

Trump Lead -- Problem

**Board 7**  
 South Deals  
 Both Vul



♠ 10 7 6  
 ♥ 4  
 ♦ A K Q 5  
 ♣ A Q 10 6 5

West	North	East	South
<i>Schwartz</i>		<i>Matthews</i>	
			1 ♦

All pass  
 1 ♦ by South  
 Lead: ♦ 7

Take my seat playing matchpoint pairs. Partner leads the ♦ 7, you win the ♦ Q, and declarer plays the ♦ 3. You cash the ♦ A, ♦ 4, ♦ 6, ♦ 8.

If partner has another trump, cashing the ace makes sense. If not, maybe it's time to try for a heart ruff, or to try to set up clubs. What would be your choice?

**Board 7**  
 South Deals  
 Both Vul

Trump Lead -- Solution

<p>♠ A Q 8          ♥ 10 8 2          ♦ 9 7 6          ♣ 8 4 3 2</p>		<p>♠ J 3 2          ♥ K 7 6 5 3          ♦ 10 8 2          ♣ J 9</p> <p>♠ 10 7 6          ♥ 4          ♦ A K Q 5          ♣ A Q 10 6 5</p> <p>♠ K 9 5 4          ♥ A Q J 9          ♦ J 4 3          ♣ K 7</p>
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EW 5♣; EW 4♦; EW 1N; EW 1♠; NS 1♥; Par -600

West	North	East	South
<i>Schwartz</i>		<i>Matthews</i>	
			1♦

All pass  
 1♦ by South  
 Lead: ♦ 7  
 Down 5 — NS -500

Here is the point: years ago, Gary told me to lead second highest in trumps. If you and partner both know to do this, you win. Otherwise, you consider the vagaries of matchpoint strategy, and make your guess.

Having started with the ♦ 7 and then followed with the ♦ 6, Gary promised a third, higher trump. A consequence of declarer having exactly three bad diamonds: declarer will almost certainly have 4=4=3=2 shape, likely with the ♣ K.

We cash the ♦ K, clearing trumps and lead the ♣ Q. Nobody would ever do this without holding long clubs that include the ace, so now partner knows what is going on. Declarer plays hearts twice, but we ruff and run the clubs. Declarer discards two spades and a heart from each hand, hoping the ♠ K will win, leaving this end position:

	♠ J	
	♥ K 7	
♠ A Q 8		♠ 10 7 6
	♠ K 9	
	♥ J	

We take the last three tricks, for down five. This result took skill, but having this deal pop up against a strong pair was fantastic good luck. We rode this and other good fortune to a 72% session and second place overall.

A modern defensive carding style is "trump suit preference." With this method, following suit first with a higher spot and then with a lower one shows interest in the higher side suit. Failing to echo shows no particular preference. Gary and I do not play that way; we play the old-fashioned trump echo, showing three trumps. (We used to also play it showed a desire to ruff, but we removed that message.) We play lots of count signals.

The lead of a trump and the trump echo correspond to each other, both serving to give partner the count in trumps using the second highest card. (Usually, there is a better lead than a trump, if you have a singleton or more than three trumps.)

Double & Bid -- Problem

**Board 30**  
East Deals  
None Vul



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

West	North	East	South
	<i>Schwartz</i>		<i>Matthews</i>
		Pass	Pass
1 ♦	Dbl	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♠	3 ♣	Pass	?

What would you do now, with the South hand?

**Board 30**  
 East Deals  
 None Vul

Double & Bid -- Solution

	♠ —											
	♥ 10 8 4											
	♦ A K 7 5											
	♣ A K Q J 3 2											
♠ A K Q 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 9 8 7	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ K 5 3 2		♥ Q 9 7										
♦ Q 3 2		♦ 8 6										
♣ 10 9		♣ 8 6 4										
	♠ 6 5 3 2											
	♥ A J 6											
	♦ J 10 9 4											
	♣ 7 5											
West	North	East	South									
	<i>Schwartz</i>		<i>Matthews</i>									
		Pass	Pass									
1 ♦	Dbl	1 ♠	Pass									
2 ♠	3 ♣	Pass	?									

Partner's bidding does not show just some random 16-count. It shows a hand worth at least 18 points, including a strong suit, what Robson & Segal call a good one-suited hand, or GOSH for short. In this case, it's 16 fine HCP, plus a void. Alternatively, there are eight top tricks, plus potential in diamonds. Quite a hand.

If the opponents are bidding honestly, and West surely is, then North has at most two spades, and likely fewer. This makes a mighty strange takeout double, and so North's values must be solid. I fell from grace and passed.

The right call is 4 ♣. At least one of those jacks must be working. With two tricks for partner, give him a bump. Partner will carry on to game and make it.

**Board 26**  
 East Deals  
 Both Vul

Responsive Double -- Problem

	♠ 5 3										
	♥ K 8 4										
	♦ A 10 8 7 4 2										
	♣ 9 5										
♠ Q J 8 4	<table border="1" style="width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 10 6 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 5 3		♥ 9 6 2									
♦ 9		♦ Q 3									
♣ K Q J 10 6 3		♣ A 8 7 4									
	♠ K 9 7										
	♥ A Q J 10 7										
	♦ K J 6 5										
	♣ 2										
West	North	East	South								
	<i>Schwartz</i>		<i>Matthews</i>								
		Pass	1 ♥								
2 ♣	2 ♥	Dbl	?								

When I asked, I was told that East's double was responsive, showing the unbid suits. What would you have done in my position?

**Board 26**  
 East Deals  
 Both Vul

Responsive Double -- Solution

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

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

NS 5♥; NS 5♦; EW 2♠; EW 3♣; Par +650

West	North	East	South
	<i>Schwartz</i>		<i>Matthews</i>
		Pass	1 ♥
2 ♣	2 ♥	Dbl	Rdbl
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	All pass
3 ♠ by West			
Lead: ♥ 4			
Made 3 — EW +140			

Well, if RHO has diamonds, partner may have clubs, hoping to double. I redoubled, hoping for a penalty, but this was an abject failure. We were shut out by the spade bids, missed our cold game, and they made 3 ♠.

Once we have a confirmed 8-card fit, losing trick count applies. The South hand has six losers: two spades, one heart, two diamonds, and a club. This is a typical game-try hand, looking for partner to erase three of those losers. This calls for a forward-going action, whether East passes or doubles 2 ♥.

We play fancy game tries, but they are off in competition. Had I made my normal 3 ♦ game try, partner would have been proud to bid 4 ♥, based on the double fit.


In general, it's better to focus on bidding to your own best contract, rather than penalizing the opponents. We would still have good chances at 3 ♥, had partner turned out to have shortish diamonds. My fault.

As he laid the dummy down, East said, "I could also have this hand." West remarked, "So it always has spades, but may have club support instead of diamonds." East: "Yes."

West did not know about this wrinkle and so could not have told us. We were due no protection and did not bother to call the director.

**Board 25**  
 North Deals  
 E-W Vul

2 NT Rebid

♠ Q J 10 8 5 ♥ A 9 ♦ A J 5 3 ♣ Q 5		♠ A 7 ♥ K Q 10 7 2 ♦ K 6 ♣ A J 9 6	♠ 9 4 3 2 ♥ J 8 4 3 ♦ 8 ♣ K 8 7 3
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♠ K 6 ♥ 6 5 ♦ Q 10 9 7 4 2 ♣ 10 4 2
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EW 2♠; NS 1N; NS 2♦; NS 2♣; NS 1♥; Par -100; NS 2N×-1; NS 3♣×-1;  
 NS 3♦×-1

West	North	East	South
<i>Matthews</i>		<i>Schwartz</i>	
	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2NT	All pass	
2NT by South			
Down 1 — NS -50			

Our opponents played 2 NT, down one. While it makes little difference on this deal, it would often be superior to declare 3♦ instead.

Gary and I play Wolff over minor-suit opener's 2 NT jump rebid. I wrote about such methods in "Opener Rebids 2 NT" at <https://3nt.xyz/bridge.htm#articles>. I recommended Wolff with 3♦ raise. Wolff with 3♦ Checkback seems to have won more favor in the field, perhaps because it is a little simpler.

A different approach is to play all bids as transfers, which I play with Andrew. I'm not a big fan of this method, but we play it in all cases of a strongish, natural 2 NT bid, including when we overcall 2 NT (a transfer to their suit is Stayman).

Any of these systems would have allowed the opponents to get to 3♦ on this deal, which will often play better than 2 NT. Depending on agreements, it is possible to get to 4♣, for example, a 3♠ transfer.

When I asked Gary about this auction, he said he thought we had agreed to play transfers in this situation only, that is, when major-suit opener rebids 2 NT over a 1 NT response.

A simpler alternative is to play all bids natural and non-forcing, because responder won't have a slam-going hand for a 1 NT response. However, if responder wants help deciding between 3 NT and five of a minor, transfers would be superior. My recommendation back in the day was to play standard, all responder's bids forcing, with the exception of 3♥ (opener's major) being non-forcing (a slow-down raise). Transfers clearly have this beat, assuming you both remember.

Do you have agreements about this situation with your partners?

**Board 24**  
 West Deals  
 None Vul

Slamming!

♠ 8 2  
 ♥ 9 6  
 ♦ K Q 8 4 2  
 ♣ Q J 6 3

♠ A J	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W     E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W     E	S	♠ K Q 6 5 4	
N						
W     E						
S						
♥ A K Q 10 8 4		♥ J 7 2				
♦ A 6 5		♦ J 9 3				
♣ K 5		♣ A 2				

♠ 10 9 7 3  
 ♥ 5 3  
 ♦ 10 7  
 ♣ 10 9 8 7 4

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♣	2 ♦	2 ♠ <sup>1</sup>	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	4 ♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass
4 NT <sup>3</sup>	Pass	5 ♦ <sup>4</sup>	Pass
5 NT <sup>5</sup>	Pass	7 ♥ <sup>6</sup>	All pass

1. 5+♠, 2 of top 3 honors, 8+ HCP (possibly less in competition).
2. Sets hearts as trump, slam interest.
3. Roman Keycard Blackwood (03-14).
4. One keycard.
5. We have all the keycards and the ♥ Q. Any kings?
6. I have a source of tricks.

7 ♥ by West  
 Lead: ♥ 6  
 Made 7 — EW +1510

This auction earned an 82% score. Some pairs did not get to the grand, but one pair bid 7 NT.

West should know that East's source of tricks must be spades headed by the KQ. Looking at the ♠ J, West can tell that East thought a ruff might be needed to set up the spades. West appears to have the holding to convert to 7 NT. Should he actually do it?

There is no need for a "cost of being wrong" or similar analysis. Count tricks: four spades, six hearts, one diamond, and two clubs, for a total of thirteen. Bid 7 NT, which is also slightly safer than 7 ♥, since the opponents cannot get a ruff. Could East hold something like

♠ K 8 6 5 4 ♥ J 9 7 2 ♦ 9 ♣ A 7 2

No, because West might not have losing diamonds to ruff, instead holding ♠ A x x, an unavoidable loser.

It may appear that the 2 ♦ overcall helped East. Not so. East only needs the 4 ♦ cue bid to show slam interest because the overcall required a flexible 2 ♠ response. Given a fit, a strong two bid plus a positive response equals a slam. This auction is virtually forcing: 2 ♣ - 2 ♠; 3 ♥ - 4 ♥. The auction continues in our methods: 4 NT - 5 ♦ [1 or 4]; 7 NT. Again, West can count 13 top tricks.