no more and no less, even if you led your left shoe...as long as you weren't using either of your minor-suit honors as footwear, that is.*



*Panelists Don Dalpe and the Glassons led the scoring this month with a pair of 97s. Rui Marques and Dave Wachsmann topped the Solvers with 94.*



## June 2016 Scoring

PANELISTS	1	2	3	4	5	SCORE
DON DALPE	Pass	Pass	Nine	4♥	♥5	97
PETE FILANDRO	Pass	3NT	Queen	4♥	♥5	95
BOB & JOANN GLASSON	Pass	Pass	Jack	4♥	♣6	97
CONNIE GOLDBERG	4♥	3NT	Queen	4♥	♠Q	88
RICK OLANOFF	Pass	3NT	Jack	4♥	♣6	94
RAY RASKIN	5♣	Pass	Nine	1♥	♥5	86
SAUL & ROSELYN TEUKOLSKY	4♠	Pass	Jack	4♥	♥5	95

SOLVERS	1	2	3	4	5	SCORE
BOB BROWNE	4♦	Pass	Queen	4♥	♥5	92
BARRY COHEN	4♥	Pass	Nine	4♥	♥5	93
BILL FOSTER	Pass	Pass	Jack	1♥	♠Q	92
LYNN HARRIS	4♦	Pass	Queen	4♥	♥5	92
RUI MARQUES	Pass	3NT	Jack	4♥	♠Q	94
BARRY PASSER	Pass	Pass	Jack	1♥	♠Q	92
BILL SCHMIDT	4♠	Pass	Queen	2♥	♥5	85
JOHN SCHWARTZ	4♥	Pass	Jack	1♥	♠Q	88
DAVE WACHSMAN	Pass	3NT	Jack	4♥	♠Q	94
HOWARD WACHTEL	4♥	4♦	Queen	1♥	♦2	73
NICK STRAGUZZI	4♠	Pass	Ten	1♥	♥A	