

# DISTRICT 4 MASTER SOLVERS CLUB

**JUNE 2017 PROBLEM**

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*This month marks the halfway point of the **2017 District 4 MSC Challenge**, and it's time for our first set of Panelist and Solver standings. You'll find them at the end of the article, after our district experts carve up the Club's latest problem.*

METHODS ARE 2/1 WITH "WALSH"

## MATCHPOINTS, NORTH-SOUTH VUL.

♠-KJ103 ♥-KJ92 ♦-AQ9 ♣-AJ

<u>South</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>
1♦	2♠	Double*	3♠
?			

\* - NEGATIVE

DOUBLE = 'CARDS' (EXTRAS, NO CLEAR BID)

4NT = UNDISCUSSED

### A. What call do you make?

CALL	PANEL	SOLVERS	AWARD
4♥	4	5	100
3NT	4	4	90
6♥	2	2	70
4♠	1	1	70
5♥	0	5	70
4NT	0	3	70
Double	1	1	60
4♣	0	1	50

*So many questions here. Hearts or notrump? Game or slam? Should we spend a round of bidding offering (almost surely futilely) to defend, and can we catch up later if we do? Is there any way to combine our chances? Why do you park on a driveway but drive on a parkway? OK, maybe not that. Leading off this month is a longtime Panelist who answers a question that wasn't posed:*

**PETE FILANDRO:** No. I do not agree with the 1♦ opening. I would have opened 2NT. The working ♠10 and two 9's, and the positional value of declaring, make this call "normal", not even an aggressive stretch.

*Pete was the only respondent who advocated 2NT, though in hindsight that certainly seems like a reasonable opening. We have tenaces galore, and using modern methods it would right-side any eventual major-suit contract. Oh, well. Onward.*

*Let's start with the option of kicking the can down the road, or at least over to the other side of the table. The footnote says that a double shows 'cards', a reasonably common treatment these days when the opponents are trained like seals to bid to their LAW level before our side can sort much out. Could that help here?*

**ED SHAPIRO:** Double. I'll make a decision later. A partner who bids hearts over this will have five or more. If he bids four of a minor, then a simple 4♥ from me will do. I don't hate 3NT; at least we'll go plus.

**CHRIS MARLOW:** Double. 3NT is probably okay with the double stopper in spades, but my club doubleton suggests we may be able to pick up an extra trick or two via ruffs. 4♥ is safe, but with a likely void in spades, partner will have a five-card suit somewhere, and a double will help me locate it. If that suit is clubs, I can still bid 4♥, but if it is in diamonds or hearts, I will move toward slam.

*Neither Ed nor Chris expect that North will choose to defend 3♠ doubled. That's realistic, considering there is probably a large hole in partner's hand where his spades are supposed to be. Several Panelists explicitly reject doubling; Pete Filandro calls it "a trap", Rui Marques fears that "the auction will get too murky", and Michael Shuster believes that "cards" means "penalty, if you remove the blame-shifting aspect."*

*Okay, so our experts have answered the first question decisively: punting to partner is out. One way or another, we're going to make a descriptive call. Next up: do we settle for game or make some move towards slam? This is a toughie, largely because there's no below-game slam try jumping out at us. Unless, that is, you have the cojones to risk temporizing with this:*

**LYNN HARRIS:** 4♣. I don't want to play in notrump, and I don't have a clear idea (yet) what the final contract should be. If partner rebids 4♥, he should have five or more hearts.

*Well, I agree that 4♣ ought to be forcing, but showing 4=4=3=2 by bidding diamonds, then clubs, is like canapé on steroids. A more prosaic way to invite slam while remaining noncommittal on strain, at the cost of sailing past 4♥, is:*

**CRAIG ROBINSON:** 4♠. We should be close to slam. I will correct five of a minor to 5♥, and if partner then tries six of the other minor, I'll play 6♦.

**AL SHRIVE:** 4♠. North is likely to be 0=4=4=5 or something similar. Partner will know if we have the values for slam.

*The most common slam invitation was:*

**RICK OLANOFF:** 5♥. Slam is certainly possible.

**BILL SCHMIDT:** 5♥. Trying to put focus on trump quality. Partner has a spade void and at least eight points, all of which must fit well. I might take 12 tricks even if North's trumps are poor, but it's better to be conservative at matchpoints.

**SAMUEL DORFMAN:** 5♥. I expect to be doubling 6♠. *(Even at these colors, I would be shocked if the opponents weren't done bidding. - NS)*

HOWARD WACHTEL: 5♥. Too much to sign off in 4♥. Double or 4♠ would fail to show the heart fit. It's tempting to jump straight to 6♥, but that would have no play opposite normal North hands like:

♠x ♥Qxxx ♦KJxx ♣KQxx

*"Lead me not into temptation, I can find the way myself." – Rita Mae Brown. I honestly didn't expect anyone to go straight to slam, but two Panelists and two Solvers went for the Full Monty:*

**DON DALPE:** 6♥. No way to be sure how many spades partner has, since the non-vulnerable opponents might be playing with us. Partner must have a spade void or the ♥A to force the bidding to the three level. Second choice is 3NT.

**JAY APFELBAUM:** 6♥. Bidding what I think I can make.

**BOB BROWNE:** 6♥. With 4NT "undiscussed", I'll bid what I feel is reasonable. I expect partner to have more than a bare six HCP to force to the three level. As such, the ♥AQ and a minor suit king should give us a reasonable chance.

**BARRY PASSER:** 6♥. I should make this even with a bad heart split. Since neither 4♥ nor 5♥ is forcing, I don't see any way to investigate a grand slam without just making stuff up, like master solvers like to do!

*Barry rejects 4NT because he's not sure how partner will interpret it. A 5♣ reply could be showing some number of aces, or it could be natural with four hearts and a lot of clubs. Perhaps he has reason to worry, because our 4NT bidders were not exactly on the same page.*

**KARL BARTH:** 4NT. Seems like this should be "Old Black", and that will get us to 6♥ if partner has an ace. Actually, we have an excellent fielders' choice no matter what partner does. Would we mind a raise to 6NT or a pass? Probably not. How about a leap to six of a red suit? That'd be okay too. One thing's for sure: partner will know that we have stuff.

**BILL BURNETT:** 4NT. Balanced 18-19 with spades stopped sounds like a reasonable interpretation to me.

*Me too. I didn't want to enforce a treatment for 4NT because whatever I chose would be a source of contention. But, my regular partners know where I stand on this issue (which is probably why Bob Browne put "undiscussed" in quotes.) If we have no explicit fit, and 4NT is needed to show a balanced hand with significant extra values, then it's natural. To Barry Passer's point of what 5♣ by North would then show, it'd be a shapely playing hand, probably 0=4=3=6 or so, with enough values to have forced to the three level but not enough to shoot out a slam. Simple.*

*Anyway, if you take our eleven slam-inviter plus our four slam-bidders, you get a total of 15. That's still two short of the number of Club members who settle for game, a group that includes two-thirds of our Panelists. Hence, 3NT and 4♥ get the top awards this month. Let's let them argue this out.*

**SAUL & ROS TEUKOLSKY:** 3NT. We could be missing a slam. We could make more tricks in hearts. But, those spades scream notrump!

**CONNIE GOLDBERG:** 4♥. If my ♠3 were the eight-spot, notrump might seem more tempting. *(There's that word again. - NS.)*

**RUI MARQUES:** 3NT. Facing a very likely spade void in North's hand, and playing matchpoints, this hand looks like it will play much better in notrump than in hearts. I really want to bid 4NT, but being undiscussed, I'm not taking the chance.

**MICHAEL SHUSTER:** 4♥. Because the opponents have preempted, we can't show a distinction between distributional 4♥ calls like:

♠x ♥KJxx ♦AKJxxx ♣xx

...and power-based ones like our actual hand. In practice, it matters little, as both hands have similar trick-taking potential for game purposes. This hand is slam-negative anyway: there's too much ruffing to do, and too much dependency on partner holding specific fillers. No, I'm not interested in 3NT either.

**DOUGLAS DYE:** 3NT. I'll follow Hamman's Law. Partner was under some pressure to show his values, so he might not have long or strong hearts. If his double was based on very long, weak hearts, I trust him to correct to 4♥.

**RAY RASKIN:** 3NT. This gives the most power to the spade holding, and so has the best chance of making.

**BOB GRINWIS:** 4♥. Partner's negative double of 2♠ should assure that we have enough for game, but probably not enough for slam. North can bid on with extras.

**ANDY MUENZ:** 3NT. Notrump feels right on a couple of levels. First, our spade values duplicate partner's spade shortness. Second, while it's highly likely that partner has four or more hearts, there's always the chance he has something like a 0=3=4=6 eight-count and felt that a negative double was his best call.

**STEVE WHITE:** 4♥. Sure, we could have a slam even with our spade values duplicating partner's shortness, but I'll take a sure plus. I will hope that hearts will be worth a trick more than notrump.

**WILLIAM KILMER:** 3NT. Even at IMPs.

**CHRISTOPHER KAUFMAN:** 4♥. I hate to sell this hand short, but I don't really see what else I can do. Slam requires partner to really come through, and if he's *that* strong, he'll probably move forward over 4♥. Second choice would be 4♠, planning to follow up with 5♥, but I give us about a 10% chance of getting through that sequence without a misunderstanding.

**DAVE WACHSMAN:** 3NT. The key is to consider the bids that North *didn't* make: 3♣, 3♥, 3♠. Each would have been stronger and game-forcing. A negative double here is unlikely to be a six-loser hand or better, and the aggressive preemption by the opponents on a weak suit is a tipoff of bad breaks elsewhere. Nine tricks in notrump will be a lot easier than fulfilling any suit contract.

**BILL FOSTER:** 4♥. The auction may not be over. If the opponents persist to 4♠, I will double.

**BRUCE SCHWAIDELSON:** 4♥. 3NT looks pretty tempting (*and again! - NS.*), but I would bid 4♥ planning to double 4♠. Partner was under pressure when he made his negative double, so I'm not ready to get too excited about my hand.

*So much temptation everywhere. Notrump bidders are tempted to bid hearts. Heart bidders are tempted to try notrump. Game-bidders are tempted to invite slam, and slammers are tempted to settle for game. This problem has turned our genteel*

*D4MSC into a bad reality TV show, like Big Brother for middle-aged bridge players. OK, bad visual. Forget I mentioned that. To wrap up this discussion, let's return to the Blue Hen State where we started:*

**PETE FILANDRO:** 4♥. So much to say. This auction has made me ultra-conservative. Lots of queens and jacks, no side source of tricks, possible bad breaks in all suits, tons of spade losers which I can't expect to ruff completely, etc. Partner's negative double at that level usually shows eight or more HCP. If she had five hearts, a spade void, and as few as 10 HCP, she'd have happily chirped 3♥. Based on the opponents' bidding a weak suit so aggressively, they likely have useful values elsewhere, I would place North with about 8 HCP comprising the ♥Q, ♠Q, ♦J, and one minor suit king.

Here is the worst-case scenario, which I find very possible. RHO will rarely raise to 3♠ with defensive values and only three-low in spades. When I am East, I will have ♠Axx, and West will have made a weak jump overcall at favorable vulnerability on queen-sixth. Thus, West's compensating value will be one of the missing minor kings, usually the ♦K because it is expected to be well-placed. On a trump lead, or a spade for that matter, declarer will run out of tricks long before reaching twelve.

*I don't have the exact deal, unfortunately, but Pete's prediction of the four hands was pretty close. Partner held something like:*

♠-- ♥Axxx ♦J10x ♣Kxxxx

*A hair light, perhaps, but few of us would resist the, ahem, temptation of a negative double over 2♠. Hearts were four-one, clubs three-two, and the diamond king was indeed offside. It's not clear what contract is best, but one thing is for certain: if you took twelve tricks in hearts, you'd get a terrific matchpoint score whether you bid the slam or not.*

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠

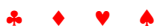
*Here's the leaderboard at the halfway point of the **2017 District 4 MSC Challenge**. Because your two lowest monthly scores will be dropped at the end of the year, the standings are based on your top four scores in the six contests thus far. 400 is therefore the max, and as you see nobody will be perfect this year. Many others are just off the board, and there's plenty of time to catch up.*

#### PANELISTS

1. Pete Filandro	390
Craig Robinson	390
3. Douglas Dye	380
Connie Goldberg	380
Rui Marques	380
Ed Shapiro	380
7. Don Dalpe	370
8. Bob & Joann Glasson	360
Michael Shuster	360
Tom Weik	360

#### SOLVERS

1. Al Shrive	380
Dave Wachsman	380
Steve White	380
4. Bill Foster	370
Bruce Schwaidelson	370
6. Mark Bolotin	360
Bob Browne	360
Bill Schmidt	360
9. Barry Cohen	340
Samuel Dorfman	340



*The District 4 Master Solvers' Club appreciates problem submissions of any sort. Our crack analytic staff can be reached at **d4msc@straguzzi.org**. Monthly problems plus our online submission form can be found at **<http://d4msc.straguzzi.org/>***