

partner has any extras," says Rigal. "Isn't this basically a lead problem? I'm leading a trump to kill any ruff in dummy."

Sanborn sums up the position of the majority.

"Pass," she says. "No guarantees on who can make what. I don't know whether to double or bid on — there is not enough information for the killer action."

Three panelists double.

"I think we are making 3♥," says Meyers, "and I want better than 140."

"I thought we were making plus 140," agrees Falk, "so I can't play for plus 100. This is not penalty, but says, 'I think it's our hand for 3♥; I have more than expected. Should we defend or bid on?'"

"I have good defense and they are vulnerable," say the Coopers. "Partner can overrule me."

You wanted to play 3♥, but the opponents pushed on — too bad. Once you decide to pass 3♥, however, you shouldn't bid 4♥ without a good reason to do so. Your partner knows more about your hand than you do about his. He heard your takeout double and he voted to let the opponents play 3♠ — let him have some say in the decision.

5. Matchpoints. East-West vulnerable.

♠7643 ♥— ♦A52 ♣AKJ1042

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	1♣
			?

Call	Votes	Award
3♠	11	100
4♣	2	80
3♥	2	60
4♥	0	60
2♠	3	20
4♠	0	10
2♣	0	0
3♣	0	0

What is this hand really worth?

Even though you only have 12 high-card points, you have a nice playing hand. Should you make a minimum rebid, invite or force to game? The majority take the middle road and bid 3♠.

"3♠," says Boehm. "I don't have enough to force to game and too much for 2♠."

"3♠," agrees Rigal. "It's not perfect, but if I bid 2♠ and partner passes with:

♠AKQ8 ♥873 ♦983 ♣873,

I'll have some 'splaining to do."

"3♠," says Soloway. "Weak trumps make 3♠ more correct than stronger actions."

Freeman reasons similarly. "Although the hand is worth a stronger bid based on playing strength, I don't want to encourage slam thoughts with such weak trumps."

"3♠," echoes Sanborn. "If playing 3♥ was a mini-splinter, I would do that. This is a good hand, but I tend to be conservative with bad trumps."

"3♠ is a straight value bid," says Walker. "No matter how you count it, this hand isn't worth more than 15-16 support points. 4♣ and splinter bids show power hands, and that is too much — this hand has ultra-weak trumps and a non-solid side suit."

Robinson bids 4♣. "This shows six good clubs and four spades, and game-forcing values," he says. "I would like to have better spades."

"4♣ is a little bid of an overbid," admit the Colchamiro. "3♠ is our second choice. The hand is too thin for a splinter."

Bidding 4♣ can get you to slam when you belong there. If partner signs off in 4♠, you haven't told the opponents what to lead. It's matchpoints, so let them guess which red suit to lead.

Several panelists commented that they would like to bid 3♥, showing heart shortness, spade support and invitational strength — some call it a two and one-half spade raise with shortness. Unfortunately, this is not part of Bridge Bulletin Standard. Two panelists bid it anyway.

"3♥ if playing this as a mini-splinter," says Kennedy. "With some partners I would bid 4♣ instead, showing a 6-4 pattern."

"3♥," agrees Baze. "Given the opponents' silence, partner has a good hand — maybe the perfect hand. I have to start the ball rolling (for

slam), but not ridiculously."

Baze means that this hand is not strong enough for a 4♥ splinter bid.

Three members of the panel make the conservative 2♠ call — they don't like the weak spade holding.

"This is the best 2♠ bid I will ever have," says Lawrence. "If someone bid 3♠, I would respect that, and might do so with ♠10987 instead of four low ones."

"The choice is to underbid with 2♠ or overbid with 3♠," say the Coopers. "Given the bad spades and the fact that opponents will surely balance with 3♥, we will get a chance to show our two and one-half spade bid later."

Bridge Buff also bid only 2♠. ("If I were playing it, I would bid more than 2♠. With my human partner as declarer, I'm taking the conservative route.")

The Joyces sum up their reasons for how they scored this problem.

"You have lots of controls and a great side suit," they say, "and you might make 2♠ or you might make 7♠. We would vote to show where our tricks are coming from, and thus the promotion for 4♣. Some people would not recognize 3♥ as a splinter bid, so the promotion for 4♥. Most players would bid more than 2♠."

The August Bridge Bulletin was Randi Montin's last month on the panel.

"I'm not playing much tournament bridge lately," Montin says. "Because of that, I want to give someone else a chance."

Her thoughtful answers and commentary will be missed.

You can participate in It's Your Call. Go to www.acbl.org and click on My ACBL. The top scores for July:

Bruce Schwaidelson, Doylestown PA	500
Adam Meyerson, Los Angeles CA	490
Alexander Kolesnik, Calabasas CA	470
Jim Miller, Olive Branch MS	470
B Marshall, San Luis Potosi	470
Fred Zappala, Methuen MA	470
Lawrence Goodman, Bellerose NY	470
Bo Liu Mabelvale AR	460
Aaron Silverstein, New York NY	460
Drew Becker, Chicago IL	450
William Grant, San Diego CA	450