

From the author of *Competitive Bidding in the 21st Century*

IT'S YOUR CALL

MARSHALL MILES



Master Point Press on the Internet

[*www.masterpointpress.com*](http://www.masterpointpress.com)

Our main site, with information about our books and software, reviews and more.

[*www.masteringbridge.com*](http://www.masteringbridge.com)

Our site for bridge teachers and students — free downloadable support material for our books, helpful articles, forums and more.

[*www.bridgeblogging.com*](http://www.bridgeblogging.com)

Read and comment on regular articles from MPP authors and other bridge notables.

[*www.ebooksbridge.com*](http://www.ebooksbridge.com)

Purchase downloadable electronic versions of MPP books and software.

Text © 2009 Marshall Miles

All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material, except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

Master Point Press
331 Douglas Ave.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5M 1H2 (416)781-0351

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Websites: www.masterpointpress.com
www.masteringbridge.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.ebooksbridge.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Miles, Marshall, 1926-

It's your call / Marshall Miles.

ISBN 978-1-55494-147-6

1. Contract bridge--Bidding. I. Title.

GV1282.4.M543 2009

795.41'52

C2009-904815-9

Editor

Ray Lee

Copy editor/interior format

Sally Sparrow

Cover and interior design

Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13 12 11 10 09

PRINTED IN CANADA

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
A Word About The Panelists	6
PART ONE	
The Bidding Panel	11
PART TWO	
A Few Bidding Suggestions	147
PART THREE	
It's your call. . .	181
PART FOUR	
My Answers	191

Introduction

The best way to improve your bidding judgment is to decide what you would do in various bidding situations, and compare your choices with those of the experts. When their call is not the same as yours, you should try to understand why. In an average session of bridge you may have only one or two challenging hands, the rest being routine or outside your control. (Perhaps the opponents did all the bidding while you had no choice but to pass throughout.) Each hand presented in this book requires you to think about several things: what the opponents' bids reveal about their hands, what partner has bid or failed to bid, and the pros and cons of your various choices. It would require eighty or ninety sessions of bridge to encounter as many challenging hands as are shown here. When you did encounter a challenging hand, you wouldn't know what others would do in your position (although your partner would usually volunteer his opinion, especially if your choice did not work out well).

I have been the moderator of a bidding panel for *The Bridge News* (the monthly bulletin of District 23 — Los Angeles County) for the last twenty-five years or so. *The Forum* (for District 22 — Southern California) has used many of the same hands, so in some cases I chose which comments to use. I have purposely chosen controversial hands (just as *The Bridge World* does), and have often disagreed with the majority of the panel. But no matter whom you agree with or whether you prefer a choice of your own, you can learn something from the choices of the various panelists and the reasons for their choices. There isn't room in this book to show all the comments, so I have chosen two or three that best state the opposing views, sometimes shortening them and always adding my own comments. The panelists were told to assume 'standard' bidding (whatever that is), but if they had a convention or treatment they thought was better than standard, they were encouraged to mention it and argue its merits. I have also made several suggestions of my own. In District 23, I assumed that 'standard' bidding is primarily Bridge World Standard (BWS) except that a 1NT response to a major by a non-passed hand is forcing, rather than 'almost forcing'. BWS includes 5-card major openings, 2/1 forcing to game unless responder rebids his original suit, and most of the popular conventions such as Michaels, Drury, Stayman, transfer responses to 1NT and 2NT, etc. If someone made a non-standard bid (such as a forcing club or weak notrump) an explanation was given.

In *The Bridge World's* 'Master Solvers' Club', the top vote usually scores 100 whether the moderator likes it or not. However, if there are seven votes

for a conservative pass, and seventeen votes for more aggressive actions, the moderator may give the top score to one of the aggressive actions which received only five or six votes. Since I have a much smaller panel and I have deliberately chosen many hands where I was in the minority or think a new treatment would be better, I have not rated the responses at all — I hate to give myself 20 or even 40 out of 100 when I think I am right! But I have given you a fair sample of the major choices, often from international experts, along with their reasoning, so you can decide for yourself which you like best.

Described above is the first section of the book, which forms the majority: the problems submitted to a bidding panel, with the panelists' answers and my comments. The next section contains my suggestions regarding specific conventions and treatments which I think would be helpful for you to adopt if you haven't done so already. Most of them can be added to your present system without making basic changes. The final section of the book is a quiz, similar to the first part, except that only my comments are given, generally at greater length than we allowed the panelists for their answers and explanations. Now it's your call.

A WORD ABOUT THE PANELISTS

Most of the *dramatis personae* were well-known to me, and I've listed them below for the benefit of readers who may not be as familiar with some of the names. One or two of the panelists, however, were from another District, and I am not familiar with their backgrounds, so have not listed them here.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| WAFIK ABDOU | Egyptian born, now winning National titles as a USA resident. |
| KEN BARBOUR | One of Britain's first Life Masters, now resident in the USA. |
| GERALD BARE | NABC Mixed Teams winner in 1970, with well over 100 Regional wins. |
| MARK BARTUSEK | My regular partner until he moved out of the area in about 2000. A software engineer and a very successful poker player. |
| GRANT BAZE | The pro's pro, his career included numerous national and international successes. |

- LEO BELL Co-author of *Two-Over-One Game Forcing* with Tom Oakley. A loyal friend and bridge partner, even though we don't always bid alike.
- DAVID CHECHELASHVILI Immigrant from Georgia (formerly part of the USSR).
- VIC CHERNOFF An actuary by profession, with numerous Regional wins to his credit.
- CHRIS COMPTON National champion with many Regional wins.
- ED DAVIS Inventor of various bidding ideas and methods, with numerous Regional wins.
- CAMERON DONER A Canadian who plays most of his bridge in the USA, Cam is in the top ten all-time masterpoint holders in his own country.
- MITCH DUNITZ Owner of a real estate investment company; many Regional wins.
- BILLY EISENBERG Multiple World Champion, one of the original Aces.
- BOB ETTER Pro football player turned bridge player, winner of National Swiss teams in 1981.
- JEFF GOLDSMITH Inventor of Internet Bridge Movies, and Puppet Major-suit Raises. Also a gourmet cook and gracious host.
- STEPHEN GOLDSTEIN Wrote a daily bridge column for *The Washington Times* for fourteen years.
- ROSS GRABEL Winner of four National titles and numerous Regionals.
- FRED HAMILTON World champion, with numerous National titles.
- BOB HAMMAN No introduction required.
- MARK ITABASHI More than 300 Regional wins.
- PAUL IVASKA Two-time National Champion with numerous Regional wins.
- JAN JANITSCHKE Four National titles; author of *Bridge Mini Series*.
- JOHN JONES My frequent partner and teammate — also a successful sports coach and fantasy sports player.

- EDDIE KANTAR My long-time friend and first expert partner, with whom I have had my best results at the national level.
- JOE KIVEL National champion with many Regional wins.
- DANNY KLEINMAN A prolific writer and theorist, Contributing Editor to *The Bridge World*, panelist and frequent moderator of ‘Master Solvers’ Club’.
- ALEX KOLESNIK A college professor and immigrant from Russia whose parents were the men’s and women’s checkers champions of the USSR in respective years.
- MR. MEALY MOUTH A well-known, very conservative bridge writer and theorist, who enjoyed the freedom of expression that using a pseudonym imparted.
- ROSE MELTZER The first woman to be on a winning Bermuda Bowl team.
- JILL MEYERS One of the world’s top women players, with multiple WBF and NABC titles. In 1999, she became the first woman since Dorothy Truscott to win the Blue Ribbon Pairs.
- ADAM MYERSON A professor at CalTech, Adam coached their national championship bridge team in 2007.
- MIKE PASSELL An inductee into the Bridge Hall of Fame.
- NANCY PASSELL Nancy is a WBF World Master.
- ERIC RODWELL One of the world’s best, with numerous WBF titles. A leading bidding theorist.
- RICK ROEDER While he has represented the USA in international competition, Rick’s primary focus has been as a consulting actuary. He is one of a handful of people who have passed all the actuarial exams and the CPA exams.
- DAVID SACKS Runner up in three NABC events, numerous Regional wins.
- MICHAEL SCHREIBER Under a pseudonym, the original moderator for the bidding panel in *Southern California Bridge News*.

- JOSH SHER One of my ex-partners — a young banker who understood my Unbalanced Diamond system better than most.
- MIKE SHUMAN A *Bridge World* ‘Master Solvers’ Club’ panelist for more than 30 years.
- MICHAEL SHUSTER Learned bridge at the age of five, and went on to play on three USA teams in World Junior competition.
- ALAN SONTAG Multiple World and National Champion, author of the classic *The Bridge Bum*. Now lives near Washington, DC.
- JOANNA STANSBY Women’s World Teams Champion 2007.
- LEW STANSBY Multiple World and National Champion.
- JOHN SWANSON Co-developer of the Walsh system, winner of the Bermuda Bowl in 1977 and a World Life Master.
- JIM TRITT National champion with many Regional wins.
- BILL WICKHAM One of my frequent partners.
- JON WITTES World Mixed Pairs champion in 1986 playing with wife Pam.
- KIT WOOLSEY World and National champion, leading bidding theorist, and author of the classic *Matchpoints*.

PART ONE

THE BIDDING PANEL

1. Vulnerability immaterial, IMPs

♠ 7 4	West	North	East	South
♥ 3		2♣	pass	?
♦ 5				
♣ Q J 10 8 7 6 5 3 2				To Solution

2. Both vul., matchpoints

♠ A Q 8 7	West	North	East	South
♥ 10				1♣
♦ Q 8	pass	1♦	pass	1♠
♣ A K 8 6 4 3	pass	2♥	pass	3♣
	pass	3NT	pass	?
				To Solution

3. Neither vul., matchpoints

♠ 5	West	North	East	South
♥ A J 9 6	pass	pass	2♥	?
♦ K Q 4				
♣ K Q J 10 2				To Solution

4. NS vul., matchpoints

♠ Q 5 2	West	North	East	South
♥ 7 5 2		1♦	pass	1NT
♦ K Q	2♥	3♥	pass	?
♣ Q J 9 5 3				To Solution

5. Both vul., IMPs

♠ A K J 8
 ♥ 9 7
 ♦ 10
 ♣ A K Q J 6 2

West	North	East	South
			1♣
pass	pass	1♥	?

[To Solution](#)

6. Neither vul., IMPs

♠ 8 4
 ♥ 8 5
 ♦ Q 8 3
 ♣ A K 8 6 4 2

West	North	East	South
			pass
pass	1♠	3♥	?

[To Solution](#)

7. EW vul., IMPs

Apportion the blame for bidding a slam.

♠ K Q 6 5	N W E S	♠ 7 4 3 2
♥ —		♥ A K 8
♦ K Q 8		♦ 10 4 3
♣ A K J 10 5 4		♣ Q 8 7

West	North	East	South
1♣	4♥	dbl	pass
6♣	all pass		

[To Solution](#)

8. EW vul., IMPs

♠ K 7 5 4 3
 ♥ 6 2
 ♦ 8
 ♣ Q 9 7 5 4

West	North	East	South
		1♥	?

- What call do you make?
- If you pass, LHO bids 4♥ and partner passes, what call do you make?
- If the opponents are playing a strong club system, how would that affect your answers to (a) and (b)?

[To Solution](#)

1. Vulnerability immaterial, IMPs

To Problem

West	North	East	South
	2♣	pass	?

♠ 7 4 ♥ 3 ♦ 5 ♣ Q J 10 8 7 6 5 3 2

LEO BELL: 5♣. Partnerships rarely have agreements about bids like this, but I hope my partner will work out that I have long clubs with no slam interest unless he has virtually all the missing keycards. I think any other sequence would be too encouraging.

VIC CHERNOFF: 2♦, assuming standard bidding. I'll sort out the rest later depending on further developments. If this is an advertisement for the 2♥ 'double negative' so be it, but I am not convinced of its efficacy. (What if opener's primary suit is hearts, with or without a side suit?)

My choice is 5♣. I think it is more logical to try to 'show what you have' and let partner place the contract than to hope that after further bidding by partner you can place the contract yourself. Almost all serious partnerships have a way to show a solid suit over a strong 2♣ opening (perhaps by responding 3NT). With a one-loser suit, missing the ace or king (not AK109xxxx, since opposite two small, that could become a no-loser suit most of the time), you can respond just below your real suit at the four-level. So when you don't make any of those bids, partner knows you don't have any of those hands. On the actual deal, partner, whose big hand included all four aces (with the ♣A singleton), raised to 6♣, which was cold. 5♣ was the top choice in District 23, although some panelists expressed doubt as to whether partner would interpret it as intended. Ironically in the District 22 panel, which includes guest panelists from other districts, no one chose to bid 5♣!

2. Both vul., matchpoints

To Problem

West	North	East	South
			1♣
pass	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	2♥	pass	3♣
pass	3NT	pass	?

♠ A Q 8 7 ♥ 10 ♦ Q 8 ♣ A K 8 6 4 3

HOW GOOD IS **YOUR** BIDDING?

FOR ABOUT 25 YEARS, world-renowned bridge theorist Marshall Miles was the moderator of a monthly all-star bidding panel for a California bridge publication. This book comprises his favorite problems from those years, together with the panel's views and the author's own trenchant comments. As ever, he goes his own way; he refuses, for example, to assign scores to various bids on the grounds that he wasn't going to give himself 20/100 when he knew his answer was right, even if no one on the panel agreed with him! Bonus sections include Miles' latest thoughts and recommendations on a number of cutting-edge bidding ideas, as well as more bidding problems from his own recent playing experiences.



MARSHALL MILES (California), though now in his eighties, is still regarded as one of the world's leading bidding theorists. His long and successful playing career includes a World Senior Teams Championship in 2004, and his book *How to Win at Duplicate Bridge* is considered among the all-time classics on the game.

