

Call	Votes	Score
4♠	10	100
3♠	9	90
Dbl	0	30

Preempts can give you nasty problems

Do you make the slight overbid of 4♠ or the slight underbid of 3♠? Neither bid seems exactly right and the panel is split.

"3♠," says Falk. "4♠ shows a more solid hand than this (at least the ♠Q instead of the ♠2)."

Soloway agrees. "Not the suit or strength for 4♠."

Freeman brings up another good point. "Good enough playing hand to bid game, but partner might expect better."

Rigal agrees with this. "Yes, the hand is worth 4♠, but that might get us too high."

"Any more than 3♠ and partner may push too hard," echoes Baze.

Others are more aggressive.

"4♠," say the Sutherlins. "No go slow tactics for us."

"An overbid in terms of high cards," says Gitelman, "but reasonable on playing strength."

"Too good for 3♠, which I would bid with less in balancing seat," agrees Cohen.

"4♠. You would bid 3♠ without the ♦A," points out Lawrence.

"North can have too many 9- or 10-point hands that make game."

Carruthers sums up the crux of the problem. He bids 4♠ but says, "Pray that partner does not think he has enough to bid on. 3♠ is simply not enough with this hand."

"4♠. Don't need much from partner," says Meckstroth.

Meckstroth held this hand in the Mixed Pairs at the 2002 Montreal World Bridge Championships, an event he won with Becky Rogers. He bid 4♠ then too, was doubled and made it with a slip from the defenders.

Dlr: North ♠ —
 Vul: N-S ♥ J 5 3
 ♦ 10 4 3
 ♣ K Q 10 9 7 3 2

♠ K J 9 8 4 3 2	♠ 6 5
♥ 8	♥ K 9 7 4 2
♦ A K 6 2	♦ J 5
♣ 4	♣ A J 8 5

N
E
W
S

♠ A Q 10 7	
♥ A Q 10 6	
♦ Q 9 8 7	
♣ 6	

West	North	East	South
Meckstroth		Rogers	
	3♣	Pass	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All Pass			

5. Matchpoints. N-S vulnerable.

♠ K 10 7 6 ♥ K ♦ Q 7 6 5 4 2 ♣ K J

West	North	East	South
2♥	Pass	Pass	?

Call	Votes	Score
Dbl	16.5	100
Pass	2	50
2♠	0	50
3♦	0.5	50

The balancing blues

Do you balance? If so what do

you bid? Your diamond suit is moth-eaten, but you do have six of them. You'd like to double to keep spades in the picture or partner might convert to a penalty by passing. But if you double, partner might bid clubs. What to do?

Most of the panel doubled.

"Double. Yup, I see all the flaws," says Cohen. "Still, it's the winning long-run matchpoint action with shortness in their suit."

"I don't like it, but I don't seem to fare well passing these hands out," says Meckstroth.

"Double," says Sanborn. These days, many people play equal level conversion, so double then 3♦ over partner's 3♣ shows no extra values."

Falk also doubles. "At matchpoints, I think it's clear to take some action, however distasteful. This would be a very tough decision at IMPs."

The Colchamiro's are split. Janet prefers 3♦ and Mel prefers double.

What if we double and partner bids clubs?

"Double," says Kennedy. "This leaves spades, a conversion of the double and 3NT all in the picture. If partner bids 3♣, I'll sit for it and hope he has length in the suit."

Soloway agrees. "Double, especially if we play equal level conversion. Will pass 3♣ if we are not. There are too many other possible contracts including 2♥ doubled."

Baze passes. "Even at matchpoints, vulnerable balancing (particularly beyond the one level) is serious. I don't have a serious hand."

This time, Pass would have worked. When the hand was played, partner held:

♠ 9 4 2 ♥ Q 5 3 2 ♦ 10 9 ♣ A 10 5 4.

The final contract was 3♦ doubled by Meckstroth, who collected plus 500.

The panelists are aware that bidding is dangerous, but most take the risk anyway. Even though passing would have worked on this hand, that action often doesn't score well, as Meckstroth points out. Once you decide to act, double is the most flexible action.

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