

"3NT," says Rigal. "I play 4NT as minors with no slam interest, and 4♠ shows minors with slam interest. I have no way to invite, so I'll guess that we can't make slam."

"3NT," says Walker, "or 4NT if that is quantitative in Bulletin Standard. I think 4NT is probably Blackwood, so I'll settle for the sure thing."

Even though 3NT is a practical bid, you have 17 high-card points. You would bid 3NT with an ace less, so you could miss a slam. In fact, five experts bid 6NT.

"6NT," says Meckstroth. "No real way to invite, so I'll bid what I think I can make."

"I bid 6NT," says Lawrence. "Knowing where the missing values are should help us in the play."

"6NT kind of just jumps out at you," says Cohen. "I don't want to just invite, because partner, with the ♣A and three kings, will pass 4NT and opposite that (super) minimum, I have a play."

Four panelists bid 4NT. Is it clear what that means? Some of the panelists thought so.

"4NT," says Montin. "This is quantitative. I have no room to do anything else."

"4NT should show a strong notrump hand," says Sanborn. "Slam chances are good."

"4NT," says Falk. "This is ugly! I'd really like to just invite slam, but 4NT is Blackwood, so I'll just make sure we're not off two aces and head for 6NT."

Freeman bid 5NT.

"Absent discussion," he says, "partner might take 4NT as minors."

"3NT got the most votes," say the Joyces, "but we think it is way too conservative. A quantitative 4NT seems about right with 17 HCPs. We admire pass because it might beat game scores."

The Sutherlins were the only contestants to pass.

"When we make 3NT," they say, "we can probably get 500 or 800. If we can make 6NT, we should collect 800 or more. Pass wins many IMPs when our counterparts at the other table go down in notrump, and lets us stay even or average the rest of the

time."

It was slightly surprising that there were not more votes for pass. If declarer has seven spades to the A-J-10, you may be able to limit his winners to five spades tricks. It is unlikely declarer could reach dummy to lead through you. In that case, you would score 800 — beating your counterparts who are not in slam (or who go set in slam).

Playing 4NT as quantitative would be convenient on this hand. With different hands, however, using it as Blackwood or to show minors could be better. The crux of the problem is this: Do you and your partner have a clear definition of what 4NT means in this sequence?

5. Matchpoints. None vul.

♠ A 5 4 ♥ 7 6 ♦ K 9 8 3 ♣ A Q 8 3

West	North	East	South
2♥	Pass	2♠	1♣
Pass	2NT	Pass	?

Call	Votes	Award
3♦	13	100
Pass	3	40
3♣	1	30
3NT	1	10

Bidding 2NT to compete

Most of the panel thought that 2NT was for minors.

"3♦," says Walker. "Partner would double here to show a trap pass of 2♥, so his 2NT has to be a takeout for the minors with longer diamonds than clubs."

"2NT has to be for the minors," echoes Kennedy.

"If partner wanted to double 2♥," says Lawrence, "then he would double 2♠ — not as a strictly penalty action — but to show his heart penalty kind of hand. He did not do this, so 2NT shows the minors."

Meyers, the Cochamiro and Sanborn all agreed with Lawrence that partner should double to show the heart trap pass.

"3♦," says Montin. "Partner is showing diamonds with club support. Based on the bidding, he probably has four hearts and 1=4=5=3 shape."

"3♦," agrees Cohen. "When you predict a unanimous panel, you risk looking silly — but what else? Partner's bid is takeout in modern bridge. Maybe the computer program will screw up the vote by interpreting 2NT as natural."

Good prediction. Bridge Buff raised to 3NT. Computer software has come a long way and Mr. Buff has had some good scores recently. A deal like this, however, shows that there is still room for improvement.

A few other panelists bid something besides 3♦. They didn't agree that partner would double 2♠ to show the penalty double of 2♥.

"Pass," say the Sutherlins. "Partner probably has about 10 points and wanted to defend 2♥ doubled. 2NT rates to be a fine contract, even if partner has a four-card minor."

"Pass," agrees Robinson. "Partner has an invitational hand with a heart stack."

"Pass," echoes Baze. "Partner has good hearts and some hand that did not warrant an immediate 2NT bid:

♠ K 7 3 ♥ A Q 10 8 2 ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ 5 4."

Meckstroth bid 3♣.

"I think 2NT is for takeout," he says. "Partner should reopen with a double if he had a trap pass."

Soloway summed up the case for bidding 3♦.

"If you have a trap pass of 2♥," he says, "double is the traditional way of announcing that hand. It would not be a penalty double. When you get stuck with 9 or 10 HCP with five diamonds and three clubs, you need a way to compete." □

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Kenneth Rexford, Lima OH	500
Scott Stearns, Elberta AL	470
Scott Chupack, Gurnee IL	460
Arun Guha, Silver Spring MD	460
Jim Mathers, Halifax NS	450
Alexander Kolesnik, Morro Bay CA	440
Eric Mayefsky, Stanford CA	440
Jay Baum, Germantown TN	420
Jay Levy, Amherst NY	410
Robert Walters, White Rock BC	410