

Quantitative -- Problem

Board 8

West Deals

None Vul



♠ A 7 5
♥ K J 10 9 6
♦ K 9 8 2
♣ Q

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	4 NT
Pass	?		

Join us for this deal in the Truscott/USPC Senior Swiss Teams event (IMP scoring).

After a major-suit opening, the strong 2/1 response provides a solid framework for the auction. Not so, for the one spade response to one heart. Our partnership has two agreements that help:

1. The 1 ♠ response promises Q-10-x-x, any five cards, or better.
2. If responder has game-forcing strength, 1 ♠ promises a 5-card suit. (With only four, bid a minor suit.)

Raising to 2 ♠ would be a fine choice, since we know we have a playable fit there. However, we chose 2 ♦, because a 5-2 fit in our chunky suit may play better. We should have a better hand to intend bidding 2 ♠ over a 2 ♥ preference by partner.

Partner invites slam with a quantitative 4 NT. What now?

Board 8
West Deals
None Vul

Quantitative -- Solution

		♠ K Q 10 3 2	
		♥ A 8	
		♦ A Q	
		♣ K J 5 4	
♠ 8 6			♠ J 9 4
♥ Q 5 2			♥ 7 4 3
♦ J 10 7 5			♦ 6 4 3
♣ 10 8 6 2			♣ A 9 7 3
		♠ A 7 5	
		♥ K J 10 9 6	
		♦ K 9 8 2	
		♣ Q	

NS 6N; NS 6♠; NS 6♥; NS 5♦; NS 5♣; Par +990: NS 6N=

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	4 NT
Pass	5 ♠	Pass	6 ♠

All pass

6 ♠ by South

Made 6 — NS +980

For the jump to 4 NT, responder should have about 19 HCP and a club holding usefully better than an unsupported ace or king. The ♣ Q is a fine card. Without agreement [2], we should explore for the best strain by bidding out our shape, in case responder has a fifth spade. Since North has (better than) game values, we know that they do. Whether we choose 5 ♠ or 6 ♠, we'll reach the fine slam.

Without agreement [2], it would be reasonable, but more complicated, for responder to use methods to look for 3-card spade support at the two level. The fitting value of the ♣ Q might not become apparent.

Spade Game -- Problem

Board 14
 South Deals
 None Vul

♠ 8
 ♥ Q 8 5
 ♦ K J 10 4 3
 ♣ J 5 3 2



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 NT
Pass	2 ♥ ¹	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	2 NT	Pass	4 ♠
All pass			
1. Spades.			

Continuing the Truscott/USPC Senior Swiss Teams event (IMP scoring), choose the opening lead.

Board 14
 East Deals
 None Vul

Spade Game -- Solution

		♠ A 5 3	
		♥ J 7 6	
		♦ 9 7 5	
		♣ K Q 7 6	
♠ Q J 9 6 2			♠ K 10 7 4
♥ A 10 3			♥ K 9 4 2
♦ Q 6 2			♦ A 8
♣ 9 4			♣ A 10 8
		♠ 8	
		♥ Q 8 5	
		♦ K J 10 4 3	
		♣ J 5 3 2	

EW 3♠; EW 2N; EW 2♥; NS 1♦; NS 1♣; Par -140; EW 2♠+1

West	North	East	South
		1 NT	Pass
2 ♥ ¹	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
2 NT	Pass	4 ♠	All pass

1. Spades.

The goal here, with IMP scoring, is to set the contract, with little concern for overtricks. The author chose an aggressive heart lead, which provided opener with the game-going trick, plus a club discard, making five.

The lead of a club is best this time, but could have blown up a trick in that suit, if partner held ♣ Q-x-x or even K-x-x. Leading from a king is even more risky, and a diamond lead would cost a trick on this deal.

The opponents have reached game by an invitational sequence, and neither opponent has indicated an outside source of tricks. With any form of scoring, it is correct to make a passive lead, if possible. While a trump lead, especially a singleton, is not passive, it's the least aggressive and is likely to work.

Since we lead second highest in trump, North can identify the ♠ 8 as a probable singleton, normally an inferior lead. Wake up! South should have a vulnerable holding in all three side suits. Win the ♠ A, get the ♣ K onto the table, and the contract can no longer be made. (If North instead switches to a diamond, declarer can rise with the ♦ A, finish drawing trump, lose a heart, and dump dummy's club loser on the fourth heart.)

On the right day, any of the three side suit leads could be best. It seems normal that only one of them actually sets the contract, not good odds.

Two Club System -- Problem

Board 17

North Deals

None Vul



♠ K Q 3 2

♥ A Q 9 4

♦ A K J

♣ A K

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

1. Holds at least an ace, king or two queens.

Continuing the Truscott/USPC Senior Swiss Teams event (IMP scoring), partner's 2 ♦ response was forcing to game. We play that a 2 ♥ response would show a bust: no top honors, except possibly one queen. Over the negative 2 ♥ response, we would have had to jump to 3 NT on this hand, thereby compromising any investigations into another strain, a rare but serious defect.*

The main alternative system uses 2 ♦ as a waiting bid. Over that, 2 ♥ is the birthright convention, devised by Eric Kokish to cure the 3 NT-jump defect. It shows either hearts or a game-forcing balanced hand. Responder bids 2 ♠, and opener either bids two-forcing-notrump or, with primary hearts, anything else. (Suit bids other than 3 ♥ are forcing.)

The 2 ♥ bust system comes into its own when opener has an unbalanced hand. With 2 ♦ waiting, with or without birthright, a broke responder must employ the second negative, typically the cheaper of a minor suit or 3 NT (the "cheaper minor" method). The immediate 2 ♥ bust avoids the need for a second negative, which many players dislike.

How are we doing so far? Are you happy with our 2 ♥ bust system, or would you rather be playing 2 ♦ waiting and birthright? Does it matter on this deal?

* On the up side, we play the Parrish convention, over 2 ♥: opener's 2 ♠ rebid asks responder to bid 2 NT, over which opener will make a non-forcing bid in any long suit.

** Whenever our system has a path to two-forcing-notrump, openers jump to 3 NT should show a hand with a long, strong suit and stoppers all around, a secondary advantage.

Board 17
 North Deals
 None Vul

Two Club System -- Solution

♠ 10 9 8 5		♠ A 7 6
♥ J 6 3		♥ 10 8 5
♦ Q 9 8 2		♦ 10 6
♣ 5 2		♣ 10 7 6 4 3
	W	
	N	
	E	
	S	
		♠ J 4
		♥ K 7 2
		♦ 7 5 4 3
		♣ Q J 9 8
		♠ K Q 3 2
		♥ A Q 9 4
		♦ A K J
		♣ A K

S 5N; NS 5♠; NS 5♥; N 4N; NS 4♣; NS 3♦; Par +460: S 3N+2

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2 ♣
Pass	2 ♦ ¹	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 NT	Pass	4 NT

All pass

1. Holds at least an ace, king or two queens.

4 NT by South

Lead: ♠ 10

Down 1 — NS -50

The two systems each have their advantages and disadvantages. Playing matchpoint pairs, either system is fine overall, since 2 ♣ openings are infrequent and each board has the same value.

The 2 ♦ positive response established a game force, so I bid 2 NT. Responder then had "systems on" to find the correct contract. So far, so good. Over 3 NT, I then bid one more, in case partner had 7 HCP or more. Had dummy contained the ♥ K or any missing queen and jack -- assuring a second entry to dummy -- 6 NT would have been an attractive contract. However, on this deal, I could not find the elusive tenth trick in 4 NT, and finished one down. Yes, I could have passed 3 NT or made 4 NT, but I did not. Our system contributed to an adverse game swing in a manner I had not appreciated before.

Playing 2 ♦ waiting and birthright, I would bid 2 ♥ over 2 ♦, promising either a game-forcing balanced hand, or hearts. Responder would bid 2 ♠, and I would bid two-forcing-notrump. Same as before, right?

Wrong. Using birthright and 2 NT would have already told partner about our game values, so with "only" 26 HCP, we would pass 3 NT and make it. Instead of losing a 10-IMP swing (sinking the match), it would have been 0 or 1 IMPs.

2 ♦ with birthright is significantly superior for balanced hands, especially for IMP scoring.

Send a Man -- Problem

Board 6

West Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 6 2
♥ J 10 7 3 2
♦ A 6 5
♣ J 7 3



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♣	1 ♥	4 ♠
All pass			
4 ♠ by South			

Join me for the 1st final session of the Wernher Open Pairs (matchpoint scoring) at the North American Bridge Championships in Philadelphia. At this vulnerability, we cannot afford to raise partner's hearts, even with 5-card support and an ace. North buys the contract at 4 ♠.

Unwilling to risk a lead in any other suit, we lead the ♠ 2 (second highest in trump). Declarer wins in hand and plays a second round of trump; partner's discard reveals declarer's massive straight flush: ♠ A-K-Q-J-10-9-8-7.

Declarer now plays a third round of trump. We play upside-down signals, with a relatively unusual priority to showing count. Plan the defense. What should be our discard, and why?

Whatever we chose to discard, declarer now leads the ♣ Q. What do we play, smoothly, on that?

Board 6

West Deals

E-W Vul

Send a Man -- Solution

		♠ 5 4	
		♥ A K	
		♦ K 10 8	
		♣ K 9 8 6 4 2	
♠ 6 2			♠ 3
♥ J 10 7 3 2			♥ Q 9 8 6 5 4
♦ A 6 5			♦ Q J 2
♣ J 7 3			♣ A 10 5
		♠ A K Q J 10 9 8 7	
		♥ —	
		♦ 9 7 4 3	
		♣ Q	

N 5N; NS 5♠; S 4N; NS 4♦; EW 2♥; NS 2♣; Par +460: N 3N+2

West	North	East	South
Pass	1 ♣	1 ♥	4 ♠

All pass

4 ♠ by South

Down 4 — NS -200

1. Declarer has made a mistake, letting us plan the defense and send a signal to partner. We are entitled to ponder the defense when the monster spade suit is clarified. It's best to notify the table that time is needed to think. Had declarer not cashed the third trump "just in case," the situation would have increased ethical possibilities.

Partner usually has at least five hearts for the vulnerable overcall. Therefore, declarer has one or two discards available on the ♥ A-K. The risk is that partner may duck the ♣ A. At the table, I discarded the ♥ J, showing an odd number of hearts, without the ♥ Q. A good effort, but not good enough.

It's important to be prepared for a club lead, so that we can play smoothly. Declarer has five cards outside of the spade suit. We know that at most two are likely to be losers, with ♥ A-K and ♦ K on dummy. If declarer has the ♣ A, the only trick we can get is the ♦ A, even if declarer has no hearts and the singleton ♣ A. In that case, the opponents have missed a slam -- we'll get a decent board, even if declarer takes 13 tricks.

2. Assuming that partner has the ♣ A, we do best to follow smoothly to the first club with the ♣ J, showing an odd number of cards. If we don't follow smoothly, partner will have unauthorized information that our play is not a singleton; and a good result may no longer be possible. Unprepared at the table, I followed smoothly with the ♣ 7; partner could not tell whether my holding was ♣ J-7 or J-7-3, and ducked the ♣ Q. I had sent a boy to do a man's job.

All this information is available at the time of the discard -- our best discard is the ♣ J, showing an odd number of cards. Then when declarer leads the ♣ Q, we follow with the ♣ 3. Partner should know to win this trick and lead a diamond.

This was a tough problem at the table. It can be difficult to tell when to invest major time and energy considering a play. My autopilot plays to these tricks left partner on a guess.

Buttinski -- Problem

Board 11
 South Deals
 None Vul



♠ 9 5 3
 ♥ A 10 7
 ♦ Q 10 8 3 2
 ♣ 7 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
1 NT	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	Pass	?

Join me for the 2nd final session of the Wernher Open Pairs at the NABC in Philadelphia.

On this auction, partner is quite likely to have diamonds. East has nine cards in the majors, and clubs are West's better minor.

My Buttinski rule requires 8 HCP to enter the auction with a non-jump bid. Is this situation an exception?

Board 11
 South Deals
 None Vul

Buttinski -- Solution

		♠ A 8 2	
		♥ Q 3 2	
		♦ J 9 7 6	
		♣ A 10 3	
♠ Q J			♠ K 10 7 6 4
♥ K J 8			♥ 9 6 5 4
♦ K 4			♦ A 5
♣ K 9 8 6 5 4			♣ Q J
		♠ 9 5 3	
		♥ A 10 7	
		♦ Q 10 8 3 2	
		♣ 7 2	

EW 3♠; EW 2♥; EW 3♣; EW 1N; NS 1♦; Par -140; EW 2♠+1

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
1 NT	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	Pass	3 ♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All pass
3 ♦× by South			
Down 2 — NS -300			

I flew in and bought a 5% result. Partner would have doubled 1 ♣ with a 4-3-3-3 14-count, so we probably have less than half the total high card strength.

Even with nine trumps, we cannot get a ruff in the short hand to take the eighth trick that would win the board. Unlucky? No. Assume East has exactly five spades and four hearts, the most likely shape. Opener has fewer than four hearts, so partner has at least three of them. West *may* have three spades, but a holding of two spades is at least as likely. It is to be expected that there will be no ruff in dummy, whether we catch three or four diamonds there.

When the opponents find a fit and stop at the two level, we need to consider reopening, with 8 or more HCP. The opponents probably do not have a fit, and we have only 6 HCP. The third spade in partner's hand is a crucial loser for us.

Good bridge requires focus and thought, not winging it -- or in this case, simply following the Buttinski rule.

Board 16
 South Deals
 N-S Vul

Four Quick Tricks -- Problem

♠ A K J 9 7 3
 ♥ 3 2
 ♦ 6 4
 ♣ J 7 5



♠ 4
 ♥ A K J 10 8 5
 ♦ Q J 9
 ♣ Q 10 6

West <i>Gary</i>	North	East <i>Pete</i>	South
			1 ♥
Dbl	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♥
Dbl	Pass	2 NT ¹	Pass
3 ♣	3 ♥	All pass	

1. Pick a minor.
 3 ♥ by South

Join my opponent for the 2nd final session of the Wernher Open Pairs at the NABC in Philadelphia.

West leads the ♦ K, showing the ace or shortness. The defenders play upside-down signals, primarily showing count. East's ♦ 2 shows an even number.

Plan the play, and be specific, as West cashes his winners: ♦ A (diamonds should be 4-4), ♣ K (standard), and ♣ A; East shows an even number of clubs as well. West then produces a small spade.

Board 16
South Deals
N-S Vul

Four Quick Tricks -- Solution

		♠ A K J 9 7 3	
		♥ 3 2	
		♦ 6 4	
		♣ J 7 5	
♠ Q 8 6 5 2			♠ 10
♥ Q			♥ 9 7 6 4
♦ A K 5 3			♦ 10 8 7 2
♣ A K 2			♣ 9 8 4 3
		♠ 4	
		♥ A K J 10 8 5	
		♦ Q J 9	
		♣ Q 10 6	

NS 3N; NS 3♥; NS 2♠; EW 1♦; NS 1♣; Par +500; EW 4♦×-3

West	North	East	South
<i>Gary</i>		<i>Pete</i>	
			1 ♥
Dbl	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♥
Dbl	Pass	2 NT ¹	Pass
3 ♦	3 ♥	All pass	

1. Pick a minor.

3 ♥ by South

Down 1 — NS -100

Gary's careful defense prevented any shenanigans in the spade suit. 12+ HCP for opener, 9 for dummy, and his own 18 totaled at least 39. Pete is broke. Gary exited safely in spades, burning that entry to dummy.

Declarer rose with the ♠ A and correctly took the trump finesse -- one down.

For the first double, Gary might have only three spades (3=3=4=3 shape) -- but for the second double, it's surely four (or a bad five). He did not need the ♥ Q for his doubles, so the odds are 3:2 or 4:1 of finding that card in the East hand, perhaps 70%.

Declarer had carefully unblocked the ♣ Q-10 under Gary's top clubs, to create a second entry to dummy. The plan was to finesse in hearts, reenter dummy with the ♣ J, and hook again, thereby picking up Q-x-x or Q-x-x-x.

The opponents were unable to find a penalty double of 3 ♦, which would probably have given them at least the 85% result that we achieved.

In or Out? -- Problem

Board 19
South Deals
E-W Vul



♠ A J 10 5 2

♥ 6 3

♦ J 5

♣ J 10 6 3

West

North

East

South

?

We continue in the 2nd final session of the Wernher Open Pairs at the NABC in Philadelphia.

Pass or bid?

Board 19
South Deals
E-W Vul

In or Out? -- Solution

♠ K 9 7 6 4			
♥ 9 8 7			
♦ 10 9 6			
♣ 9 2			
♠ Q 8 3			♠ —
♥ K 5 2			♥ A Q J 10 4
♦ K 8 7 4			♦ A Q 3 2
♣ A 7 4			♣ K Q 8 5
♠ A J 10 5 2			
♥ 6 3			
♦ J 5			
♣ J 10 6 3			

EW 7♦; EW 6♥; EW 5♣; EW 2N; NS 1♠; Par -1400: NS 7♠×-6

West	North	East	South
			2 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	4 NT ¹	Pass

5 ♦ All pass

1. 3-suit takeout.

5 ♦ by West

Made 7 — EW +640

Stew Rubenstein, who often plays with professionals, including GLM Zach Grossack, insists that it's right to get in there, non-vulnerable at matchpoints. Gary has it from World Grand Master Disa Eythorsdottir that a weak two bid is OK in a 5-card suit, when holding a 4-card suit on the side. That's the way Gary and I play, but usually with a chunkier suit. Regular partner Andrew Hanes justly complained that we usually got a bad board when I opened such a hand; I have dialed it back. My current plan is to only open 2 ♠ on such a hand at favorable vulnerability. This one earned a 76% score.

The opponents could not sort out a small slam, let alone the easy (as the cards lie) grand slam.*

Preempts work!

* These opponents noted that their double of 4 ♠ would be penalty (standard); we use it as takeout (standard through 4 ♥), as recommended by world champion Mike Lawrence. For us, 4 NT would show two places to play. This plan would have little bearing on the result on this board, unless a 4 NT response to a double were assigned an artificial meaning, such as lebensohl -- and both partners remembered.