

2024 Bronze Bidding Challenge: February

The problems came from various sources, and we have not noted the hand opposite, so we do not know what might work best at the table.

Problem 1 Teams None Vul Dealer East

♠—	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥876	-	-	1♥	Pass
♦AK9732	2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
♣AJT7	?			

Many players have not discussed continuations after a reverse rebid, so this was a tough one for our competitors. Peter Edmond does not agree with the commonly held view that rebidding in a higher suit, thus taking the auction to the 3-level, shows extra values, so he simply rebids bids 4♥, the game nearest his thumb. The rest of us are taught that a reverse bid does promise extra values, at least 15HCP. Opposite a 2-over-1 response, which normally promises 10+HCP, we have game-going values, so the auction becomes forcing to game. Whatever we bid, partner cannot pass.

SANDERS: 3♥. East has rebid a higher-ranking suit (reversed) forcing me to give preference at a higher level so is showing extra values. This means 3♥ is game forcing after a 2-level response. Slam looks a great prospect if partner has very good hearts!

SIME: 3♥. We are Game Forcing (reverse opposite a 2-level response) so 3♥ is stronger than 4♥. 3♦ is an alternative as it may be wrong to lock into hearts. However, if I bid 3♦, it may become impossible to show such a good hand for hearts.

Some panellists are less sure of the forcing position, and wish to make quite sure of reaching at least game, so they trot out the fourth suit:

HAMILTON: 3♣. Fourth suit forcing. Might just delay the problems until the next round, but at least it sets up a game force.

MALE: 3♣. A huge hand, 3-card support for partner's first suit, an opening hand opposite a reverse. I will bid fourth suit forcing, to elicit more information from partner, and let them know I have opening values.

FRAME: 3♣. Partner is showing a strong hand with more hearts than spades so I want to create a game force with Fourth Suit Forcing before deciding upon the final contract - I suspect that 4♥ will be sufficient but, once in a blue moon, partner has a suitable hand for slam and I am able to take care of three of his minor suit losers as well as ruffing some of his losing Spades so I'm not giving up hope that he could hold something like Axxx, AKQxxx, x, xx or better which should give slam some kind of play!

Seems to me that 3♣ leaves more room to investigate the best strain, which may not be hearts. We have no points in partner's suits and even Russell's perfect minimum may struggle to keep trump control while organising ruffs in dummy. 6♦ may be a better slam if partner is 4=5=3=1, and perhaps we should settle for 3NT when partner is 4=5=1=3.

Over 3♣ Partner will rebid 3♦ with 3-card support; 3♥ with a sixth heart; 3♠ with 5 spades and 6 hearts; and 3NT with minimum distribution and a club stopper. And we shall be better placed to decide where to play.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
3♣	3	10	9
3♥	4	9	14
3♦	0	8	2
2NT	0	7	2
4♥	1	6	16
3NT	0	5	6
4♣	0	2	1
4NT	0	1	2

(I would normally give top marks to the choice with most votes, but a couple of panellists sent in their responses after I had allocated 10 points to 3cx. It was too late to rescore!)

Problem 2 Teams: None Vul Dealer North

♠8653	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥53	-	1♠	Dbl	Redbl*
♦QJT3	?			
♣KJT				

*Redbl = 9+HCP with at most 2 spades

Another situation that many inexperienced players will never have come across – I suspect that the blue card never leaves many bidding boxes. We are taught that “takeout doubles must be taken out”, sound advice. However, when RHO makes a call over the takeout double it is no longer necessary – partner has another go and can take out for himself.

FRAME: Pass: I don't consider this hand as strong enough to make a free bid as RHO is reasonably strong with no fit, so I'll leave it to partner for now.

HAMILTON: Pass, not long enough suit to be worth rescuing into 2♦ just yet (problem if partner rescues into 2♥ though)

Derek has experience of that very problem.

SANDERS: 2♦. You don't often see the traditional penalty redouble these days. I remember passing on a hand like this only to hear partner bid 2♥. This did not have a happy ending so will bid the longest suit and hope for the best this time!

Indeed. The generally accepted approach when you might be in big trouble is to bid the cheapest suit (here clubs) when you feel strongly that this is the best spot. Passing suggests that you are content to let partner choose where to play. If you were 4-4 in the red suits you would pass. Then if partner bid a red suit, you would be happy, and over a 2♣ rebid you could convert to 2♦, offering a choice between the red suits. When you are short in the highest-ranking unbid suit it is best to tell partner you cannot tolerate it. Peter and Jim put it more succinctly:

EDMOND: 2♦. Denying 4 cards in hearts.

TUDOR: 2♦. If I pass then partner might, should North pass, bid 2♥.

Iain sums it up:

SIME: 2♦. Probably our best spot even if partner has only three of them. Pass the redouble is an option, but partner might think that I can tolerate hearts.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♦	6	10	32
PASS	2	8	15
1NT	0	5	3
3♦	0	1	2

Problem 3 Teams: All Vul Dealer North

♠J94	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥KT94	-	1♠	2♦	Pass
♦-	?			
♣AJ8732				

For once the panel speaks with one voice:

McKAY: Aaagh! **PASS** and hope we don't get doubled.

TUDOR: **PASS.** We've not been doubled yet, so “don't panic, Mr Mainwaring” until we are.

It is tempting to try to improve the contract, but ...

MALE: **PASS.** An area for discussion, 3♣ or pass, depends on agreements. I prefer pass: when you are in a hole stop digging.

For most of us the change of suit is forcing for one round at least. This would be a good time to have a different agreement, but we cannot pick and choose.

SANDERS: Pass: Bidding a suit is forcing so let's see if North reopens with a double, and South passes. Now I can rescue partner into clubs. You never know, partner may bid 2♥ enroute, after the reopening double, to save the day!

SIME: PASS. No reason (other than the wire) to expect that I will improve the contract by bidding. How would I feel after 3♣-Pass- 3♦- Double?

That is indeed the worry. Bidding a new suit here means you can tolerate partner returning to his own suit. Best to pass the noo'. Maybe you will get the chance to bid clubs next time round without implying any fit for partner; or maybe you will have to rescue hm from 2♦ doubled. Fingers crossed!

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
PASS	8	10	20
2♥	0	8	11
3♣	0	5	19
2♠	0	3	1
2NT	0	1	1

Problem 4 Teams: NS Vul Dealer East

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠Q3				
♥QJT5	-	-	1♠	Pass
♦53	2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
♣KQT83	?			

This time the panel is divided. In uncharacteristically pessimistic mood:

FRAME: PASS. I'm not good enough for a responder's reverse so, for a third time, I'm passing with not unreasonable values - partner may well have diamonds and spades and any further involvement from me is likely to take us too high!

But most agree that the 2-over-one response makes the auction forcing as far as two of opener's suit, so 2♦ demands another bid. The hand appears to be a bit of a misfit, but some go for the game invitation:

McKAY: 2NT. This is a relatively nice 10 count (and I'm an optimist).

SANDERS: 2NT:Very close, slightly prefer this to 2♠. The soft values and tens look better, still, communications may prove problematic and 2♠ might be better.

SIME: 2NT- Not all misfitting 10 counts should bid 2NT. This one is bolstered by two working tens.

The others vote for discretion, giving false preference to partner's first suit:

Edmond: 2♠. Minimal (having shown 10+) simple suit preference, not good enough for Fourth Suit Forcing, or an invitational 2NT.

This limits the hand to a minimum two-over-one and need not end the auction. Because partner's change of suit is forcing it is not a limit bid. With a better than minimum hand partner will bid again and we can accept a game invitation.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♠	3	10	6
2NT	4	9	37
PASS	1	7	0
2♥	0	4	8
3NT	0	2	1

(Re scores. see note to Problem 1: pesky late responses!)

Competitors Top Scores

Congratulations to Rob Meechan with a maximum score.

Well done to Jane Smithson, John Smithson, Robin MacPherson and Alan Paterson who were just shy of a top score.

John Smithson is also currently leading the annual competition.

Name	Rank	Club	Score
Peter Martin	5 Star Master	New Melville	31
Will Iles	3 Star Master	Stewartry	33
Roy Heanes	2 Star Master	New Melville	30
Robin MacPherson	1 Star Master	New Melville	39
Jane Smithson	1 Star Master	Berwick	39
Pam Warner	1 Star Master	New Melville	33
Alasdair Adam	1 Star Master	Stirling	30
Ken Tait	Master	Marmion	38
David Olive	Master	Caledonian	38
Paul Kerr	Master	Troon	36
Ken Brown	Master	Pentland	34
Andy McKinnel	Master	Linlithgow	31
John Smithson	District Master	Berwick	39
Alan Paterson	District Master	Johnstone	39
Dawn & Peter Beckett	District Master	New Melville	38
May Armour	District Master	Kyle	36
Keith Smith	Local Master	New Melville	36
Linton Horsfall	Local Master	Carlton	32
Allison Clayton / Lesley Cochrane	Local Master	Aberdeen	31
Rob Meechan	Club Master	New Melville	40
Debbie Bland	Club Master	Bearsden	38
John Baraclough	Club Master	Inverness Caledonian	37
Janet Ironside	Club Master	New Melville	37
Jacky Lindsay	Club Master	New Melville	37
Fiona McCourt	Club Master	Bearsden	36
Anne Ross	Novice	New Melville	38
Merville Archibald	Novice	New Melville	38
Annie Brown	Novice	New Melville	37
Fiona Davis	Novice	New Melville	36
Evelyn Watson	Novice	SteppingStone	35
Ian Johnston	Novice	New Melville	30
Jackie Johnston	Novice	New Melville	30