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Rules, Schmules and When to Break Them

This month's issue is being devoted to those situations where the best bid is not obvious and, worse, appears to violate a preconceived bridge 'rule'. We will study why the not so obvious bid is correct as well as explaining why the so-called bridge rule should not be followed. We will make an effort to list the examples in such a way that the most obvious ones come first. Don't be disappointed if you don't learn anything new for the first page or two. **Study the thinking involved in each situation.**

Responding to 1♣ with 4-4 in the red suits.

In our earliest bridge lessons we were taught a simple rule: with 4-card suits, responder should respond by bidding up-the-line. The theory was that if you bid your lower 4-card suit, partner could then bid the next 4-card suit (if he had four of them). Using this method the 4-4 fit could be found. With ♠ QT84 North 1 to the right, North should respond ♥ K984 1♥ to his partner's 1♣ opening. If they have ♦ KQ9 a 4-4 heart fit, South will know it now. If it ♣ T5 turns out that South has four spades (notice that North also has four spades), South will bid 1♠ after North's 1♥ and North would then support South's spades, revealing the 4-4 spade fit to all.

As bridge progressed, the 'rules' seemed to vary when responder's 4-cards suits were diamonds and a major. Some suggested bypassing diamonds completely and bidding the major. This has some merit but then they changed and the suggestion was made to always bypass diamonds to bid a major, even when the diamonds were long (5+). Now, everyone has their own idea; usually without any merit. It seems to our staff that bidding up the line works. The only time it might be a problem is with a weak hand since the opponents might outbid you before you named hearts if your response was 1♦. The solution is quite simple. With poor hands (sometimes referred to as one-bid hands), it makes sense (with four diamonds and a 4-card major) to simply respond in your best suit. What a strangely primitive concept. See the next column.

What would you respond to partner's 1♣ with each of these hands? Answers on page 8.

North 2 ♠ T84 ♥ J984 ♦ KQJ9 ♣ T5 2_____	North 3 ♠ 32 ♥ AKT8 ♦ T974 ♣ JT5 3_____	North 4 ♠ T98 ♥ AJT7 ♦ AJT3 ♣ 54 4_____
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Raising Partner's Weak 2-Bid

Back in our early days in bridge we were taught about certain invitational bids. In partnership auctions like, 1N - 2N; 1♠ - 2♠ - 3♠; or 1♥ - 2♥ - 3♥ the last bid invited partner to continue on to game with a maximum.

When partner opens a weak 2-bid, a raise to three of his suit is **NOT** invitational (2♠ - 3♠ or 2♥ - 3♥). There are two reasons for this: first, since the weak 2-bid shows a weak hand, the partner of the weak 2-bidder often wants to 'increase' the preempt (especially with three trump) since that increases the obstacles confronting the opponents; second, there is another way to invite game. The fact that there is another way to invite game is the point that many players can't seem to grasp.

The way to invite game is by responding 2N to the weak 2-bid. Most players use this bid to ask for a feature which is correct. What they don't realize is that by asking for a feature, they are showing a hand that might make game opposite the right maximum. In point of fact they are hoping that when the weak 2-bidder shows a feature, they will 'like' it and then bid game. However, quite often the weak 2-bidder has no feature but certainly wants to take a chance on game. Certainly with hands "A" and "B", the weak 2-bidder would want to bid game and, in fact, should jump to game once partner 'asks' for a feature with 2N.

North A ♠ AKT985 ♥ 6 ♦ JT985 ♣ 3	North B ♠ 3 ♥ AQT965 ♦ ♣ T98754
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What would you respond to partner's 2♠ bid with each of these hands? Answers on page 8.

North 5 ♠ AT96 ♥ AQ76 ♦ 3 ♣ 9875 5_____	North 6 ♠ QJ6 ♥ QJT7 ♦ A65 ♣ QT9 6_____	North 7 ♠ AJ82 ♥ KQJT8 ♦ 4 ♣ A75 7_____
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Opening 1 of a Major With a Bad 5-Card Suit

Rarely have the ‘rules’ of bridge indicated that one suit should be opened rather than another suit STRICTLY BECAUSE OF THE STRENGTH OF THE TWO SUITS. In minors, however, we often decide which suit to open based on suit quality. No one who has read this newsletter for more than a few months would have difficulty opening 1♣ with hand “C” and 1♦ with hand

North C
 ♠ A54
 ♥ KT5
 ♦ 5432
 ♣ AQJ

North D
 ♠ A54
 ♥ KT5
 ♦ AQJ
 ♣ 5432

“D”. Why? Simple. This writer has explained ad infinitum that in hand “C” you have ‘four’ clubs and ‘three’ diamonds while in hand “D” you have ‘four’ diamonds and ‘three’ clubs. What you have not heard before is that very weak 5-card majors should be treated as if they were 4-card suits. We recommend an opening bid of 1♣ with each of hands “E”

North E
 ♠ 98754
 ♥ AQ3
 ♦ T9
 ♣ AKT

North F
 ♠ QJ8
 ♥ J5432
 ♦ A2
 ♣ AQT

and “F”. Having opened 1♣, the bidding proceeds normally except that the 5-card major is treated as if it were a four card suit.

In “E”, North’s second bid would be 1♠, assuming South responded 1♦ or 1♥ to the 1♣ opening. Note that North would not repeat spades later in the auction. He simply treats the spades as if they were a 4-card suit.

What would you open with each of these hands? Answers on page 8.

North 8 ♠ T7643 ♥ AJ9 ♦ Q3 ♣ AK8 8_____	North 9 ♠ A3 ♥ 76532 ♦ AJ8 ♣ KJT 9_____	North 10 ♠ J9754 ♥ AQ3 ♦ A5 ♣ KQ8 10_____
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Bid-Em-Ups: Bid these with your partner. North is the dealer. Our auctions are on page 7. South’s hands are on page 4.

North 1 ♠ AKQJ86 ♥ K5 ♣ T8763 North 4 ♠ QJ83 ♥ AKQ ♦ QT943 ♣ 2	North 2 ♠ 6 ♥ AQT8532 ♦ AKQ4 ♣ 2 North 5 ♠ Q86 ♥ K984 ♦ KQ94 ♣ T5	North 3 ♠ J98 ♥ KQ3 ♦ KJ875 ♣ A2 North 6 ♠ AQJ3 ♥ 62 ♦ A863 ♣ QT7
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Rebidding 1N with a Singleton

Normally when the opening bidder’s second bid is 1N his partner should rightly assume that opener has a balanced opening bid. Yes, it is true that there are often other conclusions one should make: opener doesn’t have four of responder’s suit else he would have raised him; opener doesn’t have four spades, else he would bid them and even a few other conclusions might be made.

There are a small number of hands where the opener finds himself faced with an impossible rebid. He can’t repeat his opening bid suit; he can’t reverse for lack of strength; he can’t bid notrump because he has a singleton. Here is such a hand and the auction showing the first two bids. Clearly North “G” fulfills each of the above described conditions.

North G ♠ J ♥ AQT3 ♦ QJ4 ♣ KJ632	North South 1♣ 1♠ ?
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Unfortunately, North is not permitted to pass. Since he must bid, he must choose between the three actions.

The trick is to choose the ‘least offensive’ bid. In this case, rebidding clubs or reversing to 2H are each absurd, so that the only viable choice would be 1N (lying about the fact that you don’t have a singleton.) It’s not so bad because if partner happens to jump to 4S, at least your stiff is an honor (the jack.)

Sometimes the “rules” are impossible to abide by and you must choose the “best lie”, otherwise known as the “least of evils.” That is exactly what just happened in “G” above.

After you open with each of these hands, what is your bid after partner responds in your stiff? Keep in mind that some hands don’t fit our typical “rules”. When that happens, you break the “rules” and choose a schmule! (Hint: Which of these hands (11-13) is an example of a rule breaker? You should determine the best action.) Answers on page 8.

North 11 ♠ AT6 ♥ T ♦ QJT8 ♣ KQJT7 11_____	North 12 ♠ AQ3 ♥ Q ♦ AKJ95 ♣ KT54 12_____	North 13 ♠ A87 ♥ 5 ♦ KQT65 ♣ AT65 13_____
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Opening 3 With a Solid 7-Card Suit

A few comments must be made concerning opening preempts at the 3-level. The most important consideration when you open 3 of a suit is that you **do not** have an opening bid (your hand is not good enough to open 1 of your suit). What that usually means is that you don't have enough HCP to open a 1-bid even counting your extra points for suit length (not shortness).

There's a certain hand that is a true "rule breaker" when it comes to preempts. Solid seven card suits should **NEVER** be opened with a preempt. Instead, they should be opened with a 1-bid and repeated each time responder makes a forcing bid. In other words:

A hand with a solid 7-card suit should always open 1 of the suit.

It should be obvious that this is the correct approach. After all, how often does the opener supply seven tricks for 3N? The answer is, "Not too often." Of course, the most important aspect of this concept is that when your partner opens 3 of his suit, you know with certainty that the suit is not solid since if it were, the opening bid would not have been a preempt. With the North

North H	North	South	"H" hand to the left, what should North bid, if anything in response to his partner's 3♥ opening? Think about this for a moment.
♠ KQT4	?	3♥	
♥ T			
♦ AK87			
♣ AK43			

Certainly, 3N should not be bid. Unless you get super lucky, you will not be able to run partner's heart suit with only a singleton. You know your partner doesn't have a solid suit. However, since you have such a good hand you should bid 4♥.; It would be very surprising if partner couldn't make that.

What would you respond to partners 3♠ opening with each of these hands? Answers on page 8.

North 14	North 15	North 16
♠ AJ8	♠ Q4	♠ 7
♥ 4	♥ AJ98	♥ AKT
♦ AT9873	♦ A98	♦ AK765
♣ T84	♣ KQ65	♣ AJ65
14_____	15_____	16_____

Rebidding a 5-Card Suit

We all learn early in our bridge careers that whenever you rebid a suit it shows a 6-card (or possibly longer) suit. Since rebidding a suit shows six, many players ask, "How can I show partner that I have a 5-card suit?" This question is asked by players who open 1 of a minor (when they might actually have a 3-card suit) as well as responders who have a 5-card suit and wish to show it. Unfortunately, since rebidding a suit shows a 6-card suit, **THERE IS NO WAY TO SHOW A 5-CARD SUIT.** When you have a 5-card suit, the best you can do is **ask** your partner for 3-card support. We refer you to last month's *Bridge Sense* which was devoted to this topic.

The real question is, "When, if ever, can we break this 'rule'?" The answer depends, in part, on whether you are opener or responder. Sometimes opener violates the 'rule' and rebids his 5-card suit because it is a better bid than any other and the suit itself **looks** like a 6-card suit. Hand "I" is such a hand. After opening 1♣ and having partner respond 1♠, North has an easy 2♣ bid since "it is

a better bid than any other" and "the suit itself **looks** like a 6-card suit".

North I	North	South	Responder might break the rule with a strong 5-card suit that will not supply opener with many tricks (after opener rebids 1N. See hand "J"). It should be clear for North J
♠ 54	1♣	1♠	to rebid his hearts. In
♥ 32	?		notrump, if his partner doesn't
♦ K975			have the ace of hearts, North
♣ AKQJ6			will likely take one or two

North J	North	South	tricks since the defenders will hold off taking the ace of hearts until declarer has no more hearts. By making hearts trump, responder guarantees to contribute 4 tricks to the offense.
♠ 43	1♥	1N	
♥ KQJT2	?		
♦ 543			
♣ 432			

In each of these hands, what should you bid at your second turn? Partner (South) has opened 1 of a minor and has rebid 1N after your obvious response. Answers on page 8.

North 17	North 18	North 19
♠ 76	♠ QJT97	♠ Q54
♥ AJ9654	♥ 87	♥ AQ765
♦ 76	♦ K65	♦ T76
♣ J87	♣ T76	♣ 95
17_____	18_____	19_____

Bidding 3 of Our Suit in Competition and Not in Competition

There's a "rule" (principle) that all experienced players are familiar with. When you open a major and responder supports your major at the 2-level (1S - 2S or 1H - 2H), if the opener now bids 3 of the major opened, he is inviting game. The 3S or 3H bid asks responder to bid game (4S or 4H) with a maximum.

In a competitive auction, things change. Consider the auction below. If North knows he can't make 4S but

Auction			
W	N	E	S
	1♠	2♣	2♠
3♣	?		

would rather play in 3S than let the opponents play in 3C he wants to bid 3S in an effort to play there but he is worried that South might bid

4S. There is seemingly no way around this. Wrong, there is a solution. The solution is simple: in a competitive auction (which means ANY auction where the opponents have made any call other than pass) when opener bids three of the suit agreed upon IT IS ABSOLUTELY NOT INVITATIONAL. If opener wants to invite game, he bids a new suit or he doubles. Yes, doubling is a try for game not an effort to extract a penalty.

In each of the hands below, what should North bid assuming the auction has gone as shown above. Answers on page 8.

North 20	North 21	North 22
♠ AJ9653	♠ AKT975	♠ KJT76
♥ K76	♥ 5	♥ AT7
♦ KJ	♦ AJ96	♦ AQ4
♣ T6	♣ A2	♣ K5

20_____ 21_____ 22_____

Bid-Em-Ups: Bid these with your partner. North is the dealer. Our auctions are on page 7. North's hands are on page 2.

South 1	South 2	South 3
♠ A87	♠ KQ2	♠ AKQT2
♥ 7532	♥ K74	♥ 64
♦ QJ	♦ T975	♦ AQ9
♣ AKQ2	♣ QT7	♣ T53

South 4	South 5	South 6
♠ K65	♠ T92	♠ KT6
♥ 754	♥ T75	♥ KQ95
♦ AK65	♦ AT82	♦ T9
♣ AT9	♣ AQJ	♣ K962

4♥x is Takeout. and 4♠x is Penalty (Wrong)

Another "rule" we all learn early in our bridge lives is that a double of the opponent's opening bid is for takeout, even when that opening bid is a preempt. Somewhere along the line, many players changed the "rule" after opening preempts of 4♠. The headline at the top of this column explains the previous sentence. We feel we should explain why they play this way (then we'll explain why it's the wrong way to play). They play 4♥x is for takeout because there is "room" at the 4-level (partner can bid 4♠ if he has spades). When they open 4♠, there is no room at the 4-level so they play the double for penalties.

However, the thinking is wrong. Just because there is no room at the 4-level shouldn't change the meaning of the double. The player who doubles 4♠ is making a takeout double. What you should do is agree on a "shmule" for the partnership: the double of 4♠ is for takeout, **BUT RESPONDER NEVER BIDS AT THE 5-LEVEL UNLESS HE THINKS HE HAS A CHANCE TO MAKE WHAT HE BID.** Using the approach just described means that the rules for takeout doubles never change: the double of the opponent's opening is always takeout. The partner of the doubler always 'takes out' the double except if the opening bid was 4♠ and responder's response to his partner's double would take him to the 5-level. If that is the case, he should only take it North K out if he thinks he might make it...repeated for ♠ J8 emphasis. If you had North "K", you should ♥ T5 not bid at the 5-level if left hand opponent ♦ KT62 opened 4♠ and partner doubled. After all, ♣ A7532 making 5♣ is remote. However, with hand North L "L", North should bid 5♦ in response to his ♠ 3 partner's double of 4♠. Despite lacking many ♥ 2 HCP, it seems like there is a chance to make ♦ AJ76532 5♦. North "L" should bid it. ♣ QT65

In each of the hands below, what should North bid if partner doubled 4♥? If he doubled 4♠? Answers on page 8.

North 23	4♥x	North 24
♠ JT86	23_____	♠ 4
♥ 54	24_____	♥ A7
♦ A5	4♠x	♦ AQT873
♣ T8752	23_____	♣ JT54
	24_____	

North 25	4♥x	North 26
♠ 5	25_____	♠ 2
♥ 4	26_____	♥ 2
♦ AQ875	4♠x	♦ AK97642
♣ J87653	25_____	♣ A762
	26_____	

A Guest Column

by Jim "Dr. J" Sternberg, Bridge Sense Editor

Understanding the Impossible Major

So you sit down to play with a new partner and the auction goes:

Opener	Responder
1N	2♣
2♠	3♥ (1)

Then on the next hand it goes: How did you do? Did you get these right?

Opener	Responder
2N	3♣
3♥	3♠ (2)

The other two auctions are shown. What do all of these auctions have in common with each other? The answer is that either you or your partner have made a bid that seems to make no sense. How could you have this major (the last bid in each auction) you are now bidding. Did you forget to transfer to this major initially? Obviously not. So what's going on?

Opener	Responder
1N	2♣
2♥	3♠ (3)

Opener	Responder
2N	3♣
3♠	4♥ (4)

Years ago experts learned that on certain hands there was no intelligent way to "try" for slam. Here's one such hand. Your partner opens 2 NT and your hand is shown right (West). Partner responds 3♠ to your Stayman. Don't you think this hand is too good to just bid 4♠ but not good enough to insist upon slam? If partner had East 1, you would be happy you didn't get higher than 4♠. However, if partner had East 2, a grand slam in spades is virtually cold, needing only a trump break.

East 1	East 2
♠ K632	♠ AKJ9
♥ AKQ	♥ A32
♦ AQJ	♦ A32
♣ Q32	♣ KQ2

The idea is for the responder to let the opener decide whether to go on to slam. So, responder makes an impossible bid (a bid that makes no sense). This bid that "makes no sense" is a bid of the major that has not yet been mentioned. It makes no sense because if you really had the other major you would have transferred to it to begin with. A convention has been created that says "my hand is too good to jump to game in your Stayman response but not strong enough to go directly to slam by myself. I need you to help decide. So, if you go back to

the four auctions at the top of the previous column, the last bid by responder shows a slam try in the suit just bid by opener.

Usually your hand is balanced. With a side singleton and a slam try, responder 'splinters' (jumps in his singleton) after the Stayman hit. See just below.

North	Auction	South
♠ AQ3	W N E S	♠ KJ87
♥ KQ87		♥ AJT9
♦ T543		♦ 2
♣ AQ		♣ KT87
	*Splinter in support of hearts	

On the hand shown above, slam in hearts is cold. If, however, South's diamonds and clubs were reversed, South would have splintered in clubs and North would have realized he had the wrong hand.

Summary: there are 4 possible auctions suggesting slam in partner's suit as shown in the left hand column. We take this occasion to point out that in auction 3, the 3♠ bid which shows slam interest happens to also be the bid used to show a spade splinter. Since it can't show both, experts play that it is a heart slam try but the splinter in spades can't be shown. When responder makes this 3♠ slam try, if he happens to have a stiff spade, it is a coincidence.

When these auctions occur after a 2NT opening, responder must be very careful when it comes to showing splinter bid slam tries. The reason is obvious: you must force the bidding to the 5-level.

Opener	Responder
2N	3♣
3♥	4♠, 5♣, 5♦
The last three bids are splinters in support of hearts.	

Opener	Responder
2N	3♣
3♠	5♣, 5♦, 5♥
The last three bids are splinters in support of spades.	

Of course, after the "impossible" major, subsequent 4 NT bids are RKCB since you have agreed upon a trump suit.

So, remember to discuss this "impossible" sequence with your regular partner and you will be bidding some slams that would be otherwise "impossible"

Experts have a secret to which anyone can become privy. **They count.** They count suit length, distribution, and HCP. It's not easy. Keep at it...it's worth it.

North ♠ 432 ♥ AK2 ♦ KT32 ♣ 763	Auction W N E S W P 1♠ 2♣ P 2♠* P 3♣ All pass Opening lead: ♠T	South ♠ Q65 ♥ Q654 ♦ A ♣ KQJ92
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First a word concerning the auction. North's 2♠ cuebid means that he has a good hand (10+ points) in support of clubs, the suit of his partner's overcall. It should not be played any other way, especially by a passed hand. South had a minimum and therefore retreated to 3♣ which became the final contract.

South could tell immediately that West's opening lead of the ♠T was either a doubleton or a singleton. Now sit in the South chair. You would be correct in assuming that East will cash two rounds of spades and give West his spade ruff. We will tell you now that West leads a diamond after ruffing the third round of spades. Plan the play!

It looks as if everything is under control. Just draw the trump and throw your fourth heart on the king of diamonds. That is precisely what the actual declarer was thinking when he won the ace of diamonds, made a careless play and wound up going down. What careless play did the declarer make?

It is interesting to note that there are two possible careless plays on this hand. The first would be to cross to the dummy with a heart and try to cash the king of diamonds so that you can throw your heart loser away. The reason that this is careless is that the king of diamonds might get ruffed and the hearts might not break and suddenly you have a heart loser. Yes, we know that that is remote, but why take such a careless risk? After all, there is no rush to discard the potential heart loser. The second careless play is quite common. Check out the current status of the North-South hands to the right. It is quite common, yet extremely careless as we shall see, for South to lead a high club out of his hand from the position shown right. If South does this, the next page shows the new position after East wins the king of clubs with the ace (this time including the West hand).

If East returns a heart or a diamond, everything will be "hunky dorry". With a diamond back by East, South throws his losing heart or simply ruffs low and proceeds to remove the last two trump.

North ♠ ♥ AK2 ♦ KT3 ♣ 76	South ♠ ♥ Q654 ♦ ♣ QJ92	West ♠ ♥ JT98 ♦ 65 ♣ T8
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Exactly the same procedure with a heart back. So, you ask, what is all this stuff about playing carelessly?

Here is the answer to that question. Suppose that East returns a spade after winning the ace of clubs. South must lose another trick and go down one. Why? Take a look. If South ruffs low, then West overruffs.

Should South ruff high, West discards and his ten of clubs will eventually win a trick. This situation has a name: it is called an "uppercut".

South will go down but he could have prevented it. How? By not leading the king of clubs out of his hand. Instead, he should have led a heart to the dummy and now lead a club from dummy toward his hand. East would win the ace per force and now South can play a low club from his hand. The new position is similar to the one above. The only real difference is that now South has ♣KQJ9 in his hand instead of ♣QJ92. As you can see, East can no longer defeat the contract. Even if he tries to "uppercut" South by leading a spade, it will not work. South can simply ruff high with any of his club honors and then draw West's remaining trump with his other two club honors. Careful play (cross to dummy and lead a heart toward the South hand in case East has a singleton ace of clubs) is rewarded with a good score.

This hand is exemplative of what is generally considered proper technique. The guiding principle is "lead toward strength". In principle the idea is to get the opponent to win the trick without capturing one of your honors. This is the exact opposite of what you are trying to accomplish when you are on defense where your objective is to capture one of your opponents high cards when you win the trick. The point to the hand above is that perhaps East (the opening bidder) will be forced to take his ace of clubs when the suit is led for the first time. If that turns out to be the case then South should clearly be leading low from the dummy toward his hand. If the first lead results in South winning the trick, it often behooves South to return to the North hand to repeat the process, provided that entries are available.

North ♠ 432 ♥ AK2 ♦ KT32 ♣ 763	South ♠ Q65 ♥ Q654 ♦ A ♣ KQJ92	West ♠ T8 ♥ JT98 ♦ 765 ♣ T854	East ♠ AKJ97 ♥ 73 ♦ QJ984 ♣ A
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North 1	Auction 1				South 1
♠	W	N	E	S	♠ A87
♥ AKQJ86	P	1♥	P	2♣	♥ 7532
♦ K5	P	3♣	P	3♥	♦ QJ
♣ T8763	P	3♠	P	4♣	♣ AKQ2
	P	6♥	All pass		

North's 3♠ bid is a cuebid showing a spade control. The fact that South now cuebid clubs was encouraging to North, especially since he knew that South's heart holding was quite meager. North correctly inferred that South had very good clubs. Perhaps North should have investigated further since South might have had the ace of diamonds rather than the ace of spades. In that case, a grand slam would have been cold. On the other hand, South might have cuebid the ace of diamonds if he had it. In any event, it's a good slam to reach.

North 4	Auction 4				South 4
♠ QJ83	W	N	E	S	♠ K65
♥ AKQ	P	1♦	P	2♦*	♥ 754
♦ QT943	P	2♥	P	2N	♦ AK65
♣ 2	P	3♠	P	4♣	♣ AT9
	P	4♥	P	6♦	
	All pass	* Inverted minor			

South showed a good hand (limit raise or better) with his 2♦ bid. North's 2♥ bid was intended as a strength showing bid not as a length showing bid since South was known not to have four hearts. South 2N could not be passed, by partnership agreement. North showed the spade strength next and South cuebid 4♣. Once North showed more heart strength via the 4♥ cuebid, South jumped to slam. This is also a very tough hand on which to get to slam. South correctly judged that by bidding three suits, North would not be balanced. Also, North did not sign-off in 3♦ when he could have.

North 2	Auction 2				South 2
♠ 6	W	N	E	S	♠ KQ2
♥ AQT8532	P	1♥	P	2♥	♥ K74
♦ AKQ4	P	4N	P	5♦*	♦ T975
♣ 2	P	5♥	All pass		♣ QT7
	*Keycard response (1 or 4)				

This is truly a Blackwood hand as long as you are playing Keycard Blackwood. Notice how the king of trump has as much value as any ace. Also it should be pointed out that if you do not play Keycard Blackwood, you would not know what to do if partner had only one ace, since you would not know whether or not he also had the king of trump. Keycard Blackwood is an invaluable tool which should be added to your arsenal if you do not already use it. On this hand North, knows to stop in 5♥.

North 5	Auction 5				South 5
♠ Q86	W	N	E	S	♠ T92
♥ K984	P	P	P	1♣	♥ T75
♦ KQ94	P	1♦(♥)	All pass		♦ AT82
♣ T5					♣ AQJ

North's response to the opening bid depends on partnership style and is reflected in the bidding box with two possible bids listed. The key is the third seat 1♣ opening bid by South. We do not like opening the bidding without an opening bid, even in third seat. If we do open in third seat with a hand with which we would not open in first seat, we bid the suit we want partner to lead. If we do not have an opener and we do not have a suit to offer as a lead director, believe it or not, we do not open. Notice our choice of 1♣ rather than 1♦ on this hand.

North 3	Auction 3				South 3
♠ J98	W	N	E	S	♠ AKQT2
♥ KQ3	P	1♦	P	1♠	♥ 64
♦ KJ875	P	1N	P	2♣*	♦ AQ9
♣ A2	P	2♠	P	4♠	♣ T53
	* New Minor Forcing				

South might try for slam after North's 2♠ bid confirmed an 8-card fit. He might have bid 3♦, but we have been hard-pressed to conjure up an auction that would get them to slam. In fact we could think of only one scenario where North-South might be able to intelligently get to slam. This would require that North-South be playing strong jump shift responses. South could then respond 2♠ (strong) to North's opening bid and later bid diamonds, after North supports his spades. Perhaps North could envision South's hand and drive to slam. Not impossible. In any event, if you and your partner did not get to this slam, you should not be concerned. This is truly a tough one to reach.

North 6	Auction 6				South 6
♠ AQJ3	W	N	E	S	♠ KT6
♥ 62	P	1♦	P	1♥	♥ KQ95
♦ A863	P	1♠	P	2N*	♦ T9
♣ QT7	P	?	* Not forcing		♣ K962

Most play this secondary jump to 2N as invitational, since with a better hand you could bid 3N. This is not the same as a response of 2N to an opening bid, which our staff unanimously plays is game forcing (13+). The problem on this hand is North's. Should he raise to 3N or pass? Although he has only 13 points, the touching spade honors might justify a raise to 3N. We would pass the 2N bid in matchpoints. Even looking at the two hands it is not clear what to do. If you knew that your partner would guess the jack of clubs, then you should definitely raise to 3N. At IMPS, we would want to be in game...but we say that on almost every hand. In matchpoints we like going plus on hands like this, so we advise passing 2N.

Answers

1. 1♥. Simple up-the-line bidding with 4-4 in the majors.
2. 1♦. Better bid diamonds in case left hand opponent competes and gets the hand. You don't want a heart lead!
3. 1♥. Same reason as #2 above but hearts should be bid.
4. 1♦. Up-the-line bidding with good hands. If the opponents compete in spades, you will double at your next turn to show a good hand.
5. 4♠. Probably won't make it but let them decide. They do have more HCP than your side.
6. 3♠. Not invitational, blocking.
7. 2N. If partner shows a heart feature, we can bid a slam.
8. 1♣. Normal bid with a '4-card' spade suit.
9. 1♣. Normal bid with a '4-card' heart suit.
10. Normally we advise not opening 1N with a 5-card major. However, this spade suit is a '4-card' suit. Open 1N.
11. 2♣. We like a rebid of the suit that looks like a 6-card suit. If you opened 1♦, you are plain wrong. Longest suit first whenever possible.
12. 2N. Despite the stiff Q, or because of it, we like 2N. A jump shift to 3♣ would not be wrong.
13. 2♣. Nothing special here, simply natural bidding.
14. 4♠ is our bid. We probably won't make it (partner has a weak hand) but we want to make it harder for the opponents.
15. 3N or 4♠. It looks as if either contract might make.
16. 4♠. Not much chance to make 3N since we know partner does not have a solid suit.
17. 2♥. Obvious rebid of your 6-card suit.
18. 2♠. Your hand may be vitally worthless in notrump. Break the 'rule' and bid 2S with your weak hand and good 5-card suit. You can certainly take three spade tricks if spades are trump.
19. Pass. No reason to rebid a bad 5-card suit. Yes, you might miss your 5-3 fit but you are guaranteed to miss your 5-2 fit by passing.
20. 3♠. A must bid but partner must understand that he is not being asked to bid 4S. Responder should pass.
21. 4♠. What else?
22. x. This double is a try for game. It usually shows a balanced hand that hopes partner has a maximum and can bid game.
- 4♥x 23. 4♠. Easy
- 4♠x 23. Pass. Can't bid at the 5-level with this hand.
- 4♥x 24. 5♦. Might miss a slam but that's why they pre-empt.
- 4♠x 24. 5♦. see last sentence.
- 4♥x 25. 4N. two lower suits.
- 4♠x 25. 4N. two lower suits.
- 4♥x 26. 6♦. Let's take a chance.
- 4♠x 26. 6♦. Let's take a chance.

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