

looks familiar. Have I been playing so long that every problem looks familiar now?" he jokes.

A 2NT bid can be passed. Why so conservative?

"I want to give partner an out if he was reopening light," says Meckstroth.

"Partner could have 10 HCP and be making a reopening bid," agrees Meyers.

Kennedy calls 2NT "the most descriptive bid I can make."

Freeman says "I'll give up on hearts."

Baze says, "Notrump is often right, even if we have a 4-4 heart fit."

The Coopers say "About right on values. We'll ignore the hearts for now."

Two panelists cuebid 2♠.

"I want to find out if partner has four hearts," says Robinson. "Otherwise, we'll play 3NT. It might be too high, but we should get to the right strain."

"If partner has hearts and spade shortness, we want to be playing in the suit contract," says Sanborn. "I can convert three of a minor to 3♥ to show this hand. Then if partner has full values, and is still interested, he can ask for a stopper with 3♠."

The lesson point from the panel is that when you have balanced distribution and two or more stoppers in the opponent's suit, bidding notrump may best show your hand.

5. IMPs. North-South vulnerable.

♠KQ4 ♥32 ♦AKJ952 ♣82

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
3♥	Pass	Pass	?

<i>Call</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Award</i>
Dbl	15	100
4♦	1	60
3NT	2	50
Pass	0	40
5♦	0	10

**Make the most flexible bid**

Should you overcall your good six-card suit? The Bridge Baron is the only contestant to do so. The majority of the panel double.

"It's not clear I should bid," says Meckstroth, "but double is the most

flexible. Partner may want to defend or bid 3NT, and my hand is okay for spades. I can always correct clubs to diamonds."

"I don't want to leave 3NT out of the picture," says Meyers. "If partner bids 4♣, I will bid 4♦ and pretend I have a 6-4 hand."

"Double," agrees Cohen. "I'm hoping for 3NT, of course, which is what good partners bid. This also seems to be from The Bridge World magazine. How's my memory?"

It's Your Call got these problems from the Polish Bridge Magazine. Where they got them, we can't say.

"Double," say the Colchamiro. "This is the most flexible, but also the most dangerous. 4♦ has the small upside of getting to 5♦. Double can lead to 3NT or defending 3♥ doubled. But if partner passes with a hand that contains ♦Q764, we may easily be minus 530."

Boehm also doubles, but sees the danger. "Ugly problem," he says. "4♦ is okay, but double caters to 3NT and spades. If partner leaves it in, it may not be a success, depending on partner's diamond length."

The Stansbys and Sanborn call double the most flexible bid. Freeman says he doesn't want to give up on spades or notrump.

Walker doubles and says, "I hope partner remembers the discussion we had about equal-level conversions being on at the four level."

An equal-level conversion refers to the situation in which you double, partner bids a suit, and you bid the suit above it at the same level. Many partnerships play that this is not the same strength as doubling and bidding your own suit. Here's an example hand:

♠85 ♥AQ84 ♦AQJ104 ♣63.

Suppose your right-hand opponent opens 1♠. Many player would double — this keeps the unbid major in the picture. If partner inconveniently bids 2♣, you then "correct" to 2♦. (Some players prefer a six-card diamond suit.) Because your 2♦ bid is still on the two level, it doesn't promise extra values — you have only "corrected."

"I don't like equal-level conver-

sions except when doubling three of a major," says Baze. "The double permits a penalty pass or a 3NT bid by partner. Both of these are so important that it's worth the risk of a 4♣ bid which can be pulled to 4♦ as an equal-level conversion."

Two panelists bid 3NT. Who needs a stopper?

"3NT," says Rigal. "On paper, it's easy. In real life, it can be more painful. The vulnerability is such, however, that partner is quite likely to deliver a heart card and 3NT is our most likely game."

Falk agrees. "The odds that left-hand opponent can run his suit after a white-on-red preempt with no raise from his partner are about nil," he says. "Might as well go for the homer."

"If 3NT makes, they will be pulling in their horns for the rest of the match. If it doesn't, they'll think I'm crazy."

Lawrence mentions some problems with bidding 3NT.

"It is tempting to bid 3NT," he says, "but it requires a heart stopper and useful values from partner. Even then, I need the diamonds to come home."

When given a tough decision, make the choice that is the most flexible. The experts feel that if it works best three times out of four, for example, they can live with the one bad result to get three good ones. □

You can participate in It's Your Call. Go to [www.acbl.org](http://www.acbl.org) and click on My ACBL. The top scores for the January problems are:

Omer Ekinici, New York NY	500
Wafik Abdou, Bakersfield CA	500
Daryl Fisher, Rolla MO	480
James Edmiston, Cincinnati OH	480
Jorge Barrera, Bogota, Columbia	480
Deepak Khanna, Shillington PA	480
Robert Smink, Newtown Square PA	480
David Crausen, Kingston ON	470
Eddie Rose, Laguna Niguel CA	470
Brad Theurer, Gaithersburg MD	470
Valentin Enache, Bloomfield Hills MI	470
John Gillespie, Orleans ON	470
John Powers, Palm Desert CA	470
Jan Smola, Arlington MA	470
Allen Rew, Independence MO	470