



BRIDGEWORKS



LEARNING FROM THE DEALS

SAMPLING

BY DANNY KLEINMAN

All bridge players deduce how to act from the deals they play. In recent years, many serious students of the game have taken to increasing the tiny sample gleaned from table experience by using computer programs to simulate situations of interest and generate additional cases. How can we most efficiently make use of the deals we see?

Weak Two-Bids

My first exposure to weak two-bids came in 1953, when I was a college freshman. A senior, Jock Millenson, handed out mimeographed sheets explaining weak two's. I remember his requirements in first and second seats:

- (1) A six-card suit.
- (2) No void.
- (3) No five-card side suit.
- (4) No four-card major.
- (5) At least five playing tricks (six if vulnerable).
- (6) 1-2 honor tricks (1.5-2 if vulnerable).
- (7) 6-10 HCP (9-11 if vulnerable).
- (8) At least 5 HCP in the suit (6 if vulnerable).

Jock permitted third-seat weak two's to be "frisky" (without specifying in what ways), and didn't define fourth-seat openings at all.

I embraced weak two's enthusiastically.

They were logical, when viewed as a cross between one-bids and three-bids. They often presented problems to the opponents, particularly in early years when most players were unfamiliar with "modern" bidding and didn't know how to cope. They sometimes led to otherwise hard-to-reach games. And they were fun: How I enjoyed being able to bid with hands I would otherwise have had to pass, holdings I had yearned to open but couldn't for lack of the required honor tricks or high-card points.

The clincher for me was a deal in which my partner had opened two diamonds; with ace-fourth of diamonds, I pushed the opponents to five hearts, then, knowing that my partner had the king of diamonds, underled the ace to put him in for the shift needed to beat the contract.

Disillusionment

Gradually, however, I became unsold. My partners, who had not read Jock's handouts, gradually opened skimpier and skimpier two-bids. No longer could I underlead the ace when partner might have queen-jack-ten-sixth (the new suit-quality standard was "two of the top three, or three of the top five"). My two-notrump responses on hands with game prospects

often led to down one in three of our major, as partner had less than the playing strength expected. Opponents developed effective means of coping. By that I do not mean lebensohl or other conventions; those came later. Rather, I mean doubles that were fast or slow; passes that were fast, slow or agonized; and much, much more. The ACBL's well-intentioned mandatory ten-second hesitation rule spurred only greater creativity. A "ten-second hesitation" could be just that, or it could be a two-second hesitation by an opponent with a truly weak hand. If spending ten seconds looking at the ceiling wasn't effective enough, then a rapid-fire "one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-

ten Now may I pass?" was. Direct calls proved futile, eliciting ruling the likes of, "He thought it was ten seconds," or "There's no law against looking at the ceiling." Opponents concerned with the appearance of propriety would not stoop to looking at the ceiling, but they became very adept at looking bored.

By the mid-1960's, I had serious doubts about weak two's. I knew the casual observation was a poor guide so I set out to collect an unbiased sample. I chose all the deals in the 1964, 1965 and 1966 World Championship books. The 1960's were interesting because bidding systems were in flux. Pairs on national teams in internation-

IMPROVE YOUR BIDDING

71. WHEN MINELC APPLIES

BY BEVERLY KRAFT

Matchpoints, neither side vulnerable, the bidding has gone:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
	—	—	1♥
?			

In the BWS default, after a takeout double, minimum equal-level conversions (where a same-level suit bid by doubler after a minimum new-suit advance does not show extra values) are not used. However, because the vote on the subject was close, the system includes a leaf in which "minELC" applies when the doubler of a major-suit opening converts a club advance to the same number of diamonds after advancer has bid either at the two level or competitively at the three level.

(minELC also is in effect when the doubler is a passed hand.)

Assuming minELC applies, as South, what call do you make with each of the following?

- (a) ♠ K J 6 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ Q 10 8 6 4 ♣ A 5
- (b) ♠ K J 6 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ A 5 ♣ Q 10 8 6 4
- (c) ♠ K J 6 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ 5 ♣ A Q 10 8 6 4
- (d) ♠ K J 6 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ A Q 10 8 6 4 ♣ A
- (e) ♠ K 8 7 ♥ A 3 ♦ A Q 10 8 6 ♣ K Q 7
- (f) ♠ K J 8 7 4 ♥ 3 ♦ A Q 10 8 6 4 ♣ 2

(Answers on page 74.)

events used widely varying methods. Two-bids might be weak, strong, Acol or Roman. When someone opened a weak two, his counterpart might not have a weak two available and might call one, three or pass. I was often able to compare the results of weak two-bidders with those using other methods. Of course, sometimes judgment rather than system accounted for the different calls.

The results of this study astounded me: weak two-bids showed losses that averaged 1.93imps per deal, with weak two-spade bids least successful, and weak two-diamond bids constituting a sample far too small to draw any conclusions; even back then, many experts had concluded that two-diamond openings could better be devoted to other uses. More surprisingly, very rarely was a weak two-bid opened at *both* tables. Of the 47 hands that were opened with a weak two in my sample, only three were opened with weak two's at both tables.

Later, I learned that Edgar Kaplan had preceded me in studying the results obtained from weak two's. Following the 1958 World Championship, he wrote in *The Bridge World*, "Incidentally, weak two-bids were almost a total loss for the Americans throughout this (as throughout every other World Championship) match. Only one of them gained, and the net average was 4imps [translated to current scale] lost for each weak two-bid used."

In their 1964 system book, Kaplan and Sheinwold classified weak two-bids as "*descriptive*, not *tactical*. They promise specific values, both offensive and defensive, and are intended as much to help opener's side get to its top

spot as to impede the enemy . . . The weak two-bid is really a light opening bid with a strong suit."

However, as actually used even by players strong enough to represent their countries in world championships, weak two's were as likely to be *mini-three-bids* as Kaplan's light, strong-suit one-bids. The wide variation in suit quality, hand quality, and hand pattern meant that responder could guess wrongly almost as easily as the opponents. Why such variation? I can think of two reasons.

(1) The ACBL convention card encouraged it by providing spaces for *HCP* ranges. When players mark "6 to 10" (or whatever), they think they have *defined* their weak two's. That's much simpler than using Jock's set of eight criteria or something similar.

(2) Hands that meet all the criteria for weak two's are rare. One might play several sessions before holding a hand for a *disciplined* weak two. By loosening or discarding some of the criteria, one can open many more Weak Two's, and most players like to preempt.

A general law governs the tradeoff between restrictions and frequency: The wider the variety of hands embraced by a bid, the less effective the bid will be. Diminishing returns set in, and eventually each additional kind of hand added to the domain of a bid produces a net loss instead of a net gain. Most bridge players, unfortunately, choose to use bids, especially weak bids and conventional actions, more *frequently* rather than more *effectively*.

The Impact on Strong Hands

The empirical studies of weak two's told only half the story. weak two's

supplant Strong Two's, requiring opener, when holding a hand that would otherwise open with a strong natural two-bid, to use an artificial force (usually two clubs) instead. So I examined those hands too. The high price paid by weak two-bidders in this area was flabbergasting. The artificial strong openings produced an average loss of 8.57imps per deal when their opposite numbers used a natural opening.

All these statistics settled little about weak two-bids. Like Kaplan, I clung to the opinion that weak two's should be effective and would be effective if used with proper understandings and discipline. However, I became convinced that the omnibus two clubs bears too great a burden when used for *all* powerhouse hands. I had already observed that even top experts overuse the omnibus two clubs; many hands that qualify for strong *natural* two-bids are better opened with one-bids than with an *artificial* two clubs. My sample also suggested that changes to the usual set of responses to two clubs were necessary and that the burden of powerhouse hands should be shared between two clubs and two diamonds.

Weak Two's By Suit

Weak two-bids figure to be more effective in spades than in hearts, because spades outrank hearts. A weak two spades shuts out opponents who have hearts more often than a weak two hearts shuts out opponents who have spades; and it leads to a profitable sacrifice against four hearts more often than a weak two hearts leads to a profitable sacrifice against four spades.

The difference between two hearts and two diamonds is greater still. A

weak two diamonds permits a two-level overcall in either of the majors; a weak two hearts permits a two-level overcall only in spades. A weak two hearts produces a 10-trick game in hearts far more often than a weak two diamonds produces an 11-trick game in diamonds.

That's not all. You'll hold a hand for a weak two in hearts (or in spades for that matter) more often than in diamonds. Suppose, for example, that you have a six-card suit to the ace-king and queen-fourth in a side suit, with a singleton and a doubleton. If your six-card suit is a major, the odds are 2-to-1 that your four-card suit is a minor, but if your six-card suit is diamonds, the odds are 2-to-1 that your four-card suit is a major. Usually, you don't much mind opening two of a major with a four-card minor, but it is very risky to open two diamonds with a four-card major. That is why, even if it were to be shown that weak two-diamond bids are effective when the hands for them arise, I would still favor abandoning them in favor of some more useful two-diamond opening.

Modern Weak Two's

Have competitors in world championships become more disciplined in their use of weak two's since the 1950's and 1960's? I don't think so. I graded all the weak two-bids opened in the finals of five world championships of the late 1970's and early 1980's as "A" if the hand met my strict standards, "B" if it contained only one flaw (for example, a weak two diamonds with a strong enough suit and king-fourth of a major), and so on down the line. Only 13 percent earned A's; another 24

percent merited respectable B's. Most received C's and D's, and 18 percent received disgraceful F's. Would you like to see some of those F's?..

In first seat (nonvul. versus vul.):

♠ J 9 7 6 5 3 ♥ J 9 2 ♦ Q 10 ♣ 5 3.

(none vul.):

♠ A 10 7 6 5 2 ♥ — ♦ 9 6 ♣ 10 7 6 5 3.

(both vul.):

♠ 6 ♥ 10 9 8 7 3 2 ♦ K Q 3 2 ♣ 10 4

(vul. versus nonvul.):

♠ J 6 2 ♥ K 9 7 6 5 4 ♦ — ♣ K J 4 3.

In "frisky" third seat: (nonvul. versus vul.)

♠ 10 9 8 7 6 5 ♥ Q 9 7 ♦ K 8 4 ♣ 10

(vul. versus nonvul.):

♠ A 10 8 5 3 2 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ 4

Some of the (unshown) two-bids that rated F's were opening *one-bids* in my book (e.g. king-nine-sixth with two

aces on the side; jack-ten-nine sixth with a void and an ace-king-queen-ten side suit); others were based on skinny *five-card* suits.

I wouldn't go so far as to say you should *never* open a weak two on a five-card suit, only that you should seldom do so, and then only nonvulnerable when you exceed the usual "two of the top three or three of the top five" threshold for suit quality. A funny thing happens when your suit-length standard erodes: other standards (except the point-count standard that reigns supreme) erode with it. Your weak two's may no longer be as offensively-oriented as when you required a six-card suit. They may resemble this second-seat two hearts from my sample:

♠ K 10 9 ♥ K J 9 7 5 ♦ 8 6 ♣ 8 4 2.

IMPROVE YOUR PLAY

Problem A

Rubber bridge

South dealer

Neither side vulnerable

NORTH
 ♠ K
 ♥ Q 7 5
 ♦ A K Q
 ♣ A Q 8 6 5 4

SOUTH
 ♠ A 8 6 5
 ♥ A K 2
 ♦ J 5 2
 ♣ K 10 7

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 NT	Pass	7 NT	(AllPass)

West leads the spade jack.

Plan the play.

Problem B

Rubber bridge

South dealer

Neither side vulnerable

NORTH
 ♠ A K 3 2
 ♥ Q 5
 ♦ A K Q 7
 ♣ Q J 9

SOUTH
 ♠ 8 7 5
 ♥ A K J
 ♦ 5 3 2
 ♣ A K 10 8

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 NT	Pass	7 NT	(AllPass)

West leads the heart ten.

Plan the play.

(Solutions on page 75.)

If your weak two's remain offensively oriented, they may contain five-card side suits, like this third-seat two spades:

♠ K 10 8 6 3 ♥ A 2 ♦ 8 6 5 4 3 ♣ K

or this first-seat two spades:

♠ K J 6 3 2 ♥ Q 10 7 6 3 ♦ Q ♣ J 2,

and playing-strength standards go out the window along with suit-length standards and suit-quality standards. With only five cards in your suit, you are less likely to have the requisite number of honors in the suit. Your 5-4-3-1 hands will have more losers and fewer winners than your 6-4-2-1 hands, and likewise your 5-4-2-2's and 5-3-3-2's by comparison to your 6-3-3-1's and 6-3-2-2's.

For several years, I had "favorable vulnerability" five-card weak two's imposed on me by a stubborn client. They almost never brought good results. Most of the benefits of weak two's disappeared. As responder, I could no longer tell when to raise preemptively, to compete to the three level, to bid game to make, or to sacrifice against an opposing game. I'd be the last to say that the number of trumps held by the partnership is decisive, but it's not *irrelevant*; length in the trump suit correlates positively with useful shortness elsewhere, and, most significantly, correlates negatively with opponents' length in that suit.

A form of Gresham's Law operates with weak two's: the bad ones drive out the good. Easily 70 percent of our favorable-vulnerability weak two's were based on five-baggers, and no wonder: five-card suits are more than twice as common as six-card suits.

Enter the Computer

Now that personal computers and bridge software have proliferated, we need not leaf through World Championship books to obtain random samples of deals for the actions we want to study. Recently, I instructed a machine to use "Standard American" requirements to generate deals in which South had a weak two-heart or two-spade opening.

Were the results illuminating? Yes and no. I graded 100 of the hands on the same scale as my sample from the late 1970's and early 1980's. The computer program did much better than the world-championship contenders of two decades ago. I handed out 2 A's, 36 B's and 36 C's; no D's or F's at all. Apparently, the programme world-class analyst Anders Wirgren set higher standards for weak two's than most players, even world-class experts, did. *Exactly for that reason* the computer-generated sample was *unrepresentative*. In scanning its randomly-generated deals for hands that contained weak two's, the program may have rejected as many hands that real-life bridge players would open with weak two's as it accepted.

I started to bid the deals in the computer-generated sample. The very first deal posed what were to me insoluble problems. South opened two hearts. Most Wests, I thought, would double, but some might bid two-notrump. Most Easts would advance a double to three diamonds, but those who used *lebensohl* might judge the hand a little too weak for a constructive bid and choose a weak sequence. The timid *lebensohlers*, along with the non-

lebensohl-using Easts, would wind up in a touch-and-go three diamonds on a four-three fit. The lebensohlers who bid three diamonds directly would induce West to bid a hopeless three notrump, down two. The most interesting potential contract was an iffy three notrump by East, which might be reached after a Weak-Must-Speak two-notrump advance (usually weak with clubs or constructive with some other suit). As South, you would presumably lead the king of hearts from king-queen-ten-sixth, or a low heart from king-queen-empty-sixth, but which heart would you lead from king-queen-nine-four-three-two (the actual holding) when you have the ace of clubs for an outside entry? The result hinges on your answer, and I'm deliberately telling you no more.

So, is South's weak two hearts a "success"? I can't tell from the above analysis. Here, as often happens over the table, much depends on both the methods and the judgment of the play-

ers. Sometimes, the outcome depends on an unclear choice between opening leads, or on whether declarer guesses to finesse against a missing ten instead of playing for the drop. If South's weak two hearts propels the opponents into three notrump played by East, and South guesses wrong on opening lead, the opening is a failure; otherwise it is a success.

I deemed the two-bid a success, for even if we could somehow assign probabilities to each of the plausible outcomes, we must also consider what happens if South passes. West, with a good, balanced, 17-HCP hand, opens everybody's maximum strong notrump. East, with a weak 8 HCP, would do well to pass a 15-17 (or even slightly stronger) one notrump, but some Easts might overbid and invite game, which West would surely accept. Regardless, North's normal low-spade lead will hand West a trick, a bad outcome for North-South at any form of contest, and a disaster at IMPs if East has

IMPROVE YOUR DEFENSE

Rubber bridge
South dealer
Neither side vulnerable

NORTH (*dummy*)

♠ A J 6 2
♥ 4 3 2
♦ 7 4
♣ K 8 6 4

EAST (*you*)

♠ Q 10 9 8 4
♥ 7 6 5
♦ 3
♣ 7 5 3 2

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	3 ♥	Pass
4 ♦	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
6 ♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Club queen, four, three, *ace*.

Heart *ace*, eight, deuce, six.

Heart king, spade five, three, five.

Diamond *ace*, deuce, four, three.

Spade three, five, *ace*, four.

Diamond seven, ?

Plan your defense.

(Solution on page 73.)

stretched to a dubious game.

Oops. I spoke too soon, for I have ignored the possibility that East-West use *weak* notrumps, or perhaps the 14-16 range used by some big clubbers. In those cases, West will open one club, East will respond one diamond, and South will enter with one heart. If East and West still reach a notrump contract, it will be from West's side, for West has the only heart stopper, and North will find the killing heart lead—no swing, or perhaps a favorable swing, from not opening two hearts.

In short, an analysis of this deal leads to an indeterminate result, and it takes a lot of time and effort to get there.

The Flip Side of DeForest's Law

Rereading Jeff Rubens' *The Secrets of Winning Bridge* some years ago, I was struck by the four deals on page 7:

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

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

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

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

Jeff commented, "You would bid six notrump; I would bid six notrump; just about everyone would bid six notrump." Yet the four deals yield different results: 10, 11, 12 and 13 tricks,

respectively, if played in notrump.

Suddenly, I felt challenged. I recalled DeForest's Law, "There must be a way to reach every good contract," and wondered, "Is there a way to avoid six notrump on the two deals where it is hopelessly bad?" I looked at the deals to see why some produced more tricks than others and noticed that they differed in *the number of suit-lengths duplicated* between the two hands, 4, 2, 1 and 0 respectively.

I supposed that on all four deals West would somehow show a balanced hand with about 21-22 HCP. A Stayman auction would lead to six notrump or Deals (2), (3) and (4) or six hearts or Deal (1). However, if responder could show his exact pattern en route to six notrump, then Stayman would not be needed, opener could choose to play in a suit, or opener could stop short of slam when all four suit-lengths were duplicated. If, as well, responder could avoid naming his four-card suits while showing his pattern, then opener will usually become declarer and the defenders would be deprived of the information about opener's suit lengths that a Stayman auction would reveal.

I saw a way to accomplish all that. I had long believed that the common use of a Texas Transfer followed by responder's new-suit rebid as Exclusion Key-Card Blackwood was misguided. Voids should be shown below game if possible (which would let replies to a subsequent key-card-ask exclude the ace of the void suit); and the player with the balanced hand, not the one with the void, should be captain. In addition to the Texas rebid sequences, a four-spade reply (as a puppet for four notrump, to be followed by five of a

minor), could be devoted to describing hand-patterns; to make opener declarer as often as possible, responder could bid his shorter suits. This led to . . .

Yellow Rose (of Texas)

Suppose responder knows that the partnership holds 33-36 HCP. (a) With two clubs and 4-4-3 elsewhere, he bids four of his tripleton then five of his tripleton. (b) With any other 4-4-3-2, he bids four of his doubleton then bids his tripleton. [That assumes you are using Blackwood. If you prefer Kickback, after four diamonds — four hearts — ?, swap the meanings of responder's four-notrump and four-spade rebids.] (c) With 4=3=3=3 or 3=4=3=3, he Texas transfers to his major, then bids five notrump. (c) With 3=3=4=3, he bids four spades then five notrump; with 3=3=3=4, he bids four diamonds then five spades. If responder wants to insist on slam, he can rebid six clubs instead of five notrump.

Using Yellow Rose, East, responding to two notrump on Jeff's four deals, bids four diamonds then four spades (or four notrump if using Kickback), showing 3=4=2=4. West bids six notrump on (3) or (4) but stops in four notrump on (1) or (2). Having satisfied myself that Yellow Rose works on Jeff's four deals, I rested on my laurels for many years, until . . .

A Useful Computer-Generated Sample

Came the computer era, I thought to test Yellow Rose on 100 computer-generated deals where a 20-21 HCP two-notrump opening faced a 4-4-3-2 or 4-3-3-3 hand with 13-14 HCP. A few output deals did not satisfy me. Some opening hands were beefy, ace-rich

with good spot-cards, and I rated them as equivalent to 22 or 23 HCP; others had defects that made them worth less than 20 HCP. Likewise, I discarded some responding hands that, in my view, did not evaluate to 13-14. Here, I'll reproduce only the few deals that seemed to bear valuable lessons.

#1. Opener has,

♠ A 8 6 ♥ A K ♦ K Q 9 4 ♣ K Q 8 4

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
2 NT	4 ♦
4 ♥	5 ♠*

*values for six notrump; 3=3=3=4

At IMPs, opener should bid six clubs, the *safer* slam. A heart ruff in hand may provide the twelfth trick; or, if responder has the queen of hearts that may provide a spade discard so that a subsequent spade ruff in hand can provide the twelfth trick.

At matchpoints, opener should bid six notrump, the *higher-scoring* slam. Opener's maximum high-card strength suggests that six notrump will be a favorite. Yes, a ruff will often produce one more trick in clubs, but six notrump just making beats six clubs making seven.

In my sample, responder held,

♠ K J 3 ♥ J 10 3 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ A 9 7 5

If clubs run, declarer has eleven top tricks. If clubs split three-two, a ruff assures a twelfth trick in six clubs. In six notrump, declarer has several chances for a twelfth trick, starting with a spade lead. After any other lead, declarer can try a spade finesse. If that fails, he can unblock his hearts and cash the remaining black-suit winners ending in dummy (perhaps executing a Vienna Coup) before tackling diamonds.

Yellow Rose can locate superior minor-suit slams and is thus more

valuable at IMPs than at matchpoints. Without Yellow Rose, responder would simply raise two notrump to six, even at IMPs.

#2. Opener has,

♠ A Q 10 4 ♥ A Q 9 6 ♦ A J 5 ♣ K 6

Opener	Responder
2 NT	4 ♦
4 ♥	5 ♥*

*values for six notrump; 4=3=2=4

Opener should bid six spades, as a ruffing trick rates to be available. That is the right move even at matchpoints, for six spades making seven outcores six notrump making six.

Without Yellow Rose, responder might use Stayman, then bid six notrump over the three-heart reply.

Responder in fact held,

♠ K J 7 5 ♥ J 8 7 ♦ K Q ♣ A 5 4 3,
and six spades is much better than six notrump.

#3. Opener has,

♠ Q J 9 ♥ A K Q 7 2 ♦ A 9 ♣ A 7 6

Opener	Responder
2 NT	4 ♠*
4 NT	5 ♦†

*puppet to four notrump

†values for six notrump; 2=4=3=4

Opener should bid six notrump, despite the five-four heart fit, even at IMPs (where the case for six hearts is stronger). In hearts, the only ruffs likely are a diamond ruff in hand *with the fifth heart, a long-suit winner regardless*, and a spade ruff in dummy that is unlikely to be necessary given declarer's *lower spade honors*. Paradoxically, opener has less reason to play in hearts with 3=5=2=3 than with (for example) 4=4=2=3.

Responder has,

♠ A K ♥ 10 9 4 3 ♦ K 10 7 ♣ K 10 8 4,
so the tricks that are available in a heart

contract are also available in notrump. Occasionally, six hearts may fail when LHO has all four hearts, while six notrump makes on a squeeze.

Absent Yellow Rose, responder might drive to six hearts via Stayman. Yellow Rose enables opener to make an intelligent choice between six hearts and six notrump. Note that if responder had shown 3=4=4=2 or 2=4=4=3, the intelligent choice would be six hearts.

#4. Opener has,

♠ A 9 2 ♥ 6 3 2 ♦ A K Q ♣ A K 9

Opener	Responder
2 NT	4 ♥
4 ♠	5 ♣*

*values for six notrump; 4=2=4=3

Opener bids six notrump, the same contract that others will reach regardless of methods. Responder has,

♠ K Q 10 7 ♥ A K ♦ J 9 7 5 ♣ 7 6 3

so there are only eleven top tricks, but six notrump is odds-on with correct play, starting with the early surrender of a club trick to rectify the count for a squeeze should neither black suit divide favorably. Some pseudo-squeeze chances may arise if a defender, fearing that opener has four hearts, discards a club or a spade in order to keep four hearts headed by the jack or ten. Those who don't use Yellow Rose will reach six notrump on a Stayman auction but won't get the extra chance of a pseudo-squeeze, as opener will have denied holding four hearts. By concealing opener's suit-lengths, Yellow Rose makes the defense more difficult.

#5. Opener has,

♠ J 8 5 2 ♥ A Q 2 ♦ A Q ♣ A Q J

Opener	Responder
2 NT	4 ♥
4 ♠	5 ♣*

*values for six notrump; 4=2=4=3

Opener should bid six notrump, despite the four-four spade fit. His spades are weak, and he has queens in the other three suits, all strong indications to play in notrump. Responder has, ♠ A Q 10 4 ♥ 10 9 ♦ K J 7 4 ♣ K 8 6, and declarer will take the same tricks playing in notrump as in spades, maybe more. Responders who do not play Yellow Rose will bid six spades after receiving a three-spade reply to Stayman. Will opener correct to six notrump? If so, then he should have suppressed his weak spades in replying to Stayman.

#6. Opener has,

♠ A 8 5 ♥ A Q J ♦ J 3 ♣ A K J 9 7

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
2 NT	4 ♦
4 ♥	5 ♣*

*values for six notrump; 4=4-2=3

Serendipity strikes! Responder has bid clubs first, and opener learns of the eight-card club fit. Even though opener has nothing to ruff, he should

bid six clubs *at IMPs* to protect against a diamond lead through partner's possible doubleton king. At matchpoints, opener should risk six notrump. Even facing responder's actual,

♠ K Q J 3 ♥ K 10 8 3 ♦ K 5 ♣ Q 6 5,

six notrump is a favorite. A diamond lead is far from certain, especially when the artificial four-diamond response wasn't doubled, and the absence of a double increases the likelihood that the opening leader has the ace of diamonds, the queen of diamonds, or both.

Yellow Rose serves purposes other than those for which it was designed and serves them well. Unlike other conventions, which tend to replace judgment, Yellow Rose requires judgment for most effective use. This includes the evaluation of queens, both in number (three or four queens suggesting the desirability of a notrump

(Continued on page 74.)

IMPROVE YOUR DEFENSE SOLUTION

(Problem on page 69.)

NORTH

♠ A J 6 2
♥ 4 3 2
♦ 7 4
♣ K 8 6 4

WEST

♠ K 7 5
♥ 8
♦ Q 10 8 6 2
♣ Q J 10 9

EAST

♠ Q 10 9 8 4
♥ 7 6 5
♦ 3
♣ 7 5 3 2

SOUTH

♠ 3
♥ A K Q J 10 9
♦ A K J 9 5
♣ A

Your remaining trump may not look like much, but it is worth preserving. In

general, it is a bad idea to ruff what is or may be a losing trick for the other side. Perhaps the best way to understand the danger of such a premature move is to see what happens to this slam if you waste your precious heart. Declarer plays low and later ruffs a diamond in dummy, then pitches his last diamond loser on the king of clubs.

In contrast, what can declarer do if you discard on the second round of diamonds? Nothing effective. If South cannot trump a diamond in dummy, the defense will eventually get two diamond tricks (or the equivalent).

IMPROVE YOUR BIDDING SOLUTIONS

(Problems on page 64.)

Matchpoints, neither side vulnerable, the bidding has gone:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
—	—	—	1♥
?			

♠ K J 6 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ Q 10 8 6 4 ♣ A 5

(a) *Double*. Then convert a two-club advance to two diamonds, a move that will not overstate the hand's strength. The South hand is typical for this sequence. After a three-club advance over responder's two hearts, however, it's not clear whether to try to improve the contract, even though three diamonds would not be a strong move. Advancer will normally hold five clubs, could easily have six, and may well be short in diamonds. In that scenario, I would pass three clubs.

♠ K J 6 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ A 5 ♣ Q 10 8 6 4

(b) *Double*. Then, you must pass a two-diamond advance and take your lumps, because bidding three clubs would show substantial extra values.

♠ K J 6 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ 5 ♣ A Q 10 8 6 4

(c) *Two clubs*. Spades may come later, but doubling immediately risks overencouraging partner to bid diamonds in a competitive auction, after which you are likely to be in the soup.

♠ K J 6 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ A Q 10 8 6 4 ♣ A

(d) *Two diamonds*. If minELC were not in force, this hand would be strong enough for double-then-diamonds (although it might turn out to be more effective to overcall). However, in a minELC context, that would not be

a strong sequence, so doubling risks leaving yourself in an uncomfortable position after partner's most likely advance. The choice is between doubling, to be followed by a jump or free bid in diamonds over a club advance (you would be hoping, of course, that advancer is blessed with spade length) and a very strong two-diamond overcall. An advantage in overcalling is that South will usually avoid uncomfortable future decisions. Although two diamonds might end the auction when North-South can make four spades or three notrump, starting with a double will commit South to bid diamonds or to double again at virtually any level, and that's no picnic either.

♠ K 8 7 ♥ A 3 ♦ A Q 10 8 6 ♣ K Q 7

(e) *One notrump*. This announces hand-type and strength in one call. Double-then-diamonds would be slightly better if that sequence depicted a hand with extra values, but minELC precludes that interpretation in some likely auctions, and it's a slight stretch to double first, then to bid notrump with only one short heart guard and the likelihood that time will be required to develop winners.

♠ K J 8 7 4 ♥ 3 ♦ A Q 10 8 6 4 ♣ 2

(f) *Two hearts*. Here, minELC does not affect South's choice; doubling is not a possibility. I consider this promising hand close enough to the BWS 'weak' requirement (at this vulnerability) to warrant a two-suited overcall.

Sampling (continued from page 73.)

contract) and location (queens in the partnership's doubleton suits points to the desirability of a notrump contract).

A computer-generated sample is like a box of chocolates: You never know what you will get.