

seven-card suit sometimes offers no alternative."

FRANK STEWART: "Three hearts. I'm not sure of three-card raises, but two spades is dubious here, as I don't want to be in spades opposite:

♠ 10xx ♥ xx ♦ Kxx ♣ Qxxx."

KIT WOOLSEY: "Two hearts. If two hearts ends the auction, it could well be better. If partner bids again, I can follow with three spades, and he will have a good idea about why I didn't raise immediately."

BARNET SHENKIN: "Two hearts. Limit the hand while keeping the bidding low and constructive continuations."

ERIC KOHLER: "Two hearts. Start slow, but at matchpoints. I'd bid two spades and would rely on the opponents to reopen. Instead I will hope that either two hearts or a right partscore or that I can make up for my timidity later."

ERIC KOKISH: "Two hearts. If partner passes my rebid, I'd rather be in two hearts than elsewhere at this form of score. The hand is worth three hearts on strength, but that will too often lead to a notrump or to a high heart contract if poor North thinks that his stiff heart is a golden card."

ERIC WOOLDRIDGE: "Two hearts. At risk of getting passed, I underbid in the hope of showing spade support (and of control-bidding) later. If I were to bid the auction with three hearts, I'd feel about having shown my values, but I have no clue what to do after partner passes with three notrump."

ERIC L'ECUYER: "Two hearts. Least of all. Not two spades with three spades and seven hearts, as hearts may play a lot better than spades. Partner will bid again if he has a game. Two diamonds has merit and I'd bid two spades over a two-heart contract, but I don't want to risk playing at matchpoints."

Younger panelists have it right.

The sound of the opponents' silence with all those clubs is deafening. Partner will bid again. Then, we can come to life at our third turn, the best time for opener to show extras that consist solely of extra length. If, instead, we were to jump now, we'd spend the rest of the auction backpedaling.

Problem H

IMPs; North-South vul. You, South, hold:

♠ A Q 5 ♥ J 6 5 ♦ 10 8 7 ♣ K Q J 2

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
—	Pass	Pass	1 ♣
Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

What is your opening lead?

Action	Score	Votes
♣ K	100	13
♣ Q	90	3
♥ J	60	7
♦ 8	40	3
♦ 10	30	1
♠ 2	30	0
♥ 5	30	0
♦ 7	20	0
♠ Q	20	0
♠ A	10	0

In an earlier era, or playing against the few of my Neanderthal brethren who have stuck to the old ways, I would agree heartily with:

BARNET SHENKIN: "Diamond eight. Stay passive against one notrump. There will be time to switch to better suits if necessary."

KIT WOOLSEY: "Diamond ten. Passive is usually right with no long suit to lead against one notrump. The diamond lead is relatively safe, and it could establish a slow diamond trick or two in partner's hand."

The ten may protect partner's holding and will tell him that I have no other diamond honor. Declarer, having opened one club, is unlikely to hold four diamonds; if declarer has two diamonds and dummy has four, the ten-lead is less likely to cost a trick than the seven- or eight-lead."

Yes, a diamond lead would be most passive against an East who would open one diamond rather than one club holding:

♠ J 9 8 4 ♥ K Q 2 ♦ A K 9 ♣ 9 5 3

or:

♠ K 10 8 ♥ K 7 2 ♦ A K 9 ♣ 9 5 4 3,

and against a West who would respond one diamond rather than one heart holding:

♠ J 8 4 ♥ Q 7 6 2 ♦ A K 9 6 4 ♣ 9

or:

♠ J 8 4 ♥ 10 7 6 2 ♦ K J 9 6 4 ♣ A,

but there are few of us left.

FRANK STEWART: "Heart jack. But I would ask whether East could be 4=3=3=3. Then, the case for the king of clubs would be stronger."

You might also ask whether West would bypass diamonds with four or more strong ones and fewer than five hearts.

ROBERT LEVIN: "Heart jack. Not a club when declarer can easily have five, and not a spade lest that trigger a Player Memo if successful. I prefer the heart jack to the diamond eight, as partner will figure out the heart position quickly and return clubs when necessary, whereas the diamond eight might seem to be from length. I would not lead the heart jack at matchpoints, lest I hit dummy with five hearts or four with good spots."

ROBERT WOLFF: "Heart jack. No pointed-suit lead for me; with at least four hearts in dummy, the jack seems appropriate."

ERIC KOKISH: "Heart jack. All suits are possible, but I'm staying off the passive-looking diamond lead, as it will too often blow a trick while taking too long to establish one or two winners for partner. If declarer has only two hearts, we may be able to do some damage with heart leads and club returns through strength."