

Bronze Bidding Challenge July 2023: Comments and Scores

A potpourri of hands from various sources this month, and no information about the hand opposite, so no idea what would work at the table.

Problem 1 Teams: EW Vul, Dealer East

♠—	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥K865	-	-	Pass	Pass
♦KJT6	?			
♣AJT74				

It is normal to open our longest suit, but 3-suiters can present a rebid problem when partner responds in our short suit. In this example if partner makes the most likely response of 1♠ we shall have to rebid this club suit. Iain speaks for most of the panel:

SIME: 1♣. I would be happy to rebid 2♣ if partner responds 1♠. Even happier if he doesn't!

All should be well if partner has enough to rebid a second suit if they have one – and if they pass we can hope we are in a 5=2 fit. I think more panellists might prefer Russell's approach if the clubs were weaker:

FRAME: 1♦. I don't want to pass but I don't have a sensible rebid after 1♣ or 1♥ whereas I can at least rebid 2♣ if partner responds 1♠.

Bidding a 4-card diamond suit before longer clubs on this sort of hand is quite a popular style in some countries, particularly among those who play a Strong Club. Perhaps partner is trained not to give false preference to diamonds with a doubleton...

Several competitors chose to open 1♥, planning to rebid in a minor over 1♠. This seems a good route to a 4=3 heart fit that might not play too badly if partner has a stuffy 3-card holding. It may, of course, get you to a 4=2 fit when partner gives false preference...

No-one votes for Pass, though this may be the best solution: if opponents bid spades you have a perfect takeout double, and if partner bids spades you can still find a fit if one exists. If the hand were 1=4=4=4 I think Pass would be even more attractive.

Problem 1	Panel	Marks	Competitors
1♣	6	10	20
Pass	0	9	1
1♦	1	7	3
1♥	0	5	4

Problem 2 Teams: All Vul, Dealer North

♠JT93	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥J832		1♦	Dbl	P
♦8743	?			
♣A				

You must respond to the takeout double here unless you have a 6-card diamond suit.

HAMILTON: 1♥ – not enough to jump.

This hand is better than it might be for a 1-level response, so one or two competitors do make a jump response, but the panel think this hand is not quite worth that. It would be more acceptable with a 5-card suit.

Hearts may not be your best fit, but there will likely be more action, so Russell plans ahead.

FRAME: 1♥. I don't expect this bid to end the auction so will hope to show partner my spade suit if he forces me to bid again.

But will that not suggest that your hearts are longer than your spades? If partner happened to be 3=3 in the Majors you might find yourself at the 3-level in a 4=3 fit. Jim and Derek have a better plan:

TUDOR: 1♠. Normally as responder I bid 4-card suits "up the way" but here, following partner's takeout double, I'll prepare for North saying 2♦ or 2♣ and allow myself to compete then with 2♥.

SANDERS: 1♠. Gives me two bites at the cherry if North comes again with 2♦ or 2♣. I can rebid 2♥ and locate our best fit!

*This seems about right on values, so I split the tie in its favour.
Tim, ever the optimist, decides to make sure we find our best fit:*

MCKAY: 2♦ showing both majors – this is pushy but otherwise it is difficult to get both majors into the auction.

*The cuebid is not game-forcing, but it is forcing to suit agreement, so you cannot stop below the 3-level.
Put the ♣A into one of the Major suits and this might be worth it – but a singleton Ace is not as valuable as an Ace in a long suit.*

Problem 2	Panel	Marks	Competitors
1♠	3	10	4
1♥	3	9	16
2♦	1	6	3
2♣	0	3	1
2♥	0	2	2
1NT	0	1	1
Pass	0	0	1

Problem 3 Teams All Vul, Dealer South

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠82	-	-	-	1NT
♥Q942	Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
♦9653	?			
♣864				

We are not hopeful of a good outcome here. Some decide to tough it out.

HAMILTON: PASS. I'd only remove with an unbalanced hand. Maybe partner can beat it on their own, maybe we concede 1NT doubled making, but don't want to start running.

SIME: PASS. I am struggling to come up with a sensible alternative. Partner may have a 20 count with a doubleton or worse in whatever suit I "rescue" to.

TUDOR: Pass. Hoping not to lose more than 180! Bidding could make things worse.

*Tim prefers to run. He simply bids 2♥, explaining that this is a weak bid. It seems a bit risky to put all your eggs in one basket – on a bad day you have reached a 4=2 fit, occasionally a 4=1. Even if not doubled you might go several hundred down, and that might be more expensive than 1NTX making.
Others try to keep more than one option open.*

SANDERS: 2♦. 1NTX is probably making and at this vulnerability it's 200 per overtrick so got to move! If they double I can try 2♥ but really trying to give the opponents space to bid 2 of a Major and rescue me.

MALE: 2♦. I can't stand partner's double so bid my lowest 4 card suit.

*When we rescue partner from 1NT doubled we bid the lower of two 4-card suits, but does this apply here?
I think most play that when you pull partner's double of 1NT you have a weak hand with a 5+-card suit.*

*One idea that was popular in my youth was to bid 2♣. If that was passed out it should not be too awful; and if someone was rude enough to double you could make an SOS redouble showing the next two higher suits, asking partner to bid her longer red suit. That way you should reach the best available contract without having to guess. The only problem was that a dozy partner might scratch her head and pass.
(This happened to me on one occasion. Opponents did not find the best defence and 2♣xx made 2 overtricks!)
But the SOS redouble has been responsible for many disasters, so you need serious discussion with a reliable partner before trotting it out.*

Problem 3	Panel	Marks	Competitors
Pass	4	10	15
2♣	0	9	2
2♦	2	7	4
2♥	1	4	7

Problem 4 Teams EW Vul, Dealer East

♠AQ8652 ♥6 ♦AKJ9 ♣Q7	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	-	-	1♣	Pass
	1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
	2♦	Pass	2NT	Pass
	?			

Some competitors might question the 2♦ rebid. It should be forcing: you cannot land on the head of a pin. A weak hand rebids 2♠ or passes 2♣.

What is the best game here? Spades, clubs or no-trump?

Tim thinks he knows:

McKAY: 3NT. Partner knows I may well be 6/4 and we have plenty of points (but it doesn't look like we have a slam)

3NT will probably play well enough, but if partner has something like x QTx Qxx AKJxxx we might lose the first 5 tricks on a heart lead with 6♣ virtually laydown.

The panel wants to investigate further, but they disagree about which bids are forcing after this start.

Two panellists decide to focus on their long suit:

MALE: 3♠, showing a sixth spade. Any bid over 2NT I play as forcing.

FRAME: . 3♠. This must be game-forcing and I plan to follow up partner's possible 3NT with 4♣ to allow him to judge whether to settle for 5♣ or venture slam.

Partner should raise to 4♠ with a doubleton spade, but a lead through East's heart holding might be annoying.

SANDERS: 3♣. This might get us to the right spot but I really prefer an initial strong jump shift with 2♠, easier way to get across the strength of our hand. No problem when partner rebids 3♣, happy to raise.

This looks a good idea provided it is forcing. As we can see from Problem 1 East may have been compelled to rebid 2♣ over 1♠ with only a 5-card suit: in that case they will bid 3♠ with a doubleton, or 3NT with good hearts. The others are less certain that any bid other than the fourth suit is forcing, so they use that.

HAMILTON: 3♥. Any game of 3NT, 4♠ or 5♣ could be right. I hope making this fourth suit bid will prompt another bid from partner and we land in the right place!

TUDOR: 3♥. Perhaps partner can show partial support for Spades. If she signs off in 3NT then I'll leave it at that.

This problem gave everybody a headache, as you can see from the number of suggested answers.

Problem 4	Panel	Marks	Competitors
3♥	3	10	0
3♣	1	9	1
3♠	2	8	13
3NT	1	5	7
4NT	0	4	1
4♥	0	3	1
4♠	0	2	2
4♣	0	2	2
6NT	0	0	1

Top Scores

Another tricky set, which might explain the smaller than usual entry – or perhaps it was just the summer break. No-one managed a perfect 40 this time, and anything over 30 merits a 'Well done!'.

2* Master	Will Iles	Stewartry	34
1* Master	Alasdair Adam	Stirling	29
Master	David Hartley	St Andrew	37
	Pam Warner	New Melville	37
	Robert Taylor	Linlithgow	36
	Alex Sutherland	New Melville	35
	David Olive	Caledonian	30
	Alan Kirk	Bearsden Academy	27
	Brian Rattray	Oban	26
District Master	Ken Brown	Pentland	34
	Ken Tait	Marmion	33
	Graham Vincent	Linlithgow	32
	Dawn & Peter Beckett	New Melville	30
	May Armour	Kyle	26
Local Master	Larry Watson	Buchanan	33
	Keith Smith	New Melville	31
	John Ramsay	Carlton	27
	Chris Mickley	Nairn	26
	Allison Clayton/Lesley Cochrane	Aberdeen	25
Club Master	Debbie Bland	Bearsden Academy	37
	Fiona McCourt	Bearsden Academy	36
	Helen Adamson	Kirkcaldy	33
	Brian Allan	Dundee	29
	Linton Horsfall	Carlton	25
Novice	Sandra Mair	Carlton	37
	Ian Lowson	New Melville	31

Congratulations to regular competitor Chares Fogelman on reaching the rank of Regional Master and so ruling himself out of the monthly competition.