

nor-suit cards than only 10. Because of what East knows West has, North may have a tactical motivation for bidding four spades with a hand that qualifies for a stronger raise—but if so, that’s his business; South expects North to have a decent *preemptive* game raise and should act accordingly.

In general, regardless of vulnerability, a side that has reached game without indicating the balance of power is not involved in forcing situations. Here, one might consider an exception to that principle based on the opponents’ having passed initially and then contracted for 11 tricks, apparently largely on distributional strength. As South opened in fourth position, everyone expects North to have a good hand within the category of preemptive raises. West has made an ostensibly weak defensive bid. Do these special circumstances justify treating a pass by South as forcing?

ROBERT LIPSITZ: “Pass. I’m tempted to bid five hearts, but that would be too aggressive. A pass must be forcing, as both opponents are passed hands.”

ZIA: “Pass. Don’t know what to do. Is this forcing? No.”

LARRY COHEN: “Pass. My rule of thumb on forcing passes: If undiscussed, a pass is forcing only if the janitor would play it as forcing. Here, with both opponents passed hands, the janitor would not let them play in five clubs undoubled. Given that a pass is forcing, why not choose it? Partner is unlikely to double; if he bids five of a red suit, I will bid a slam (playing him for something like king-fifth of spades and an ace—maybe he wouldn’t have bid three clubs with that).”

Hoping for a second opportunity to earn their degrees in custodial services are . . .

Problem C

IMPs; North-South vul. You, South, hold:

♠ A 6 5 3 2 ♥ K Q J 8 3 ♦ 7 ♣ A 5

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
—	Pass	Pass	Pass
1 ♠	2 NT	4 ♠*	5 ♣

? [BWS: No special agreements.]

*BWS: 3 ♣ = game-invitational-plus raise

What call do you make?

Action	Score	Votes
5 ♠	100	9
5 ♥	70	7
5 ♦	70	3
Double	60	7
Pass	60	4
6 ♠	20	0
6 ♥	10	0

The footnote reminds us that North had assorted raises available. It does not point out that West, a passed hand, could also have bid *one* notrump, so he is more likely to have at least 11 mi-

JEFF MECKSTROTH: "Double. A tough problem, as anything could be right. I don't think a pass is forcing—I'd choose it if it were."

JOEY SILVER: "Pass. This is not a forcing situation, as partner could have anything. I have a strong offensive hand but no idea whether it fits with North's, so I will not bid five on my own, nor do I have enough defense to double."

It's one thing to pass with this South hand when you are confident that partner won't pass, but to risk having five clubs passed out is downright frightening.

Although none of the doublers state explicitly that a pass would be forcing, their comments leave no doubt that they are doubling for penalty. Many experts use a double in a *nonforcing* "fit" situation to indicate transferable values, leaving it to partner to make the final decision; with a rare, "pure penalty" hand, they must pass. Anyone adhering to that philosophy who doubles *for penalty* here considers this a forcing situation.

CARL HUDECEK: "Double. I expect our side to be off one ace, with possible trump and diamond losers as well. I have a good lead against five clubs doubled (the heart king), and with partner's denying a strong raise, I'll let the five level belong to the opponents."

IRA RUBIN (along with MARSHALL MILES, who does not speak of the lead): "Double. South shouldn't bid (though probably should with switched major-suit holdings). Five spades will have little or no chance (partner didn't bid three clubs). Double and lead the singleton diamond."

SAMI KEHELA: "Double. Isn't this consistent with the Law of Total Tricks?"

The Law's average prediction often deviates considerably from reality at

high levels, especially when each side has a double fit and there are no wasted honors. This might be one of those deals. Even if total trumps and tricks turned out to be the same and there were only 20 total tricks, doubling will be right in only one of the two likely cases: each side can take 10 tricks. If East-West can win only nine, North-South will take 11. The doublers are really betting that their own maximum is only 10 tricks and are not really concerned about their opponents' taking 11. Still, with opinion divided about the best opening lead, perhaps there should be more concern about the East-West potential.

An interesting feature of this problem is that a significant number of panelists are unwilling to contract for 11 tricks at IMP scoring while just as many are willing to try for slam (even grand slam) while outbidding the opponents at the five level.

AL ROTH: "Five hearts. This is automatic. Slam, perhaps a grand slam, is entirely possible."

BILLY EISENBERG: "Five diamonds. Aggressive, but if it fetches five hearts, six spades looks good."

BEVERLY ROSENBERG (with EDDIE KANTAR): "Five hearts. Partner may well have chosen to bid four spades rather than three clubs with something like:

♠ K Q x x x ♥ A x x ♦ x x x ♣ x x,
or rather than four clubs with:

♠ K x x x x ♥ x x x ♦ A x x x ♣ x,
in order to make it harder for the opponents to save."

ROBERT WOLFF: "Five diamonds. This great problem sneaks up on you. Probably, a majority will try five hearts, but usually that kind of bid is chosen only to provide guidance should the competition continue.

Here, we have real slam chances (king, or perhaps queen-jack, of spades plus the ace of hearts is the most likely, but not the only, North holding where six is possible). Five diamonds is unquestionably a slam-try; five hearts might not be. Yes, five spades can go down, but what else is new? Will partner visualize our club control? He should!"

MICHAEL BECKER: "Five hearts. I've got too much strength to go quietly and can't double a contract I may not beat, so the question is whether to bid five hearts or five spades. Five hearts should be interpreted as a slam-try rather than a bid to get partner involved if the opponents bid on. If we have no spade losers and partner has the heart ace, we should make a slam. (Assuming that East's five-club bid shows more clubs than diamonds, partner will have a shape that allows me to ditch his losing club on my long heart.) Five hearts also has advantages when the opponents bid on: North will be better placed to make a decision whether to bid six or to double (as I will have created a force)."

DAVID BERKOWITZ: "Five diamonds. It's hard to believe that we can make a slam if partner cannot now bid five hearts (which I would raise to six). Worrying about being too high in five is negative thinking."

MICHAEL LAWRENCE (and DANNY KLEINMAN similarly): "Five hearts. I am willing to have partner bid on if East-West bid again. Our agreements are not so detailed to allow for five hearts to become the final contract (though that might be right if North is 4=5=2=2), but we might be able to reach six hearts.

"This problem raises a serious general question: Why is it that after years of getting questionnaires on weird sequences and obscure doubles, we do not know what partner's four spades means? This is borderline ridiculous. (I am assuming that four spades shows a 'preemptive-ish' raise to game, perhaps:

♠ K x x x x ♥ A x x ♦ x x x x ♣ x.)"

ERIK PAULSEN: "Five hearts. This hand is offensively oriented; partner should be able to evaluate his hand accordingly. Little can be gained by doubling five clubs."

It's not that the slam-try panelists are dreaming greedily; it's just that their conception of the upper range for North's four spades is out of whack with the rest of the panel's. This makes Lawrence's lament poignant.

The middle ground between a depressing penalty double and a wide-eyed slam-try is five spades: no slam, too close to defend against five clubs doubled, no need to consult partner. Its supporters are realistic.

ANDERS WIRGREN: "Five spades. Opposite a fourth-seat opening, a jump to four spades should be mostly constructive, even in these 'trump-counting' days. I expect strong spades and some short minor."

ANDREW ROBSON: "Five spades. Quite likely one off versus one off, but the potential double game-swing pushes me to bid on at IMPs. The heart holding gives the hand a relatively high offense-to-defense ratio. There is no point in bidding five hearts, as I don't want partner to bid six spades (I think)."

BARRY RIGAL: "Five spades. Undisciplined, yes, but I can't see selling out to five clubs, and doubling five clubs will not get us rich. Maybe I can bid with enough confidence that East-West won't double when they should. Who knows which side can make anything?"

What's undisciplined about bidding what you expect to make, especially when defending has such a small upside?

JEFF RUBENS (supported by KIT WOOLSEY): "Five spades. I expect partner to have long, strong spades and few or no other high-card values. There is a chance that we

can make five spades—North might have a singleton club, and there is no guarantee a heart ruff will be lost. There is a chance that East-West can make five clubs—West could have bid only one notrump; maybe he has six-five. And if there is a way to beat five clubs, it might require a specific red-suit lead. None of these possibilities seems highly likely, but together they add up to justification to take out insurance.”

RICHARD COLKER: “Five spades. Give partner something like:

♠ K Q J x x ♥ x x ♦ Q x x x x ♣ x,

and we’ll be lucky to beat five clubs (a diamond ruff may be needed) while five spades might be cold, losing only one trick in each red suit. Change partner’s hand slightly, and both five clubs and five spades might be going down, but that will cost about 5 imps when North-South are plus 100 at the other table, while if five spades makes and five clubs goes down we stand to gain 11 imps. Additionally, five clubs could be cold against our minus 100 or 200 if partner has something like:

♠ Q J 10 x x ♥ x ♦ J 10 x x x ♣ x x.

Add to that the possibility that the opponents may guess wrongly and push on to the six level, and the odds in favor of bidding are good.”

RUSS EKEBLAD: “Five spades. Great problem! If the opponents have 10 clubs (very likely) they may make theirs (if spades are three-zero), and we should make ours. I suspect we may be able to make six, but the opponents are more likely to save over six than over five. Ironically, ‘missing’ slam and scoring 680 may be our top score, because seven clubs costs only 300 or 500.”

And last, but definitely not least . . .

ROBERT FRIEND: “Five spades. As the five level supposedly belongs to the opponents, this should confirm me as an opponent.”