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BIDDING 6-PACK

Problems

This week we have a 5-pack or a 7-pack, it all depends upon your method of counting.

Board 9	E-W Vul
♠ AKQJ54	<i>South West North East</i>
♥ T	Pass 3♥
♦ 872	??
♣ KQ8	

Board 11	None Vul
♠ A	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ KJT86	Pass
♦ AK764	1♥ Pass 3♥ Pass
♣ KQ	4NT Pass 5♠ Pass
	??

Board 13	Both Vul
♠ K4	<i>East South West North</i>
♥ T32	Pass
♦ T9543	Pass 1♥ 1♠ Dbl
♣ QJT	??

Board 24, 26, 28

Three East hands with a common theme. In each case, what is your opening bid?

Board 24: ♠ AJ2, ♥ QT8, ♦ QJ83, ♣ KQ7

Board 26: ♠ KT2, ♥ AK9, ♦ 983, ♣ KQ76

Board 28: ♠ AT84, ♥ AQJ, ♦ A82, ♣ 942

Board 27	None Vul
♠ J	<i>South West North East</i>
♥	??
♦ AJ8753	
♣ AKQJ63	

Solutions

Board 9	E-W Vul
♠ AKQJ54	<i>South West North East</i>
♥ T	Pass 3♥
♦ 872	??
♣ KQ8	

South has no idea whether the hand belongs to N-S or to E-W. But she does know that if West bids 4♥ she will want to bid 4♠. She should also suspect that either or both of 4♥ and 4♠ are likely to make, in which case she might as well bid 4♠ immediately. The expectation is that either it will make or be a good sacrifice. As it happens, it's the former.

Board 11	None Vul
♠ A	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ KJT86	Pass
♦ AK764	1♥ Pass 3♥ Pass
♣ KQ	4NT Pass 5♠ Pass
	??

After East makes a limit raise (either with a natural 3♥ or via Bergen), West is headed for slam. 4NT was Roman Key Card Blackwood and 5♠ showed two Key Cards and the trump Queen. At this point West will want to be in 7♥ provided that there is no Diamond loser. There is a way to find out! It's a relatively obscure extension to Roman Key Card, and it's called the Specific Suit Ask. After receiving the response to 4NT, West now bids a new suit to inquire into Partner's holding in that suit. So, in this case West bids 6♦. The responses are a little tricky and you have to remember that an Ace in the asking suit is already known so that Axx and xxx are equivalent (and equally bad) holdings. So, with the ♦A reduced temporarily to a spot card, the responses are:

- 6♥ (a return to the trump suit) is the worst holding (xxx or xxxx)
- 1st step (not counting trumps, so in this case 6♠) is a third-round control (xx or the ♦Q)
- 2nd step (6NT) is a second round control (singleton or King)

That's a simplified version, you can google "specific suit asks" for more on the subject.

Anyway, those with a Specific Suit Ask at their disposal can trot it out and bid 7♥ with confidence. Those who don't have that gadget will have to guess.

Board 13

♠ K4
♥ T32
♦ T9543
♣ QJT

Both Vul

<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>
			Pass
Pass	1♥	1♠	Dbl
??			

After that Negative Double, what are the options? More specifically, how do you use Redouble and 2♠ in this situation? Here are some possibilities:

- *Rosenkranz*: With this convention, Redouble shows a top honor (Ace or King or Queen) and a Spade raise (usually three), and 2♠ shows a Spade raise without a top honor.
- *Reverse Rosenkranz*: As previously but with the meanings of the bids reversed. Also whimsically known as *Guildestern*.
- *Munson*: In this method a Spade raise may or may not have a Spade honor, and the Redouble shows the ♠A or ♠K and just one or two Spades. Additionally, if the Overcaller makes a spot card opening lead in the suit then the magnitude of that spot card is used to indicate suit preference.

Take your pick. Rosenkranz (or the reverse version) is most commonly used, but we have a personal preference for Munson which has valuable lead-directing benefits.

Board 24, 26, 28

Three East hands with a common theme.

Board 24: ♠ AJ2, ♥ QT8, ♦ QJ83, ♣ KQ7

Board 26: ♠ KT2, ♥ AK9, ♦ 983, ♣ KQ76

Board 28: ♠ AT84, ♥ AQJ, ♦ A82, ♣ 942

Are these hands worth a 15-17 1NT opening? They all have 15 HCP, with unimpressive intermediates, and they are all square (for which some players immediately deduct a point). There is a trade-off, when opening 1NT with these miserable hands, between getting too high and keeping the opponents out of the auction. Hand evaluation is a wonderful thing, but tactics also count for something, and a big consideration is the vulnerability.

Let's start with Board 28, where we are White vs Red. We should be bidding 1NT on the merest of pretexts, the conditions are perfect! As they are Red, the opponents will be hesitant to step into the auction and, as we are White, if we go down a couple that may not be such a bad thing.

How about Board 26 where we are Red vs Red? This one is an in-between. We like the fact that

they are Red, and again would open 1NT, knowing full well that we'll occasionally go for -200.

And Board 24? Here the opponents are not vulnerable, and will jump into the auction fearlessly, so the preemptive benefits of opening 1NT are less than on the previous hands. Added to that, this hand is the worst of the worst, not only square but also littered with Queens and Jacks. The hand is so bad and the conditions such that we would open this with 1♦.

Board 27

♠ J
♥
♦ AJ8753
♣ AKQJ63

None Vul

<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
			??

What is your opening bid? Even though you have a three-loser hand, you would not want to open 2♣, those sequences tend to get crowded when the 2♣ opener has a minor-oriented hand (even more so if it's a minor *two-suiter*). If you do not open 2♣, then with that 6-6 hand the normal thing to do is to open the higher-ranking suit. But look what will now happen. North will bid 1♠ and East will throw a wrench in the works with a 2♥ overcall. Now you don't have a good way to show your Clubs! 3♣ is non-forcing (though in the circumstances it is unlikely to get passed out), 4♣ might be interpreted as a Splinter, 5♣ pretty much gives up on slam (or even worse, you may be playing this as Exclusion!), and 6♣ is altogether too ambitious. Added to that, by bidding Diamonds first and then Clubs, you run the risk of being taken back to Diamonds on some hands where Clubs will play better (for example, if North is 2-2).

It would surely be better to open the hand 1♣! The plan is to reverse into Diamonds (if the auction allows) and later bid some large number of Clubs. The auction will start:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1♣!
Pass	1♠	2♥	3♦

Isn't that better? South has shown better Clubs than Diamonds (though in theory they are really supposed to be longer), and has also shown a good hand (that 3♦ bid *is* forcing). Next time around she will bid 5♣ showing a self-sufficient suit.