



under some pressure later. Ross's 3♦ preference was easy, as was Baze's description-completing 3NT, but put yourself in West's shoes at this point in the auction. Would you cuebid 4♠? Ross thought a long time here, and eventually made the decision to go forward, but it wouldn't have been a total shock if 3NT ended the auction for many other pairs employing this auction. Baze used Roman Key Card Blackwood (diamonds agreed) to find out that Ross had two keys without the ♦Q.

Scores: 6♦ 12; 6♠ 11; 4♠ 9; 5♠ 8; 5♦ 6; 3NT 4.
Smith-Cohen 12, Ross-Baze 12

See last month's issue for the East and West hands that appear below, and try bidding them with a regular partner. Compare how you performed with the expert pairs whose auctions you can read about in this month's column. The form of scoring is matchpoints with a 12 top.

The carnival atmosphere of the California gubernatorial race has attracted so much attention that *Bridge Bulletin* editors have decided to get into the act. No, we're not declaring our candidacy (there are enough idiots in the contest already), but we are presenting an all-California version of *The Bidding Box*.

Ron Smith of San Francisco and Billy Cohen of Encino have enjoyed a long, successful partnership. Cohen plays far less frequently on the national level these days, but he and Smith are regarded as a threat to win whatever contest they enter. They each possess multiple national championship titles.

Hugh Ross of Oakland and Grant Baze of San Diego are powerhouses in the game of bridge, but theirs is a new partnership. Ross is a previous world and national champion, while rubber-bridge expert Baze is also a top-level professional player who has plenty of national wins to his credit as well.

Both pairs employ fairly normal 2/1 methods.

Problem 1

East deals. No one vulnerable.

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| West | East |
| ♠ A J 9 4 | ♠ K Q 2 |
| ♥ 9 4 3 2 | ♥ J |
| ♦ K 10 7 | ♦ A Q J 9 3 |
| ♣ 5 2 | ♣ A K 6 4 |

| | |
|-------|-------|
| Smith | Cohen |
| 1♥ | 1♦ |
| 2♦ | 2♣ |
| 3♠ | 2♠ |
| 5♦ | 4♣ |
| Pass | 6♦ |

| | |
|------|------|
| Ross | Baze |
| 1♥ | 1♦ |
| 3♦ | 3♣ |
| 4♠ | 3NT |
| 5♥ | 4NT |
| Pass | 6♦ |

Both pairs reached the diamond slam, though not by the same path.

Cohen chose the very conservative 2♣ call as his rebid with the East cards. As long as partner doesn't pass, these underbids can work very well since they allow the strength and shape of the hand to be described very accurately. This auction is a perfect example, since Smith knew that his partner had a 3-1-5-4 pattern with extras after Cohen bid 2♣. Smith's 3♠ was natural, 4♣ was a cuebid and 5♦ set trumps and showed more than a minimum.

Baze chose 3♣ as his rebid. This would be the popular choice, since it does alert partner to the strength of the hand, but it puts partner

Problem 2

South deals. N-S vulnerable. South opens 2♥ (weak).

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

| | |
|-------|-------------|
| Smith | Cohen |
| Pass | (2♥) |
| 2NT | (Pass) |
| | Dbl (Pass) |
| | Pass (Pass) |

| | |
|------|-------------|
| Ross | Baze |
| Pass | (2♥) |
| 3♦ | (Pass) |
| | Dbl (Pass) |
| | Pass (Pass) |

After a weak 2♥ bid by dealer, West passes and East doubles in the balancing position. How should West proceed?

Smith and Cohen play 2NT as natural and non-forcing, which works very well on this layout. Many pairs, however, play that 2NT in this situation is artificial. This treatment, commonly referred to as lebensohl, acts as a relay to 3♣ and allows responder to escape at the three level with very weak hands. The corollary, of course, is that a direct three-level bid promises values.

Ross and Baze have agreed to use lebensohl, so Ross's 3♦ bid was constructive. The unavailability of 2NT here forced the partnership into an inferior spot.