

Issue 136

Scottish Bridge News



Jennie McCartney

1943 - 2023

The Official Magazine of the Scottish Bridge Union

Scottish Bridge News

Editorial

The Performance events are over, and Scotland's Camrose teams have been announced. In an unusual move the selectors have picked teams for both weekends in advance, giving six of the top finishers a chance to shine. The first weekend will feature Derek Diamond & Iain Sime; Stephen Peterkin & Sam Punch; and Douglas Piper & Alex Wilkinson, captained by Anne Symons. The team for the second weekend will be Paul Barton & Jun Nakamaru-Pinter; Martin Bateman & Callum McKail; and Brian Spears & Barnet Shenkin, captain to be announced. We wish them success.

The selection committee is to be commended on the work they have put into the preparation and supervision of the Performance events. We hope the selected pairs, and those on the fringes will demonstrate similar commitment to improving their own performance. If you read Sam Punch's book, "Bridge at the Top" you will see that the world's top

players agree that part of the fascination of bridge is that there is always more to learn.

We dedicate the edition to the memory of Jennie McCartney. She was a fine player, but remembered more for her personality, her determination never to give in to the difficulties that life threw at her. Her death cast a cloud over the Highland Congress for her many friends.

Talking of which – this year's Highland Congress returned to Coylumbridge, the ideal venue. It was a huge success, a good example of a Scottish Congress where the bridge is important, but less so than the sheer enjoyment of greeting old friends and making new ones.

Please note that the SBNews now appears online every two months!

Contributions should be sent to: liz.mcgowan@blueyonder.co.uk

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The Rayne Cup

This is one of our oldest competitions. The Cup was presented by Sir Edward Rayne in 1948 after a successful weekend at a Gleneagles Congress.

In the early days it was run as a Multiple teams, with heats in the clubs and District semi-finals from which 12 teams qualified for the Final.

Even before Covid the numbers had fallen seriously. This year it was decided to return to face-to-face as a two-day event in Stirling, with qualifying rounds then a Final and subsidiary consolation event. This did not seem to appeal to the membership, so it was reduced to one day. Only 12 teams entered.


How can we revive this prestigious event? For some reason Swiss Teams seem more popular than the traditional Multiple teams. Is this because of the lure of National Master Points? In all-play-all teams fractions of a red point are awarded for each match won, so everybody has a chance of winning at least a few reds.

Or is it that face-to-face tournaments are hard to revive because of the travel involved? Might online qualifying rounds with a face-to-face Final have more success? I am sure the Tournament Committee would be pleased to hear your views.


Those who did attend the Rayne Cup had a thoroughly enjoyable day in Stirling and Union BC, a very suitable central venue

This 3NT contract proved too difficult for most. (See top of next column. Rotated through 180°.)

Where West led a diamond East won the Ace and returned the suit.

Bd 1	♠AJ83 ♥KT9 ♦J98 ♣A42	None Vul
♠642 ♥QJ7 ♦T762 ♣985		♠QT9 ♥A64 ♦A43 ♣QT73
	♠K75 ♥8632 ♦KQ5 ♣KJ6	

Now declarer has 6 top winners and lots of possible finesses. If West's lead shows 4 diamonds you can afford to lose 3 more tricks provided you do not lose one to West once the 13th diamond is established. West's most likely entry is in hearts, so that is the suit to play now, A low heart to the ♥T draws the ♥A, and East clears the diamonds. It is safe to finesse spades into East now. The finesse loses, and East returns a heart to the Jack and King. Spades break kindly, so you have 8 tricks, and must risk the club finesse for 9.

Bd 2	♠J ♥Q9432 ♦T6 ♣AKT85	NS Vul Dir E
♠K9874 ♥- ♦8732 ♣9732		♠AQT5 ♥AKT87 ♦A94 ♣J
	♠632 ♥J65 ♦KQJ5 ♣Q64	

The big question here is whether West should respond to partner's opening bid with only 3 points. If you pass you are

clearly in a poor spot, but if you bid you may make things worse. I believe most experts would respond 1♠ in case partner has a spade fit. Those who did were promptly raised to game. Dummy was a pleasing sight on this occasion.

But what if partner has fewer than 4 spades? The most likely rebid is 1NT, over which West can retreat to 2♣, to play. It is likely that the 7-card fit will play at least two tricks better than the 5-0.

If instead partner rebids in a new suit you have definitely improved the contract and can pass with a satisfied glow.

The worst case scenario is when partner rebids hearts, but at least then you know they have a 6-card suit. You can explain that you meant well as you table your apologetic dummy.

Another danger is that partner has a strong hand and jumps to 2NT. Some partnerships agree that you can run to 3♣, to play, to cover this sort of situation. Without such agreement you just have to pass, fingers crossed.

Occasionally partner has opened a very strong 2-suiter and makes a jump rebid in a new suit. That is forcing, and you had better not destroy partnership trust by passing. Squeak a raise,

Some of the Wests who passed 1♥ may have hoped that North would gallop to their rescue, but that is unlikely when you have so many spades, and very unlikely if North has heart length, as here.

Congratulations to the winners, **Roy Bennett & Harry Smith; Finlay Marshall & Bob McPaul.**

Let's hope we can up the entries next year.

Play Challenge

Jim Patrick

1 NS Vul Dealer South

♠975
♥764
♦A42
♣Q762

♠AT4
♥AKJ95
♦Q
♣AJ94

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1♥
Pass	1NT	2NT	3♣
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♥	End	

Contract: 4♥ Lead: ♦3

After a good sequence – North might want to play 3NT opposite 3=5=1=4 – you receive the lead of ♦3 against your slightly optimistic contract. How do you play?

2 NS Vul Dealer East

♠QJ5
♥32
♦AK74
♣T654

♠KT932
♥AKJ
♦6
♣Q732

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1♠
2♥	3♠	4♣	4♣
End			

Contract: 4♠ Lead: ♥T

You win and play trumps. West wins the second round and returns a heart. West clearly has a club void, so how can you make this?

Solutions on Page 9

What a Performance!

Way back in the early days of bridge the SBU ran a Trial for its Camrose team. 12 pairs played 2 sessions of match-pointed pairs. This year the selectors opted for a 6-table Performance Event with some pre-selected pairs and some who qualified from earlier Performance Events that were open to all-comers. The scoring method was by cross-imps, and that seemed to inflate the scores awarded to unusual results such as slam swings. Those who bid and made a good slam fully deserved their bonus – but the unlucky pairs who had slams bid against them surely did not deserve to lose quite so many Ximps.

Here are some example 'slams', many rotated for convenience, that you might discuss with your favourite partner

Match 3, Bd 2

♠KQT642	♠J985
♥K	♥AQ7
♦A62	♦95
♣K86	♣AQT7

West opens 1♠ and East may respond 2NT, a game-forcing 4+card raise. Most like to show a shortage here. That helps partner evaluate the usefulness of his cards, and hence is not a good idea with a singleton Ace. A singleton King is also dubious, so West might prefer to bid 3♠, showing a non-minimum with no shortages but some extra distribution. That should produce a series of cuebids, and West can infer that East has the rounded suit Aces. An enquiry reveals that an Ace is missing, but there is a 10-card fit and East must have some working cards on top of 2 Aces.

Only 1 pair bid this excellent slam, gaining **16.78 Ximps**.

Match 5, Bd 28

♠3	♠AKQT85
♥KT984	♥A3
♦A2	♦K85
♣AT732	♣Q5

West opens 1♥ and East bids spades. (A good example of an old-fashioned strong jump shift, but not many play that these days.) West rebids in clubs, and now East needs to employ fourth suit to make the auction game-forcing. After 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♥ - West continues to show distribution with 3♣, then bids 3NT over partner's 3♠. East probably makes one last try with 4NT, and West may decide that the heart pips merit a punt at slam.

This is a so-so slam: there is a 50% chance that spades will run, and a 60% chance that hearts will play for 1 loser, or the ♣K might be onside. It was bid 3 times, and proved an easy make when the ♠J dropped doubleton, hearts were 3=3 and South had a singleton ♣J.

It was nonvulnerable, so the bidders gained just **8.64 Ximps**

Match 5, Bd 32

♠AJ3	♠842
♥3	♥AK86
♦AQT754	♦K82
♣AQ5	♣KJ4

This looks fairly straightforward.

West opens 1♦ and rebids 3♦ over partner's 1♥ response. The diamond suit is just about good enough, and the hand is not quite up to a forcing rebid.

East is worth a move towards slam. (At teams scoring there is no need to worry about bypassing 3NT.) Rebidding the

heart suit suggests an alternative place to play, so the obvious move is to cuebid 4♣, agreeing diamonds and denying a spade control.

Now West can afford to ask for keycards: if partner has only 1 he can stop in 5♦; opposite 2 keycards there are 11 tricks and a 12th will appear if partner has a doubleton spade, or ♠T9, or something extra in another suit.

This good Vulnerable slam was bid 3 times, so the gain was just **9.30 Ximps**. Only one East-West pair bid both the slams that were available in Match 5.

Match 6, Bd 34

♠AKJ6 ♥5 ♦A62 ♣KJ987		♠9732 ♥AKQJ ♦KJ2 ♣54
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Most would bid: 1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ - 4♠.

12 tricks are actually available in every denomination except diamonds! South has ♣AQx and ♠Q and everything breaks nicely.

The pair who bid this awful slam were very lucky to gain **16.78 Ximps**.

Match 6, Bd 37

♠QT96 ♥AKT986 ♦A ♣64		♠K ♥Q53 ♦T8654 ♣AK82
-------------------------------	--	-------------------------------

East has a tough response to 1♥. "Do not bid bad suits on good hands" is sound advice, so 5-card majorites might prefer to show a 3-card raise. Weak no-trumpers are stuck with a 2♦ response, leaving West to wonder

whether he is worth a stronger rebid than 2♥.

This slam needs only reasonable breaks in the majors. It would be even better if East had stronger heart pips. Two pairs went past 4♥ to flirt with slam, but only one pair actually bid it to gain **14.20 Ximps**

Match 9, Bd 19

♠A654 ♥KQ6 ♦Q6 ♣J974		♠QJT7 ♥— ♦AK73 ♣AQT65
-------------------------------	--	--------------------------------

Strong no-trumpers open 1♣, then raise partner's 1♠ response. Scientific Easts can enquire to make sure partner has 4-card trump support before bidding slam.

Success requires one of 2 finesses to work, slightly less than 75% when the finesses are into different hands. The pairs who bid slam were unlucky this time: the pair who stopped in game were lucky to gain **16.11 Ximps**.

Match 9, Bd 21

♠K ♥QT7543 ♦Q43 ♣J53		♠AT6 ♥KJ6 ♦AKT65 ♣A9
-------------------------------	--	-------------------------------

If West opens a flawed Vulnerable weak 2♥ East can use Keycard Blackwood to discover that the ♥A is missing. But can he find out which black King West might have? Even when West has the wrong King slam makes unless North leads a club, so it is certainly not the worst you will ever bid. Alas, North had an automatic lead from ♣KQxx.

The only pair to bid this one were rather unlucky to lose **16.11 Ximps**.

Match 10, Bd 31

♠AQJ83		♠K6
♥A4		♥QJT
♦K		♦AJ9754
♣K9642		♣AQ

17HCP opposite 17HCP normally means slam, but there are no 8-card fits here. It is the ♦9 that makes this a playable slam, and no-one has the methods to pinpoint that card. It means that there are 5 diamond tricks whenever the suit breaks 3=3, and also when either opponent has a doubleton Ten or doubleton Queen.

3 pairs bid 6NT. The two successful declarers gained **13.22 Ximps**. This would have been rather less, had not the third declarer, tired after three long days, messed up the communications and gone down, gifting opponents a whopping **18.59 Ximps**.

There were other 'slam' boards, where opponents were not kind enough to pass throughout. This freak produced some excitement.

Match 4, Bd 12

	♠AQT953	NS Vul
	♥8	Dir W
	♦KQT98	
	♣5	
♠82		♠764
♥A542		♥Q73
♦7		♦AJ65432
♣KJT972		♣—
	♠KJ	
	♥KJT96	
	♦—	
	♣AQ8643	

I suspect that half the Wests opened the bidding with 3♣, possibly 1♣. After which 3 North-South pairs reached 4♠,

the only making game, to score about average.

Some Wests passed. Now East was tempted to pre-empt in diamonds over North's opening 1♠. Two South's earned partner's approval by doubling for takeout, Declarer managed to scramble 5 tricks to lose 800 in 3♦X and 1100 in 4♦X. 1100 gained **13.7 Ximps**.

The 6th East also overcalled 4♦. It is not generally a good idea to double with a void and extreme distribution, so South decided to go slamming instead. North was soon in the hopeless 6♠. But East led the ♦A, and now the contract is far from hopeless. North ruffs in dummy, overtakes the ♠K and draws trump. Now if the club finesse works, she can discard her losing heart and concede a diamond to the Jack. Declarer failed to spot an alternative line when the club finesse fails. She can finesse the ♥J! If West wins, he has to return a card into one of dummy's tenaces, allowing declarer to discard all her diamond losers and claim +1660 and a record number of Ximps. By banking on the club finesse, she went one down to lose **17.30 Ximps** instead.

There were fewer big swings on the Sunday, when a pair failed to show up.

There was some dissatisfaction also with the fact that matches were of 11 boards when the players might easily have played 12 boards within the same time limit. Still, the selectors made it clear that they would be guided by performance rather than results, and their choice of two different teams gives everybody involved a chance to play for Scotland.

Jennie McCartney

1943-2023

Jennie McCartney was born and raised in Falkirk as an only child. She attended Graeme High School and then studied at Edinburgh University, graduating with an MA in English and History.

During her time at University she learned to play bridge and also met her husband. They spent two years in London before returning to Scotland following the birth of their only daughter Alison.

Jennie had taken up teaching when in London and returned to teaching in Graeme High School. Jennie was a popular teacher and delighted in the progress of her pupils.

She was a gifted poet and was also a renowned Burns speaker. She was able to recite "*Tam O' Shanter*" without reference to any notes. She wrote many poems for friends and family to commemorate special occasions and was able to do so at short notice.

On her return to Scotland Jennie initially continued her bridge career in Denny Bridge Club, where she played with Steve Andrew. They won many club trophies and events. Later they transferred to play at Falkirk Bridge Club, where she found new partners in Dave Perry and Simon Muir. She also played with Dr Tony Cameron at Linlithgow Bridge Club.

She and Dave won the teams Championship at the Aviemore Congress in 2002.

Jennie taught bridge in schools and introduced many young pupils to mini-bridge. She ran a very successful Schools Minibrige Championship in Stirling and Union BC for several years. Her preparation for the event was meticulous, no detail was overlooked. Her only reward the obvious enjoyment of all the participants.

Jennie had a wide range of interests outside bridge and was a generous and thoughtful friend to many. She loved to travel and enjoyed many holidays over the years with friends and family. She had a number of health issues over the years but she never let it define her and always had a brave smile and a joke.

After an operation confined her to a wheelchair she was undaunted. She continued to play with Pam Leith on Monday nights in Falkirk. She took on the task of visiting public buildings to rate them for wheelchair access and made many constructive suggestions to local officials.

The advent of more online bridge was ideal for her, since travelling to clubs was difficult. Her last game of bridge was the Tuesday before she passed away and she was delighted to win against Jim Hay. Jim was equally pleased that this was her last hurrah.

Jennie will be sorely missed by all her friends and especially by her family for her sense of fun, her knowledge, her spirit and her general Joie de Vivre.

Jennie the Poet

Jennie was the SBU poet laureate, she could be relied on to produce a poem for any occasion. This one was composed when Pieter van Dijk, the irreplaceable General Manager of Peebles Hydro, retired in 1997. It demonstrates her sense of fun, her acute observation and her caring, empathetic nature.

There are famous Dutchmen a-plenty
Here in Britain there's more than a few
There's Snejders and Hairy Ruud Gullit
To mention just one (or just two).

But Pieter Van Dijk's an exception
No footballing record at all
For he came o'er from Holland to Scotland
And I don't think he e'er kicked a ball.

For he knew about football corruption
And I don't think he's that sort of chap.
For it was his decided intention
To put Peebles right on the map.

He might have become a great actor
Been comfortably rich and secure
Like his old cousin Dick on the TV
The one who chums Miss Tyler-Moore.

He might have earned oodles of money
Helping produce fat cigars
A well set-up tobacco baron
With women and fast flashy cars

He might have become a great artist
Like Van Dijk, his great grandpa had
Painting our kings and princesses
With their clothes on, of course, I may add!

But instead he took over the Hydro
And for that he deserves rich rewards
He only has one awful failing –
He hillwalks but doesn't play cards.

But I'm told he is thinking of taking
The game of bridge up, for a change.
So if he comes here as a player.
He'll understand why we're so strange.

Why we sit in deep silence for hours
Saying nothing as each card is laid
Then we never stop talking at dinner
About which card should have been played.

We, the bridge players of Scotland,
Can be proud as well as contented
For we've all heard of 'making a peter'
A term which this Pieter invented.

He has welcomed this flock of bridge
players

Whom he once must have viewed with
alarm

As they romped late from bedroom to
bedroom

Clutching bottles – one under each arm!

Those who indulge in some 'hanky-panky'
Might feel safe, and be somewhat smugger
Who knows if there's bugs in these
bedrooms?

If so I think I know the bugger.

But he understands our little foibles
With that smile so inviting and warm
Even his staff will agree that
The one thing he exudes is CHARM

He runs his hotel to perfection
He has pandered to our every need
He has been discrete when there was
trouble

He has made our stay pleasant indeed.

As a manager he is not conceited
Theres is no task to which he won't stoop
Did you notice that to-day at lunchtime
The great man himself dished the soup?

So he's leaving to have his retirement
And we all think it rather a shame
For the Hydro may still keep on going
But without him things won't be the same.

He is more like a friend – never distant
There is nothing that one van dislike
So ladies and gents, lift your glasses
And toast Mr Peter van Dijk.

Play Challenge Solutions

Jim Patrick

1 NS Vul Dealer South

	♠975										
	♥764										
	♦A42										
	♣Q762										
♠KJ63 ♥Q3 ♦J953 ♣T53	<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠Q82 ♥T82 ♦KT876 ♣K8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠AT4										
	♥AKJ95										
	♦Q										
	♣AJ94										

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♥	End	

Contract: 4♥ Lead: ♦3

Unless you find a singleton ♥Q or ♣K you almost certainly need clubs and hearts 3-2. You can win in dummy and take the heart finesse gaining when East has ♥Qx or ♥Qxx - simplifying and only considering 3-2 breaks in the vital suits 50% of the time.

You improve your odds by playing a club to the Jack. You make your contract against ♣Kx in East. If he has ♣Kxx you may drop the doubleton ♥Q. If the finesse loses, you can return to dummy with the ♣Q to take the heart finesse. As before neglecting good singletons, you gain in 57% of the 3-2 breaks.

The problem with this line is that West may duck with ♣Kxx to deny you an entry to dummy for the heart finesse. His optimum strategy is to take when he has the ♥Q but duck when East has ♥Qxx. If he will always find this, he reduces your odds to 48% and you are better finessing in hearts.

2 NS Vul Dealer East

	♠QJ5										
	♥32										
	♦AK74										
	♣T654										
♠A874 ♥QT954 ♦QT93 ♣-	<table style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠6 ♥876 ♦J852 ♣AKJ98
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠KT932										
	♥AKJ										
	♦6										
	♣Q732										

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1♠
2♥	3♥	4♣	4♠

End

Contract: 4♠ Lead: ♥T

Since clubs are clearly 5-0, you cannot lead clubs before you draw the last trump. Having done this, how can you secure a club trick with only one dummy entry to lead up to the Queen?

The answer lies in counting. After you have drawn the last trump and played the last heart everyone is down to 6 cards. East must have 2, 3 or 4 clubs and the corresponding number of diamonds.

If he has 2 clubs, it is easy – just play clubs. If he has 3, cross to the ♦A and play a club. East has to let you score a club trick or put you back in dummy with a diamond to lead clubs again. If he has 4, he has 2 diamonds. Cash the ♦AK before playing clubs and you must come to a club trick.

It would have been better technique for West to win the third round of trumps to cut communications, but the play really required to beat you was to take out dummy's diamond entry while he still had a trump. Winning the third round of trumps would have been necessary as well if declarer's clubs had been KJxx.

The Highland District Congress

This legendary Congress, generally referred to as “Aviemore” was first run in 1973. It was Scotland’s biggest and most successful Congress under the stewardship of Bill Richardson. It lapsed during Covid but was revived last year as a face-to-face event.

To celebrate its 50th anniversary the Congress returned to its traditional home in Coylumbridge. This is a great venue, with a spacious playing area and lots of room to socialise before and after the game. (The social aspect is what distinguishes Scottish congresses from mere bridge events.)

The hotel pulled out all the stops. A very competitive room rate did not include lunch, but free coffee and cakes were provided during the interval between the Bidding Competition and the afternoon sessions. The staff were friendly and helpful. The only complaint I heard was that the Bar shut at 11 pm!

One reason for the Congress’ success has been attention to detail. Tartan tablecloths, numerous prizes, and the best TDs around are some of its distinctive features. This year’s organisers, Ann and Tim Wickens, produced commemorative plaques for regular attenders. Three who had attended the first Congress - Ken MacDonald, Jim Hay (then in his school uniform) and me – were there to receive one. Another first attender, Stuart MacDonald received one in absentia. Other regular attenders were Beryl Campbell, Veronica Guy, Shiena Lang and Sheila Adamson (also in absentia).

This deal piqued my interest.

Teams Final Bd 21

		♠K963	NS Vul
		♥QJT86	Dir N
		♦T	
		♣Q72	
♠Q42			♠A8
♥43			♥AK9752
♦9432			♦—
♣KT93			♣AJ865
		♠JT75	
		♥—	
		♦AKQJ8765	
		♣4	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	Pass	1♥	3♦
Pass	Pass	4♣	4♦
5♣	End		

South might have made things harder with a higher pre-empt – 5♦ is a make – but then there would be no story. She led a top diamond, ruffed. I led a club to the ♣K, expecting South to be short, then erred by playing a second club to the ♣A. When South showed out on the ♥A things looked bleak, but I cashed the ♥K and crossruffed the next 4 tricks in the red suits, leaving myself with no trump in ether hand. Then I exited with the fifth heart to North, endplaying him. When he cashed the ♣Q I discarded my losing spade. Discarding a loser on an opponent’s master trump as declarer is a first for me.

It was fitting that the honours went to some regular attenders, Teams winners were Ken and Rita MacDonald, with Eddie McGeough and Jim Mason; Fiona McQuaker won the Pairs; and the Bidding Competition went to Bob Hunter and Ron Moodie.

November 2023 Bidding Challenge

Iain Sime

Welcome to the Bidding Challenge. Douglas Mitchell from Glasgow has joined the panel as a co-winner in the previous set. I have had many a pleasant but tough game against him over the years.

The hands come from American based magazine competitions; Bridge World (BW) and the ACBL Bridge Bulletin (BB). I have also included, for interest only, the votes of their expert panels with multiple world champions. And, in some BW cases, yours truly, as a reward for finishing second in their annual readers' competition. Some kudos is due to our panel in that their votes generally matched those of the overseas experts.

I have gone with 15/17, 5-card majors etc. because that is the system BW and BB use. My apologies to those who would have preferred Acol.

Problem 1

Teams

None Vul

♠AKQ65	S	W	N	E
♥QJ92	-	-	-	3♦
♦5	Dbl	P	4♦	P
♣AJ3	?			

We have made a takeout double with a bit in hand. Partner has responded with a cuebid. This is wide-ranging. Perhaps he is just making sure we are in a 4/4 fit. Perhaps partner also has extras. Should we be slam-forcing, slam-hunting or settle for game? The majority

of both panels voted for slam hunting. The most popular choice was a return cue bid.

DRAGIC: 5♦. I have extra values, let's rock.

SMITH: 5♦. We should have a double fit in the majors, and I'll let him assess the value of his hand to decide whether we go to the 6-level.

WHYTE: 5♦. 4♦ means "choose your major", so I expect my partner to have at least 4-4 in the majors. He will have some values as he is willing to play in a game. However, he could be as weak as ♠Jxxx ♥Kxxx ♦xxx ♣Kx but as strong as ♠Jxxxx ♥AKxx ♦Axx ♣x.

That is a playable grand slam which is likely to languish in game if we simply nominate a major.

CLOW: 5♦. Assume partner is at least 4-4 in the Majors and hopefully better than minimum. I'll get my apologies ready if Five of a major goes one off.

Some made a 5-level bid in one of the majors. The advantage of playing in hearts is explained by the two Douglasses.

PIPER: 5♥. Invitational to slam, you throw a club on the fifth spade.

MITCHELL: 5♥. With five losers I'm too good to sign off in 4♠. The club discard on the fifth spade suggests playing in hearts. If partner has such as ♠Jxxx ♥AKxx ♦xx ♣Axx he'll bid 6♥ which should be good if hearts are 3-2, failing which there's the club finesse. If a bit weaker he'll pass 5♥.

MCGOWAN: 5♥. Partner's cuebid here does not promise great strength, just equal length in the majors. But she would bid 3♥ with a complete bust, so I

have to look for slam. I hope she will read the jump in a Major as “bid 6♥ with good trump.”

Ronan and Gints issued their invites in spades.

VALENTINE: 5♠. I think there are too many hands where partner won't know what to do over 4♠, and other calls seem ambiguous. Looking at my spades, partner ought to know that this is some general slam try and not a suit quality check for slam. Would partner know to bid slam over 4♠ with ♠JTxx ♥KTxx ♦Axx ♣Kx?

FREIMANIS: 5♠. Quantitative invite to slam. Expecting partner to make the right decision most of the time.

6 of our panel settled for game. Again, these were divided into two camps.

MARSHALL: 4♠. By itself, the cue bid does not guarantee any real strength. If he is really weak, he could, of course, bid 3♥, but it is almost always the case that you go one less off in the right strain than in the wrong strain.

SHIELDS: 4♠. I would normally bid my lower suit with this shape, but I am hoping that either 4♠ is enough or, if partner converts to 5♣ (holding hearts and clubs) then my 5♥ bid will be read as a slam try. Curiously, I could also start with 4♥, and, if partner converted to spades raise that as a slam try – but I am more enthused about a 4-4 heart fit.

Patrick makes a salient point. Whilst many assumed that partner was 4/4 in the majors, wouldn't North also cue bid 4♦ with one major and clubs?

MCGINLEY; 4♥. Bidding Majors up the line. Partner may be four hearts and

five-plus clubs (so would be bidding 5♣ over an initial 4♠ from you instead).

PATERSON: 4♠. Partner could be light if 4-4 in majors, and the 5-level is not safe. Also, even assuming there is a good slam, it is not clear that we would necessarily get to the right/best slam.

SHORT: 4♥. I would bid 4♦ on many lightish hands to find the best strain, not as a slam try. It is possible that hearts will play better than spades (discard on the 5th spade) but there could be a ruff (or ruffs) in spades to beat game, so I opt for hearts. If partner is strong, he will make a try now. To bid slam myself would be a serious punt, but if I do, it will be in hearts.

MCKAY: 4♠. The next step is up to partner.

Partner's next step will probably be to put dummy down. We have an Ace and a spade more than he can expect.

Pushing to the five level may be wrong when partner can have a lightish 4♦ cue looking for the safer major. However, both panels believe that it is more likely that we can make slam.

Problem 1	Votes	Marks	BW votes
5♦	5	10	13
5♥	3	7	0
5♠	2	6	2
4♠	4	5	7
4♥	2	5	0
4NT	0	4	1
5NT	0	4	4

Problem 2

Teams All Vul

♠Q32	S	W	N	E
♥KQT432	1♥	P	2♣	P
♦A	2♥	P	3♦	P
♣J53	?			

This is the hand on which our panel vote deviated most from the other panel. That may be partly explained by the American proclivity for rebidding 2♥ as a default with only five hearts and no clearcut alternative. The majority of our panel bid the fourth suit.

DRAGIC: 3♠. If 3NT is a valid option, then I have to explore it. 4♣ is an obvious second choice.

SMITH: 3♠. This cannot be natural and must be a request for at least a half stop. If he has a stop, it would be better played from my hand but I'm not willing to gamble 3NT at this stage. This hand is not fitting well. We're forced to game, but I want to dampen any enthusiasm on the other side of the table.

MCGOWAN: 3♠. I think this shows ♠Hxx and invites partner to describe her hand further. She should bid 3NT with ♠Hxx, and short hearts, 4♥ with a doubleton and 4♣ with serious slam interest. I do not want to bypass 3NT yet.

MARSHALL: 3♠. If he doesn't bid 3NT we will be in 4♥ or 5♣. While it appears more and more that my values are largely wasted, I have to bid what I have, and I do have a half-stop in spades. My hearts are not worth repeating again.

MCKAY: 3♠. Hopefully suggesting something in spades.

SHIELDS: 3♠. I would not expect 2♥ to guarantee six with a pick-up partner but bidding the suit again overstates the strength there. This choice indicates uncertainty as to where we belong, which is indeed my state of mind.

SHORT: 3♠. Waiting, with something in spades, but uncertain about the strain. I'm sure my "excellent" partner will do something intelligent.

MITCHELL: 3♠. This seems best as it allows partner to pick from 3NT, 4♥ or investigate game in a minor. 4♣ is a possibility but there may be three losers in 5♣.

Indeed. And two of them would probably be lost immediately.

ROSS: 4♣. Reluctantly.

VALENTINE: 4♣. Don't see the need to keep 3NT in the picture here. 5♣ rates to play as well as 3N and if slam is making agreeing clubs now makes that much easier. Bidding 3♥ just complicates the auction aiming for too thin a range of hands.

I confess that I was with the 3♠ crowd in BW. I now admit that 3♥ seems an improvement. If we belong in 3NT, we can still get there.

FREIMANIS: 3♥. No rush in making a decision on 3NT vs another contract. Should show six hearts and allow partner to express doubt about 3NT via a 3♠ bid.

MCGINLEY: 3♥. Showing a decent 6-card suit. If partner now bids 3♠, I can still bid 3NT to show a half-stop.

WHYTE: 3♥. The main advantage of this bid is that it keeps the 3NT and 4♥ games in the frame. Going to 3NT at this stage over-values my 'stopper' in spades. 4♣ is too arbitrary and puts us

on the slippery slope to 5♣ or 6♣ when 3NT may still be the easiest game.

CLOW: 3♥. I don't want to bid 3NT with such a tenuous stop, but I'll be happier if partner bids it. Or 4♥ if he has a singleton honour or small doubleton. We can still end up in 5♣ if nothing else works.

I think 3♥ is the most flexible option. If partner has no values in spades 3NT is out and top losers would become a serious issue in 5♣. We can still bid to these contracts when it is right to do so.

Problem 2	Votes	Marks	BW votes
3♣	9	10	6
3♥	4	9	10
4♣	3	5	7
3NT	0	4	4

Problem 3

Teams EW Vul

♠—	S	W	N	E
♥AKQ984	1♥	P	1NT	2♠
♦T95	?			
♣AQT5				

(Double would be takeout)

The Bridge World Panel were split on this one. Ours has a majority for 3♣. 9 out of 16 is the most majority we are going to see on this set. On his own:

ROSS: 4♥. Can't think of anything else.

4♥ is not silly and had some supporters on the BW panel. But everyone else on our panel thought of something else.

MCGOWAN: 3♣. Ideally should have a fifth club for this, but I cannot double with a void in spades, and partner still has the option to show long diamonds.

PATERSON: 3♣. Better than Double, because over 4♠ I want to encourage partner to bid on with 5-card clubs, but probably not otherwise.

PIPER: 3♣. Good chance of higher things.

WHYTE: 3♣. As we know, E/W have at least a 10-card fit. The bidding may quickly reach 4♠, and it is essential to let your partner know where your values and secondary length are. Later, you may be salivating about double 4♣ vulnerable but finding this a miserable compensation for missing a cold 6♣.

SMITH (and **MITCHELL** similarly): 3♣. Let's show partner where our values are. A high number of spades will shortly be bid on our left as they have a 10-plus card fit.

Not necessarily. Although they have 10-plus spades, they are at adverse vulnerability and have fewer than half of the points. We may not hear from East-West again. West can have something like a 4333 two count. He may envisage his partner in 4♣ doubled unable to reach his hand even for the trump finesse. -800 territory.

CLOW: 3♣. The opponents have a 10-card fit so I'd better try and let partner know we can play at the 5-level if he is suitable.

MARSHALL: 3♣. This just has to be forcing. OK it is the bid I would have made had East not interfered, so my partner might not take me for quite such a good hand; but so what – forcing is forcing, and I have just made a forcing bid.

When somebody insists that a bid is forcing, it indicates to me that he may not be all that convinced. Seems like a good time to hear from somebody who is aware that his bid is not forcing but relies upon partner or the opponents to keep the auction alive.

SHORT: 3♥. Middle of the road and invitational but Not Forcing. They have at least 10 spades, so I don't want to risk a pass from partner (though this is most unlikely). 4♥ is the most likely game, so I emphasise my good hearts. Seems obvious as they will probably compete further in spades.

Let's hear from the doublers.

SHIELDS: DBLE. We know we have a fit somewhere as long as partner has fewer than 4 spades, and this gives us a chance to find it and play in 3NT or possibly a part-score. If West bounces to 4♠, and partner doesn't double to show wasted values, then I shall try 4NT to let partner pick a spot at the five-level.

DRAGIC: DBLE. Not ideal that my points are concentrated but I have right shape and values. There are many hands where six of a minor makes and we won't get there if I jump to 4♥.

VALENTINE: DBLE. I think double then 3♣ is stronger than a direct 3♣ if I want to do that and is certainly stronger than initial 3/4♥. Also allows the chance that we can take a number.

FREIMANIS: DBLE. I might have only one bid before a 4♠ bid comes out, and I want to give partner a chance to find a potentially necessary 5♦ bid on a 6-card suit which will not be possible if I make a heart or a club bid.

Yes, bidding clubs risks losing the diamonds if the opponents bid Four

Spades. However, that 4♠ is not as inevitable as some believe.

Problem 3	Votes	Marks	BW votes
3♣	9	10	7
Dble	5	8	7
4♥	1	6	4
3♠	0	6	5
3♥	1	5	3
4♣	0	3	1

Problem 4

Teams EW Vul

♠QJ4	S	W	N	E
♥A9	-	-	-	2♥
♦Q875	P	3♥	Dbl	P
♣T973	?			

Half of our panel bid a suit over partner's take out double. Mostly they chose their shortest suit!

MCGOWAN: 3♠. At this vulnerability partner will double on most hands with a heart shortage. She likely has only four spades (with more she would just bid them) so it is hard to envision game. 3NT is wildly optimistic, requiring her to produce eight running tricks.

MITCHELL: 3♠. I'm not strong enough for 3NT – we'd probably need to take 9 quick tricks after a heart lead. 4♣ or 4♦ may find us in a 4-3 fit at the 4-level. Partner is likely to have 4 spades and I may be able to handle heart forces with my doubleton heart and decent spades.

SHORT: 3♠. Bit of an underbid, but I only have three after all. Partner is still there and will realise that I might have a couple of cards.

WHYTE: 3♠. Pass comes a close second. The prospects for game are slim. We have the balance of points but insufficient shape to contemplate a minor-suit game, nor good prospects in 3NT. A pass could garner a 200 or 500 penalty but could lose 730.

PATERSON: 3♠. At this vulnerability partner is more likely to be light than the opponents, so not good enough for 4♥. If partner raises, he will have 4 spades and a good enough hand to make a Moysian fit viable.

There are a couple of concerns about 3♠ which the above have overlooked. Firstly, partner would double with a good 3-1-4/5 hand, so we may not even be in a 4/3 fit. And, even if we are, the dreaded 5/1 break is more likely after a pre-empt. Still, I think 3♠ is better than trying to guess a minor.

ROSS: 4♦. I don't particularly like it. I feel pass would be too dangerous.

MCKAY: 4♣. 3NT is way too pushy even for me.

PIPER: 4♣. I don't think 3NT will make. 4♣ on a 4-3 fit might be best; maybe partner can bid again.

If we want to be sure to find partner's 4-card suit(s), we must commit to game.

SHIELDS: 4♥. I feel we will need running tricks for 3NT to be a success and that is too much to ask for. I don't mind a 4-3 spade fit but sometimes partner has only three, and 3-3 fits do not play well. If partner confirms 4 spades I will stand it, and if partner bids anything else we will stop in a minor suit game.

MARSHALL: 4♥. For my part, I am well up to strength for wherever partner wants to go, and as I passed initially, he shouldn't take 4♥ too seriously. I am prepared to let partner play this hand in his chosen strain.

The most popular game follows Bob Hamman's Law. "If 3NT is a reasonable bid, bid it."

MCGINLEY: 3NT. Showing values with a heart stop.

FREIMANIS: 3NT. I have a stop with some values. 3NT might not make, but there is no obvious bid otherwise.

VALENTINE: 3NT. Don't love it, but what else am I to do? I can't bid a minor as partner will find it hard to judge their hand. If we belong in 3NT, I need to bid it now and I'll take my chances. If partner pulls 3NT, at least they'll have a sense of my values and be able to judge slightly better.

DRAGIC: 3NT. I could have nine tricks on top and same number of tricks in a minor suit contract.

SMITH: 3NT. We have game values, but where is our best game? It could be in a minor, and while we do have 4-card suits in both, they have rather miserable values. It could be a spade Moysian, but showing spades at this stage could excite partner beyond what would be reasonable. And finally, it could be 3NT. We have no easy way to investigate, so let's keep to the lowest option.

I agree with most of this except the first clause. In my world 13 plus 9 does not equal game values. Robert also thinks that partner must have more than his usual shape-suitable minimum opener.

CLOW: PASS. I hate leaving these in but anything else is risking playing in a poor fit. Partner must have a good hand so this should go down a couple.

Playing teams, converting to penalty is too risky for me, but not for four of the BW experts. My guidelines for a penalty pass include no fit for our side and my trumps plus the level adds to at least six. These can be relaxed at matchpoints where plus 200 is often a top and minus 730 only needs an overtrick on the next hand to break even.

Problem 4	Votes	Marks	BW votes
3NT	5	10	9
3♠	5	9	7
4♥	2	7	7
4♣	2	6	1
Pass	1	5	4
4♦	1	5	0
4♠	0	5	1

Problem 5

MP Pairs

NS Vul

♠6532	S	W	N	E
♥K8	-	-	1♦	3♠
♦KJ6	?			
♣AKT7				

Both panels voted to double.

WHYTE: DBLE. The least worst bid, and I may have a similar dilemma when it is my turn again to bid.

Other doublers were kind enough to reveal their intentions if (when) partner bids Four Hearts.

ROSS: DBLE. I will bid 5♦ if partner bids 4♥.

SHORT: DBLE. Nothing else sensible. If partner bids 4♥, I will remove to 5♦. I've at least shown decent values.

MARSHALL: DBLE. I am going to break the cardinal rule, and make a negative double, intending, of course, to convert 4♥ to 5♦.

FREIMANIS: DBLE. I would like to explore if partner has got four clubs or is able to bid 3NT. If partner bids 4♥, I can easily convert to 5♦.

MCGOWAN: DBLE. Far from perfect but does not promise anything specific at this level – just game-going values and an inability to bid 3NT. If partner bids hearts, I shall have to convert to diamonds and hope she has a few.

The above are all going back to partner's diamonds after 4♥. I prefer the following as partner may bid 4♥ when he also has 4 clubs.

MCGINLEY: DBLE. Take out. Over a possible 4♥ from partner, I will pull to 5♣ as suggesting a minor contract.

SHIELDS: DBLE. Opposite short spades I have an enormous collection of working cards, and in that case, we have a fit somewhere, but that could be clubs or diamonds. Doing this and removing 4♥ from partner to 5♣ should get us to the right suit. Bidding 4NT at this point would also suggest the minors with longer clubs, but to me would need more shape.

Some bid clubs immediately.

SMITH: 4♣. We are forcing to game, I am showing where my values are, and whatever he does now, I can take him back to diamonds. Double is too misleading and gives the wrong picture of where your values are.

CLOW: 4♣. At least this is forcing, partner will probably have five diamonds so I will support them next.

PATERSON: 4♣. Though 4♣ would normally have five, the suit quality is good enough that I will not be worried if partner takes control.

We have only one vote from our panel for 4NT.

MITCHELL: 4NT. Pick a minor. I could bid 5♦ but partner may have something like ♠x ♥AQxx ♦AQxx ♣Jxxx. Double strongly suggests hearts, and if partner bids 4♥, it'll be difficult to get to the right minor suit game. Pass and wait for a reopening double doesn't appeal as the vulnerability is wrong for taking a big enough penalty at Pairs.

Some disagree, perhaps hoping that any plus score will garner some match points when others end up in the wrong game. If there is a right game.

MCKAY: PASS. With so many spades there's a reasonable chance partner will come back in, and if not, we should still go positive.

DRAGIC: PASS. Partner will reopen and I can follow up with 4♠. No bid at four-level feels right. I don't like doubling as partner is likely to bid 4♥ and then I will have to bid 5♦.

VALENTINE: PASS. Double implies heart length and I'm not good enough to commit to diamonds with 4♠. Partner will strain to balance when they can

here and then I can come up with some clever bid then.

Problem 5	Votes	Marks	BW votes
Dble	9	10	11
4♣	3	7	8
Pass	3	7	2
4NT	1	6	0
4♠	0	5	3
5♦	0	5	2
4D	0	3	2
5NT	0	3	1

Problem 6

Teams None Vul

♠AJ97	S	W	N	E
♥92	-	1♦	1♥	P
♦AT	?			
♣QJ843				

MARSHALL: PASS. Partner did not ask me for my best suit, and I am not strong enough to change suit without a reasonable fit. And there is always North to help out.

The rest of our panel all found a bid. Brian explains why passing is more dangerous than bidding.

SHORT: 1NT. Got to bid something in these days when overcalls range from about 7 to 18 points. ♦AT is a decent doubleton (imagining ♦Jxx opposite) and I've a few points extra for some sort of safety.

PATERSON: 1NT. This is marginal for a bid. Presumably 1♠ or 2♣ would be forcing, but the spades are not good enough and the presence of the ♦T makes 1NT (not forcing) my preference over 2♣.

Being Not Forcing is an advantage of 1NT over a new suit. For all we know, partner has made a flimsy overcall at love all and East was sharpening his axe. Do we really want to force partner to rebid 2♥?

SMITH: 2♣. Let's wait and see how this auction develops. We have good values but no clear destination.

DRAGIC: 2♣. One round forcing. Wrong shape for 1NT but might bid it depending on their system.

CLOW: 2♣. Partner is unlikely to have Spades as no Michaels Cue Bid or Double. Better to bid my five-card suit.

Yes, partner would double with 4=5=1=3. However, that shape is less likely when East passes.

MITCHELL: 1♠. I'd like another spade for this, but the alternatives are flawed too. I could bid 1NT but that bypasses spades and anyway I'd like another diamond for that. 2♣ is a possibility but it bypasses spades and NT.

WHYTE: 1♠. What's not to like? Forcing, yes; showing 11+ points, yes; showing a five-card suit, no, but this is only a little fib. I am not sure anyway that it guarantees a 5-card suit.

SHIELDS: 1♠. If partner opened 1♥, what would I bid? Anything else risks missing a spade fit.

McGOWAN: 1♠. I believe this shows a 4-plus card suit with no primary heart fit and is forcing for one round. Bidding should continue much as if North had

not opened. If partner makes a minimum rebid I shall pack it in.

VALENTINE: 1♠. I don't really see this as a problem. It has to be right to bid 1♠ here. 2♣ as forcing doesn't look right. I can tolerate any of partner's subsequent actions and this is the only way to get to spades.

Like Bridge Bulletin, our biggest vote is for 1♠. This has the advantage that there is less chance that partner will be railroaded into rebidding hearts.

Problem 6	Votes	Marks	BB votes
1♠	7	10	7
2♣	5	7	3
1NT	3	7	2
Pass	1	4	0
2♦	0	3	2
2NT	0	3	1

Problem 7

Teams Both Vul

♠A83	S	W	N	E
♥42	1♦	1♠	Dbl	3♠
♦AKJ5	P	P	Dbl	P
♣T643	?			

Mice v. Men. Squeak up...

McGINLEY: 4♣. Denying four hearts or a double-stop in spades (opposite a likely singleton).

SHIELDS: 4♣. Having running tricks in 3NT is too much to ask, and partner will have only 4 hearts for this sequence so

we know there is a minor suit fit. I have a minimum hand and doing any more than this will get partner too excited.

ROSS: 4♣. Close between 4♣ and pass.

FREIMANIS: 4♣. Partner likely does not have 5 hearts here as otherwise I would have expected a 2♥ bid that is forcing for one round. However, it does look like partner has got a spade shortage. This likely makes partner a 1-4-(5-3) or 1-4-4-4 shape which means that we have one or two minor suit fits. If partner has got enough for game, another bid will follow. If partner was stretching, four of a minor might be our limit.

SHORT: 4♣. Seems middle of the road to me. If we have 8 running winners plus the ♠A I've done the wrong thing but if partner has, say, ♠x, ♥AJxx, ♦Qxx, ♣AKJxx we are pretty good for 5♣ on most layouts and 3NT is do or die on finding the ♠Q.

MITCHELL: 4♣. I could pass for penalties but with partner marked with at most one spade, it seems better to try for a minor suit game. Partner may have something like ♠x AQxx ♦Qxx ♣AJxxx.

A great hand to illustrate why 5♣ is better than 3NT. However, take the ♥Q away from that hand and 4♣ plus one is a likely outcome. That will lose ten imps to the following:

DRAGIC: 4NT. Partner has singleton spade, does not have five hearts from failure to bid 2♥, so we are likely to have a nine-card fit in one of the minors or 4-4 fit in both minors.

PIPER: 5♣. You have perfect points.

PATERSON: 4♣. Given that 1♦ may be three, partner can still have 4 diamonds. Indeed, given his failure to bid a 5-card heart or club suit at the 2-level, his likely

shape is 1444. While 4NT would say "pick a minor," 4♣ also says "I am slam-suitable (bearing in mind my pass on the previous round)." Pushy with only 12 points, but a very sharp 12!

Jack is our only panellist to mention a possible slam (Jeff Meckstroth did in BB). Not a possible for:

MCGOWAN: PASS. If partner had 5 hearts she would prefer to overcall last time; if she had 6 clubs or 4 diamonds she could bid them over 3♠. She must realise that a pass from me is a real possibility. Therefore, she is as balanced as is possible given the spade shortage. I cannot imagine less than 500 if she has a trump to lead.

VALENTINE: PASS. One of those hands where we pass and hope we have it beat. No clear fit for us, but definitely the majority of the values so rate to go positive in 3♠ doubled.

CLOW: PASS. Alternative is 4♣ but surely they are going down.

McKAY: PASS. You might well make 3NT but if so Pass should still be profitable.

Unsurprisingly, we have more Bob Hamman disciples (if 3NT is a reasonable bid, bid it). I think that if we "know" partner has spade shortage, Axx is pointing towards five of a minor.

WHYTE: 3NT. The theory states (correctly) that when you have Axx opposite a singleton and oppos know to lead this suit, you have little chance of making 3NT. However, I have even less chance of making 5♣ or 5♦ so where is there a game when we have the preponderance of the points?

SMITH: 3NT. There is a clear theme in this set of problems, with game values

and no known fit. I don't like 3NT but the alternative of going to game at the five-level on a poor club suit is worse.

MARSHALL: 3NT. I have a stop, and my spade cards are insufficient to pass the double, so partner will have a reasonable idea what is going on. That is the best I can hope for.

Marking this one is a dilemma. Fewer than half of both panels voted for a non-forcing Four Clubs, but that was the plurality. The majority of both panels voted for something with a bit (lot) more upside. The Bridge Bulletin conductor resolved the matter by giving 4♣ the 10 points but upgraded the scores of the alternatives. I have done the same.

Problem 7	Votes	Marks	BB votes
4♣	6	10	7
Pass	4	9	5
3NT	3	8	2
5♣	1	7	1
4NT	1	7	1
4♠	1	7	0

Problem 8

Teams NS Vul

♠A84	S	W	N	E
♥K63			P	1NT
♦J75	P	3♣*	P	3NT
♣AT62	End			

*3♣ = natural, invitational

What is your lead?

A small majority selected a heart with various degrees of (lacking) enthusiasm.

SMITH: ♥3. The real answer here is 'not a club', and all the other suits look unattractive. With the ♥A likely to be on your right, this is the least likely to give away a trick.

Isn't it heartwarming that "Not a Club" was the unanimous choice of both panels?

DRAGIC: ♥3. Tricky. Any lead can give trick away. Declarer could still have 5-plus diamonds. A lead away from Axx can give away more than from Kxx.

MCGOWAN: ♥3. A complete guess. On general principles I try not to lead away from Axx(x) against no-trump contracts, prefer to keep my controls. Jxx is too likely to do in the entire suit.

MARSHALL: ♥3. The ♠A has the advantage that I can see dummy so I can switch at trick two. If, as expected, dummy is limited in (outside of clubs) high cards, it would be my intention to knock out the entry, if I could. When it is partner's suit you are seeking to set up, Ace to three is an Ok lead. But I think the heart is so much better.

SHORT: ♥3. Anything (apart from a club) could be correct so it's just really a guess. Having said that, a heart lead is a tiny (very tiny) bit less likely to cost a trick,

VALENTINE: ♥3. It's a toss-up between the majors. If I am leading into East's major strength, a heart feels less likely to blow a trick than a spade and I may just catch the right holding anyhow. If spades are our suit, I will probably get another chance at it. If it is hearts, it feels more like I need to get them going now.

WHYTE: ♥3. Partner has 3-4 points, yet I have no long suit, so I must find a suitable five-card suit in my partner's hand to beat this contract. Diamonds lack allure, so I must choose a major. Between the two, the spade suit gives me a more certain entry than the heart king.

We have one outlier:

CLOW: ♥K. Partner has very little but maybe he has ♥QJxxx. I have to hope that declarer errs and wins the second heart then gets the clubs wrong.

It seems more likely that the ♥K can become the setting trick when declarer has to look outside clubs for tricks. That is possible if we can dislodge dummy's re-entry. Six of our panel chose the other major:

FREIMANIS: ♠4. Partner does not have a lot here. Outside of guessing which lead works best, if partner had, say ♥QJxxx, that might let declarer duck for two rounds and cut communications. However, if partner has got this combination in spades, declarer may find ducking the first trick quite a bit harder.

The spade 4 will also nullify the re-entry when dummy has ♠Hx. Whilst underleading the Ace retains control of the spade suit, it doesn't allow a change of plan at trick 2. Which is why some prefer this:

PATERSON: ♠A. No clues from the auction, so have a look at dummy and partner's signal before committing.

MCGINLEY: ♠A. May need to attack dummy's entry for long club tricks.

MITCHELL: ♠A. Partner isn't going to have much here, so spades is our best chance of beating 3NT. Partner may

have Kxxxx in spades. He'll encourage then duck the spade continuation to keep communication open. If partner discourages, it may be obvious where to try to knock out dummy's entry outside clubs.

We have only one diamond leader, which had some illustrious support (Jeff Meckstroth and Andy Robson) on the BW panel. As usual, Patrick makes a sound case.

SHIELDS: ♦5. The club break might well inconvenience the opponents so I will choose the safest of the suits I might lead. Admittedly declarer is more likely to have a robust 5-card diamond suit, than the same in hearts or spades – but I would hate to catch declarer's five-card major. That would be taking generosity too far.

Problem 8	Votes	Marks	BW votes
♥3	8	10	13
♠A	3	8	7
♠4	3	7	4
♦5/7	1	6	3
♥K	1	4	0

Plagiarising problems which have divided other panels creates an interesting set. No panellist scored top points on more than five of the problems, with no answers attracting more than nine out of 16 votes. Well done to Bill Whyte and Liz McGowan for the best scores.

Panel Answers – November 2023

Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Top Scoring Choice	5♦	3♠	3♣	3NT	Dbl	1♠	4♣	♥3	80
Bill Whyte	5♦	3♥	3♣	3♠	Dbl	1♠	3NT	♥3	76
Liz McGowan	5♥	3♠	3♣	3♠	Dbl	1♠	Pass	♥3	75
Harry Smith	5♦	3♠	3♣	3NT	4♣	2♣	3NT	♥3	72
Gints Freimanis	5♠	3♥	Dbl	3NT	Dbl	1♠	4♣	♠4	70
Dougie Mitchell	5♥	3♠	3♣	3♠	4NT	1♠	4♣	♠A	70
Miro Dragic	5♦	3♠	Dbl	3NT	Pass	2♣	4NT	♥3	69
Mike McGinley	4♥	3♥	Dbl	3NT	Dble	2♣	4♣	♠A	67
Ronan Valentine	5♠	4♣	Dbl	3NT	Pass	1♠	Pass	♥3	67
Douglas Piper	5♥	3♠	3♣	4♣	Dble	1NT	5♠	♥3	67
Patrick Shields	4♠	3♠	Dble	4♥	Dble	1♠	4♣	♦5	66
Brian Short	4♥	3♠	3♥	3♠	Dble	1NT	4♣	♥3	66
Tim McKay	4♠	3♠	3♣	4♣	Pass	1♠	Pass	♠4	64
Finlay Marshall	4♠	3♠	3♣	4♥	Dble	Pass	3NT	♥3	64
Bill Ross	5♦	4♣	4♥	4♦	Dble	2♣	4♣	♠4	62
Robert Clow	5♦	3♥	3♣	Pass	4♣	2♣	Pass	♥K	61
Jack Paterson	4♠	4♣	3♣	3♠	4♣	1NT	4♠	♠A	60

Competitors Top Scores

(Because of some changes in communication there is a very small entry this time. Our apologies to those who did not receive a set of problems.)

Congratulations to **Ali Gordon (GBC)** on his winning score of **67**.

Other good scores:

Marilyn McDonagh	(Carlton)	59
Danny Hamilton	(Buchanan)	57
Sheila Templeton	(Kyle)	56
Pam Warner	(New Melville)	53
Bob Brown	(GBC)	52

SBNews Bidding Panel Problems

January 2024

You are always South, playing with an excellent first-time partner. You have agreed to play Acol with a weak No-trump.

Please send your answers to the Scorer:

t.vandelisle@gmail.com

quoting your SBU Membership number.

Closing date: 26 January 2024

Problem 1 Teams Both Vul

♠9632	S	W	N	E
♥54	-	-	-	P
♦KQJ	1♣	2♥*	Dbl	P
♣AKQJ	3♣	P	4♦*	P
?				

*2♥ = weak jump overcall

*4♦ = cue

Problem 2 Teams EW Vul

♠A432	S	W	N	E
♥43	-	-	-	1♦
♦J532	P	1♠	2♥	P
♣AJ98	?			

Problem 3 Teams None Vul

♠932	S	W	N	E
♥-	-	1♦	1♥	P
♦AKQJ75	?			
♣J973				

Problem 4 Teams Both Vul

♠AJ7543	S	W	N	E
♥QJ	-	-	1♥	P
♦K832	1♠	P	2♣	P
♣2	?			

Problem 5 Teams Both Vul

♠T5	S	W	N	E
♥AK	-	P	1♦	P
♦KT87	2♦*	P	2NT	P
♣AJ875	3♣	P	3♠	P
?				

*2♦ = inverted raise, forcing

Problem 6 Teams None Vul

♠QJT653	S	W	N	E
♥T832	-	2♥*	3♦	P
♦Q7	?			
♣8				

*2♥ = weak

Problem 7 Match Points None Vul

♠AKQ53	S	W	N	E
♥AJ3	-	2♦*	P	P
♦6	?			
♣K753				

*2♦ = weak

Problem 8 Teams NS Vul

	S	W	N	E
	-	-	-	1NT*
♠J972	P	2♣*	P	2♦*
♥J92	P	3♥*	P	3♠
♦J3	P	4♣*	P	4NT
♣KT84	P	5♣*	P	5♦*
	P	5♠*	P	6♠

*1NT = 11-13

*2♣ = Stayman; *2♦ = no 4+cardM

*3♥ = 5x♠s; 3+♥s

*4♣ = shortage

*5♣ = 0/3 keycards; *5♠ = no ♠Q

What is your lead?