

Scottish Bridge News

The Official Magazine of the Scottish Bridge Union
Issue 130



Barnet Shenkin in profile

Scottish Bridge News

Editorial

Scotland did not shine in the first Camrose weekend, as reported by Captain Alex Adamson. The second weekend is in Dublin on 3-5 March. You can follow the play on RealBridge: <https://kibitz.realbridge.online>

We also have coverage of the Women's and Senior Trials. The Lady Milne will be held in Perth on 21-23 April. Why not come along and watch it live? The Teltcher Senior Camrose runs in Wales on 19-21 May.

The publication of his new book "*Heroes, Icons and Scandals*" suggested that Barnet Shenkin would be a suitable candidate for the Player Profile Feature.

We also have a tribute to the late Gibby Reid and his late wife Sally. This year's Norvite Simultaneous Pairs was run in his memory.

Finally, the SBNews Bidding Panel is a regular feature at the end of the SBNews. A new set of problems is on the last page. They seem to be difficult to find! If you would like to enter please send an email to the editor, who will add you to her mailing list.

Contributions and entries should be sent to the editor:

liz.mcgowan@blueyonder.co.uk

Thank you!

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Camrose Weekend 1

Alex Adamson

In March 2020 the Camrose was held at the La Mon Hotel and Country Club near Belfast. In 2020, 2021 and 2022 we held the event online, in venues such as my daughter's bedroom. It was therefore a great pleasure to get back to playing in-person and, fittingly, we were at La Mon for the occasion.

Scotland fielded two new caps, Harry Smith and Gints Freimanis, and brought back Roy Bennett – a player with many Camroses behind him, but who hasn't featured since 1993 (the year Gints was born). The rest of the team was Derek Sanders (playing with Gints), and Sam Punch & Stephen Peterkin, with me as Non-Playing Captain.

We had the toughest possible start, playing England on Friday night. They played well against us and gave away few chances. We managed one big swing in our plus column.

Match 1 v England. Board 8

Board 3	♠AKJ8	None Vul
	♥JT9	Dir W
	♦Q7	
	♣AKQ5	
♠T7		♠642
♥AQ643		♥72
♦J63		♦T842
♣JT3		♣9762
	♠Q953	
	♥K85	
	♦AK95	
	♣84	

At both tables N/S opened 2NT and found their spade fit. Over 3♠ by Stephen (North), Sam continued with a 4♦ cuebid and Stephen bid 4♠. Knowing they were missing the ♥A, and with the

lead coming through her King, Sam judged well to sign off in 4♠.

At the other table, the English South, Black, had to bid 4♥ as a general slam try over 3♠. Gold signed off in 4♠, but Black, lacking the information that our pair had, went on with 4NT, eventually driving to 6♠. At first glance, this looks like a slam on a finesse – if the ♥Q is with East you will probably make.

Against a suit contract, Harry and Roy lead 3rd and 5th from honours and MUD from three or more small. Harry chose to lead the ♦4 which went to the 5, Jack and Queen. This gave declarer an extra chance. He could play Harry for the ♦T, finesse the nine and discard two hearts on the ♦AK. Or he could lay down the ♦AK to see if the Ten dropped, in which case he could discard the hearts, while keeping the heart finesse as a back-up if the Ten didn't appear. He drew trumps in three rounds, ending in hand, then led his second diamond towards dummy. Harry found a nice false card of the eight of diamonds. This was consistent with two original holdings: T84 or 842. If it was the former then Gold could make either by finessing or playing for the drop of the ten. If it was the latter then he had to win in dummy and revert to the heart finesse. Gold went up with the Ace, took the King and a couple of minutes later went down when the heart finesse lost.

So with the extra chances, was this a slam that was better than a finesse? No. A 5-0 trump break means it is close to unmakeable, and it would be tricky on a 4-1. On top of that, the defence might have had a ruff. Indeed, on a heart lead the defence takes the first three tricks.

In the second match we played the CBAI team. They beat us, and showed that it was no flash in the pan with a

good all-round performance throughout the weekend. They go into the second weekend nearly 10 VPs ahead of their countrymates – the Republic of Ireland.

Bridge is a bidders game, especially at this level. How would you and you partner bid the NS hands on this board from the second match?

Match 2 V CBAI Board 15

	♠AT7	NS Vul
	♥KQT8	Dir S
	♦K2	
	♣KT73	
♠63		♠9852
♥9752		♥—
♦J964		♦AT853
♣J64		♣Q985
	♠KQJ4	
	♥AJ643	
	♦Q7	
	♣A2	

With 17 opposite 15, a solid 9-card heart fit and all of the Aces and Kings apart from the ♥A, you would hope to get to 6♥. The CBAI pair got a free run and duly bid the slam. At the other table the task was a lot harder. This was the auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	<i>Derek</i>	-	<i>Gints</i>
Pass	2NT	Dbl	1♥
3♦	3♠	4♦	Redbl
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♥
End			

2NT showed a slam try in hearts. East's double allowed his side to get into the auction and take up room. With the opponents having found a fit and making a slam try there was no danger that his partner would take him for a good hand, and it was possible that they could compete in one of the other three

suits. Gints' redouble showed a hand akin to a strong NT. Derek's 3♠ was a cue bid. Over 4♦ Gints had very little room. 4♥ would have been his weakest bid so he passed. Over Derek's 4♥, he might bid RKCB but with the points that they had shown he was confident that they were not missing 2 aces – what he was worried about was a diamond control. He cue bid 5♣ and then when Derek was able to bid 5♦ Gints bid the slam. Well bid, especially in the face of aggressive and space-consuming action by the opponents.

On Saturday evening we lost to the Republic of Ireland. It was not going well, but we were still above Northern Ireland – until we played them on the Sunday morning.

We seemed to run into an astonishing number of bad breaks over the weekend. Of course, the breaks were the same at all of the tables but somehow we seemed to be the ones getting punished.

Take this deal from the Northern Ireland match for example:

Match 4 V NI: Board 3

	♠—	EW Vul
	♥94	Dir S
	♦9742	
	♣QT87654	
♠KJT7		♠65
♥J2		♥AQ8653
♦AKJT63		♦—
♣3		♣AKJ92
	♠AQ98432	
	♥KT7	
	♦Q85	
	♣—	

At all eight tables South opened 1♠ and West overcalled 2♦. North passed and seven Easts bid 2♥ while one bid 2♠. What would you do as South?

Everyone of them bid: 2♠ over 2♥ or 3♠ over 2♠. At seven tables E/W bid a game – either the making 3NT or 4♥ going down on the terrible breaks. Only where Harry and Roy were N/S did the opponents decide to double 2♠. This was heading for -800 on best defence.

Harry reckoned that his hand would be worth a few tricks in clubs but none as dummy, and rescued to 3♣. Not only did his partner have an unlucky void but he ran into a horrendous break. He got out for -800 while our East was going one down in 4♥

We finished with Wales - one last chance to get a win and start to move back up the table. This was a tight match all the way but we had the better of them in the closing straight. Meanwhile, Northern Ireland were losing heavily – a result that meant we climbed up to fifth place.

We have a lot of work to do in the second weekend. We will do our best.

The Camrose Trials were won by the team of Brian Short, Alan Goodman, Liam O'Brien and Ronan Valentine. For various reasons neither pair was available for the first weekend.

Brian has now returned from Australia, and he and Alan have replaced Harry and Roy for the second Camrose weekend on 3-5 March in Dublin.

Alex continues as npc – we wish him a change of luck.

The Women's Trial

Scotland is at home for the Women's Home International in 2023, and so gets two teams into the Lady Milne. This led to a record entry of 14 pairs in the Trials, held in the New Melville Bridge Club on 3-5 December.

This deal from the first 8-board match caused a few headaches:

Board 5	♠A2 ♥9 ♦AT85 ♣QT8763	NSI Vul Dir N									
♠T9876543 ♥5 ♦— ♣J942	<table border="1"> <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		♠J ♥JT863 ♦KQJ9743 ♣—
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠KQ ♥AKQ742 ♦62 ♣AK5										

At my table, where North did not open, I decided to get the East hand off my chest by opening 5♦. South doubled, showing values, and North was happy to pass. Dummy was far from ideal, and the play was not much fun. I was rather fortunate to escape for 4 down, just the -800. Was this good or bad?


It is important to put such a board behind you and get on with the match, but the question lingered – could NS make slam?

The answer was yes – and no! When Sam Punch opened the North hand Anne Symons was soon in 7NT. She won the spade lead in dummy and played on clubs, finessing the Ten when East showed out. 8 black suit winners squeezed East in the red suits and 13 tricks rolled in. Well played for a fat 17.67 crossimps, very unlucky for opponents.

One other pair reached 7NT but mistimed up the entries by winning the spade in hand and playing on hearts. One down. Another pair bid 6♣, an easy make.

The remaining pairs played in hearts, where 10 tricks are the limit – and two of them bid 5♥ which turned out to be one too many. My opening bid cost - 3.33 crossimps – I was quite relieved that it was not more.


Crossimps may be the best way to score a Pairs Trial, but they cannot remove the element of luck. I was lucky on day 2:

Board 18	♠K95 ♥AK43 ♦862 ♣A63	NS Vul Dir E
♠T843 ♥T985 ♦97 ♣J85		♠A72 ♥Q6 ♦4 ♣KQT9742
	♠QJ6 ♥J72 ♦AKQJT53 ♣—	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	1♣	3♣*
Pass	?		

The double jump cue overcall asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in the suit opened. It is typically based on a solid suit, with or without outside values. On this occasion I could assume that the solid suit was diamonds. I could count 10 winners – enough to persuade me to punt 6♦! This time dummy was much more suitable. No-one else bid slam, so that was 13.17 crossimps to us – and against our unfortunate opponents.

They say that luck evens out over time. But a single weekend may not be time enough for the unfortunate. Our only really unlucky board was this one from day 2:

Board 52	♠KQ93 ♥Q5 ♦K653 ♣T85	All Vul Dir W
♠T864 ♥T42 ♦T984 ♣92		♠52 ♥K9763 ♦QJ7 ♣KJ3
	♠AJ7 ♥AJ8 ♦A2 ♣AQ764	

We were East/West. I shall not name the opponents who sailed into 6♣, nor shall I publish their auction... but when clubs played for one loser and the heart finesse worked I did wonder why they were not in 6NT. They were the only pair to reach slam, and that cost us 10.83 cross-imps.

At the end of the weekend the leading pairs were:

1 Liz McGowan/Fiona McQuaker	172.56
2 Laura Middleton/Ying Piper	147.76
3 Amanda Douglas/Katherine Bailey	144.67
4 Sam Punch/Anne Symons	144.22
5 Lucia Barrett/Veronica Guy	138.76
6 Sheila Adamson/Abi Milne	138.56

A single double-figure swing separated pairs 2-6! So the selectors chose last year's winning team (Pairs 1, 4 and 6) to represent Scotland. Pairs 2, 3 and 5 will play in the SBU team.

The Senior Trial

The last in this year's series of Trials was run face-to-face in the Carlton BC on 14-15 January. There were six teams of four, playing matches in two halves, five 10-board sets each day.

The case for Teams Trials is that conditions and scoring reflect real life bridge. The case against is twofold: teams self-select, so the best pairs may not be in the same team; and international events are played as teams of 6, so a third pair is added to the winning foursome. Both elements may create ill-feeling. Team harmony may not matter too much over one weekend, but it is essential for success in a longer, European or World event.

What would you respond if partner opened 3♠, vulnerable, in first seat?

♠AT
♥A83
♦AK84
♣A765

If partner has ♠KQxxxx you can count 11 tricks. Is there a twelfth?

Many pairs have adopted Keycard Gerber, where 4♣ is the enquiry over a 3-level pre-empt (4♦ over 3♣). North can find out whether partner has the ♠K, then ask for the ♠Q to see if partner could cue a King. That works when partner turns up with the ♥K, but does not find the ♦Q.

Partner actually had:

♠KQJ7652
♥K
♦T7
♣843

I suspect that some opened 4♠, or 1♠. Only one pair did not punt slam; another overreached to the Grand!

In his book "Overcalls" Mike Lawrence introduced the idea that a 1-level overcall in a Major with a 4-card suit can be a winning strategy. The idea has caught on, but players sometimes forget the caveats: it must be a stuffy suit; there must be no better call (eg double); and the hand should have opening strength.

Board	♠QT5	NS Vul
37	♥T75	Dir N
	♦AK74	
	♣A72	
♠A972		♠86
♥4		♥AQJ8
♦T9832		♦QJ6
♣Q84		♣T653
	♠KJ43	
	♥K9632	
	♦5	
	♣KJ9	

Only one NS pair played in the normal 4♥. Three pairs preferred 3NT, an easy make by playing on hearts. Did they choose 3NT because of a 1♥ overcall from East? At the table where I watched North opened 1♣ and East ignored the third caveat.

What should South do over the 1♥ overcall? A huge penalty from non-vulnerable opponents looks unlikely, so my South chose to introduce spades via a negative double. North thought that 1NT best described his hand – stoppers are in the mind. South now knew that partner had a weak no-trump, and thought that 2♣ would be Checkback, the start of an invitational raise. North did not agree. To add insult to injury, 2♣ could not be made.

Many players are reluctant to lead cards that dummy can ruff. But sometimes 'punching' dummy is a good plan

Board 16 ♠QJ876 EW Vul
♥T765 Dir W
♦T6
♣76

♠3	<div style="background-color: #90EE90; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠T42
♥KJ984		♥A32
♦732		♦AKQ985
♣J985		♣T
♠AK95		

♥Q
♦J4
♣AKQ432

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	1♦	Dbl
2♦	2♠	Pass	4♠

Every NS pair reached 4♠. East cashed two top diamonds, partner showing an odd number. What now?

East can see that if dummy's long club suit will run declarer has lots of tricks. But partner might have 4 clubs, in which case declarer must ruff a club to establish the suit – and then return to dummy to cash it. Robert Clow spotted the successful defence: he switched to ♥A and another, forcing dummy to ruff. A less astute defence, switching to the singleton club, allows declarer to draw trump, establish clubs and enter dummy with a ruff.

Final Scores:

1 John Hamilton/Paul Maiolani Robert Clow/Derrick Peden	115.83
2 David Shenkin/Cameron McLatchie Derek Diamond/Iain Sime	100.34
3 Brian Spears/Barnet Shenkin Irving Gordn/John Murdoch	98.51
4 Mike Ash/Bob Ferrari Harry Smith/Roy Bennett	97.17
5 Brian Short/Alan Goodman Sandy Duncan/Bob McPaul	93.09
6 Bob McKinnon/Cathy Ferguson Patrick Home,/Finlay Marshall	89.54

Play Challenge

Jim Patrick

1 NS Vul Dealer North

♠KQ5
♥7
♦AK754
♣A965

♠A8762
♥A9862
♦62
♣7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	5♠
Pass	6♠	End	

Contract: 6♠ Lead: ♣K

Not only have you overbid but you have also received the least favourable lead. Can you recover with favourable breaks?

2 NS Vul Dealer West

♠86
♥Q83
♦AKJ93
♣K76

♠AK4
♥K972
♦T86
♣A93

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1NT
Pass	3NT	End	

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♠5

East plays the ♠J on the opening lead. How do you make sure of this contract assuming that West has at least 4 spades?

Solutions on Page 13

Heroes, Icons, and Scandals

by *Barnet Shenkin*

www.shenkinbridge.com



After a couple of years of sporadic work, Master Point Press has published my collection of stories.

I look at great players, many of whom I played against, and feature their brilliancies. Taking a look at some of the greatest scandals of our time and the old days, I introduce both some unknown facts in modern scandals and some original documents from long ago. Each chapter has its own story and the hand shown below is taken from the chapter on Omar Sharif. In 1970 his team, known as the Circus and including Belladonna and Garozzo, two of the world's best-ever players, played a challenge rubber bridge game against Flint and Cansino, two of England's greatest stars. The stakes were 1 pound per point (or 37 dollars a point after inflation.) The players wore tuxedos and had a huge viewing audience. The book has a link to a short newsreel live at the event.

On the third day, the Circus were leading by 2290 points when the English pair had a major disaster.

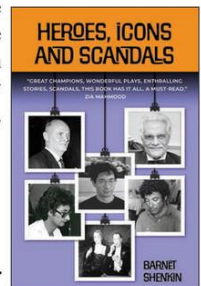
N-S vul.

<p>♠ J 7 6 5 ♥ T ♦ J 9 2 ♣ A K T 4 2</p> <p>♠ Q 9 4 2 ♥ K Q 8 4 ♦ T 4 3 ♣ 5 3</p>	<p>♠ 3 ♥ A 9 7 5 2 ♦ A Q 8 7 6 ♣ Q J</p> <p>♠ A K T 8 ♥ J 6 3 ♦ K 5 ♣ 9 8 7 6</p>
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West	North	East	South
Demouly	Cansino	Sharif	Flint
	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Dbl	Pass	4♣
Dbl	All Pass		

Delmouly led the ♥K and Sharif played the ♥9. Another ♥ forced dummy and a low ♠ went to the ♠T and ♠Q. West could have ensured the defeat of the contract by playing another ♥. When his partner won the ♦A, a fourth ♥ would establish a trump trick for the defense. Instead, he switched to a ♦, won by the ♦A, and a second ♦ went to the ♦K. Flint played a ♣ to the Ace, Sharif dropping the ♣Q. He now drew trump and was at a crossroads. Had Sharif started with the singleton ♠Q or ♠QJ doubleton? He played a ♣ and finessed, losing all the rest of the tricks for minus 1100. Had he played the ♠K, he would have made an overtrick for plus 990: a difference of 2090, or about \$77,000 today.

If you like bridge stories along with the intrigue that goes with the game, you can get my book on Amazon: Heroes, Icons and Scandals.



Click on book to order

We have reproduced this article from "Sunshine News", Florida's Bridge Newsletter. Clicking on the Book will not work, but you can order it on Amazon.

[Heroes, Icons and Scandals: Amazon.co.uk: Shenkin, Barnet: 9781771400763: Books](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B0981771400763)

Player Profile:

Barnet Shenkin

What would you like to share about your background?

I was born in Glasgow and attended Hutcheson's Grammar School and Strathclyde University. I have been married to Maggie for 32 years – we met through bridge when I was playing in a Camrose match. We have three children from a previous marriage.

I worked in the family rug business for 29 years. When we persuaded Marks and Spencer to take rugs I accompanied them to China, Italy and Belgium. In 1998 I moved to USA to play and teach bridge – I got an Arts Visa** with credentials support letters from Benito Garozzo, Bob Hamman and Edgar Kaplan. While in the USA I wrote "Playing with the Bridge Legends" which was published by Masterpoint Press in 2000.

What about your bridge history?

My father, Louis Shenkin, was a Scottish International with executive posts on both the SBU and the British Bridge League. He took me to Bridge Congresses from the age of 3. I started to play at 11 and learned initially from two books – Howard Schenken on bidding and Victor Mollo / Nico Gardner on Card Play. I got my schoolfriends to play and at 14 we were playing with boards at my house. Four played and we came back the following week to play the boards again in the opposite direction – then scored up with ourselves! My mentor was Victor Silverstone and I travelled to watch him and Willie Coyle play for Britain in Oslo and then Stockholm. I spent many hours watching them play in Scotland.

I played at Albert Benjamin's Kenmure Club – a house in Shields Road – both rubber and duplicate bridge, and enjoyed having supper afterwards with Victor, Willie and Victor Goldberg and Sam Leckie, and being part of bridge discussion.

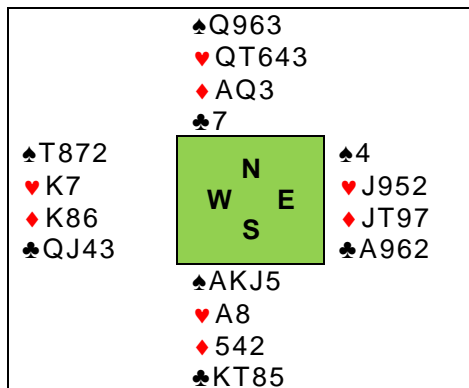
Finest Bridge Moments?

I had the best possible bridge partners in Scotland. I played for the Great Britain Junior team with George Cuthbertson in 1972. We also played in the Camrose the following year when Scotland tied with England. I then played with Michael Rosenberg for about 4 years. We were very successful: we won the Camrose twice, in 1976 and 77; in 1976 we were the first Scottish Pair to win *The Sunday Times* International Pairs; that same year we finished second in the Cavendish International pairs in the USA; we also won the Gold Cup. We represented Great Britain in 1977 just before Michael left for USA. I then played with Victor Goldberg for a few years for Scotland and Great Britain – we won a silver medal in the Common Market teams and recorded my second win in the *Sunday Times*. With Willie Coyle our team won the Gold Cup famously being 52 down with 8 to play and then we played for Scotland, and Great Britain in the World Olympiad in Seattle in 1984. I then played with Victor Silverstone and we had the happy experience of helping Scotland win the Camrose in 1989. My last partner in Scotland was Les Steel and we lost two Gold Cup finals but were selected to play for Great Britain in Menton in 1993. Although we played in reasonable form the team was severely damaged by the withdrawal of Forrester – Robson which in my opinion likely cost us a place in the Bermuda Bowl- a major regret.

So the secret of bridge success is having the best possible partner and of course teammates.

Favourite Hand?

My favourite bridge hand comes from the 1976 *Sunday Times* as written up in the *History of the Scottish Bridge Union.*” It was played against the Israeli pair, Frydrich / Shaufel who finished second behind Barnet and Michael.



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Barnet</i>	<i>Shaufel</i>	<i>Michael</i>	<i>Frydrich</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Declarer won the ♠2 lead in hand and played the ♥A. Barnet dropped the ♥K! This brilliancy was inspired by a tip from Terence Reese: “when everything looks right for declarer try to deflect his course.” Convinced that hearts were breaking badly, Frydrich thought long and hard before losing his way and going down in a contract made at every other table.

I am also very happy with my book just out “*Heroes Icons and Legends.*” Mostly uplifting stories about players and special events to include Scottish friends some unfortunately departed. However, I also did some major

investigative work never uncovered that supported the sportsmanship award to the Scottish team earlier this year.

Any views on how bridge is run in Scotland?

In my opinion the only way to promote bridge in Scotland for the long term is through the schools . it would be good to find a sponsor to support teaching in schools and mentors for the better prospects. I understand that the youngsters of today have more social interests in today’s internet climate. However other countries seem to manage to entice younger players to play the game. The internet actually makes teaching groups easier and this idea should be utilised.

Favourites?

Film: *The imitation Game* with Benedict Cumberbatch

Music: Leonard Cohen – the amazing singer songwriter who had to make a comeback at 70.

Book: Alan Furst and Daniel Silva – love both these authors

Food: Oriental food or Zia food { he is specialist} – Indian ,Thai and Chinese.

Colour:Blue.

*** An Arts Visa is given to especially talented people in the field of art, literature, poetry or other artistic pursuits. Barnet is too modest to mention that he was the second ever bridge player to get one - Martin Hoffman was the first.*

Gibby Reid



Gibby was a pillar of North District, a genial, soft-spoken man. He died in 2021 aged 83, leaving many fond memories of a quite exceptional person.

Together with his wife Sally he made a huge impact on bridge in Aberdeen, as a player, organiser and teacher. Together they built up a cogent series of lessons, materials still in use today. They were a charming and formidable pairing, Sally a born teacher who explained and made complex things simple, while Gibby contributed a certain “have a go” mentality. He viewed risk-taking as an integral part of the game and felt that beginners should not be too timid.

These same qualities were apparent when they played together; they complemented each other perfectly, playing very successfully and at a high level. Their joy in playing and in each other was easy to see and to appreciate.

Gibby and Sally were largely responsible for the flourishing of Junior Bridge in the North. They ran an after-school bridge session in Aberdeen Bridge Club which produced star players Jun Nakamaru-Pinder and Abi Wilson (now Milne) among many others. Their contribution to Junior Bridge and bridge in general was

recognised when they were awarded the SBU President’s Prize.

Both Gibby and Sally served on the committee of the Bridge Club and their drive and hard work made it a success, even as other clubs languished. He was President of North District and served on the SBU Council.

A proud Aberdonian, Gibby remained a committed supporter of “The Dons” all his life, whether they were doing well or badly. A home match was one of the few reasons for him to cry off a bridge night. He loved jazz and dancing and was a keen golfer. Bridge and golf were the basis of the regular trips to Ireland that he organised for his club. Every activity was taken on with great joy and enthusiasm.

Sally’s death, closely followed by the pandemic, hit him hard, and he gradually faded away.

Based on the Aberdeen BC Obituary by Nuala Booth

Gibby and Sally were members of the Phoenix Bridge Club for nearly 50 years, Gibby serving as Captain many times. We were a family that made Bridge not only competitive but FUN. They were the instigators of all our *Phoenix Phunctions* including 7 Trips to Ireland to play against the mighty Irish Teams. They also organised all the Golf outings and rallied us all up to make sure we entered Congresses up and down the country. They were affectionately known as Gabbie and Silly in Aviemore, Gibby with all his jokes and Sally with her hospitality.

Emily Garden

The Norvite Simultaneous Pairs

Gibby worked in agriculture and he set up Norvite, a successful animal-feed business. As managing director he decided to sponsor the North District Simultaneous Pairs. Uniquely, the Norvite uses Aggregate scoring. (Once the norm in Pairs events, aggregate has been squeezed out by Match Points over the years.)

Gibby loved to collect interesting hands for his event. There were no dull boards in the Norvite. He persuaded your editor to write the commentary for a while and loved to test her ability to analyse obscure Double Dummy lines. Each hand was accompanied by a par score, which sometimes proved a serious challenge!

This year's event was run in Gibby's memory, so I made a point of playing. Online, it attracted an entry of 50 pairs. The deals, compiled by Mike Hodder, did not disappoint.

This one reflects the spirit of the event:

Bd 21	♠96	NS Vul
	♥A42	Dir N
	♦A97653	
	♣K6	
♠K854		♠32
♥97		♥QJ86
♦-		♦J842
♣QT97432		♣J85
	♠AQJT7	
	♥KT53	
	♦KQT	
	♣A	

Par was 1400 to NS - 7♣X-6.

No-one achieved Par. Some missed slam when EW pre-empted in clubs.

6♦ was a popular choice. It needs imaginative play when the 4-0 trump break comes to light. Declarer needs two entries to the North hand: one to finesse diamonds, one to get back to draw trump. The second entry has to be the ♠9. Declarer must lead ♠Q from dummy to create that entry! (If West ducks you can afford a diamond loser.) Too tough for most.

Some tried 6♥ or 6♠, but these contracts had no real chance. At my table opponents reached the top spot:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	Pass	1♠
3♣	Pass	4♣	6NT!
End			

Declarer won the club lead and crossed to the ♥A to run the ♠9. I held up once, then won the second spade. My club return was pitiful. Declarer crossed to a diamond to cash spades, and poor partner was squeezed in the red suits. Why did I not break up the squeeze by returning a heart? 😞

Declarer makes 6NT by cashing one top diamond, then conceding a spade. Now the heart return is won in dummy, ♠K is cashed, and South crosses to a diamond to run spades. East may not have expected to be squeezed, but eventually folds.

Play Challenge Solutions

Jim Patrick

1 NS Vul Dealer North

<p>♠J93 ♥KT43 ♦QT9 ♣KQ8</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	<p>♠KQ5 ♥7 ♦AK754 ♣A965</p>	<p>♠T4 ♥QJ5 ♦J83 ♣JT432</p>
<p>♠A8762 ♥A9862 ♦62 ♣7</p>			

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	5♠
Pass	6♣	End	

Contract: 6♠ Lead: ♣K

At the table declarer, having lost his side entry to dummy at trick 1, ducked a diamond at trick 2. His plan was to make 5 trump, 4 diamonds, the ♥A and a heart ruff. The defence scotched his plan by returning a diamond, removing his other side entry to dummy.

You need good breaks in trumps and diamonds, but instead of going for the heart ruff in dummy, go for a dummy reversal.

Ruff a club at trick 2, cross to the ♦A and ruff another club. Now play ♦K and ruff a diamond to establish that suit. Three rounds of trump now make dummy high, apart from one club loser.

Instead of making 5 trump in hand, plus a heart ruff in dummy you make 3 trump in dummy and 3 ruffs in hand.

2 None Vul Dealer West

<p>♠QT753 ♥J4 ♦42 ♣J854</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	<p>♠86 ♥Q83 ♦AKJ93 ♣K76</p>	<p>♠J92 ♥AT65 ♦Q75 ♣QT2</p>
<p>♠AK4 ♥K972 ♦T86 ♣A93</p>			

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1NT
Pass	3NT	End	

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♠5

East plays ♠J on the opening lead.

You are in danger of losing 3 spades, a heart and a diamond. Say you win and take a losing diamond finesse. The defence clears spades while West still has the ♥A. If you duck the opening lead the defence might switch to clubs to establish two tricks there.

In "Reese on Play" Terence claimed that the Sure Tricks solution was to lead to the ♥Q at trick 2. But if East wins and returns a heart declarer cannot afford to win the ♥K in case East has 5 hearts and the ♦Q. If he ducks the heart West wins and plays a spade, which must also be ducked. Now another heart from East puts you to the test.

The best line is to cross to dummy with a top diamond to lead a heart to the King. If it holds – play on diamonds. If West wins and switches to a club – play on diamonds. If West continues spades duck and then play diamonds – East cannot now threaten enough heart trick from his side. If West plays a heart East has only 4 hearts so you can afford to win the Queen and play diamonds.

January 2023 Bidding Challenge

Liz McGowan

We return to Acol with a weak NT for this set, keeping the panellists on their toes. Bob Clow, persistent winner as a contestant, has been promoted to a permanent panellist.

Problem 1 **Teams** None Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠QT	P	P	1♠	2♣
♥K752	Dbl	P	2♠	3♣
♦A8765	?			
♣T2				

Compete further, or call it a day? We have the compulsive bidders, some of whom think game is still a possibility.

GORDON: 3♠. I must have missed something? Partner's range is up to the inability to rebid 3♠. Partner is not barred from bidding game – maybe 3NT. Anyone doubling again hoping it shows great spade support with an irregular partner is rather tilted.

CLOW: 3♠. Inviting in case partner has a very suitable hand eg AKxxxx Axx QJx x. I don't like the current trend for 2-card raises but this hand has every point working. Biggest danger is that partner has a balanced 15 count with only 5 spades and no club control. Even so, 1 off may be a save against 3♣ making!

WHYTE: 3♠. Each of my honour cards is useful; what can go wrong? It might even allow my partner to punt 3NT with AKxxxx Qx Kx Kxx.

Others are just competing.

SMITH: 3♠. Partner has 6 spades, a minimum opener, and no fit for my suits. We should have 6 trump tricks, an outside trick in his hand and 2 in mine.

This is not invitational. As I'm a passed hand I can easily make a game try with either red suit.

Partner may well have a 6-card suit, but I do not think that is guaranteed. Is she supposed to rebid 2♥ with a 5=3=1=4 distribution? Might she not be 5=2=2=4 or 5=1=3=4, unsuitable for 2NT?

McKAY: 3♠. I don't think I am strong enough for 3♦.

One panellist does bid 3♦, but without comment. In my world the 3♦ rebid after the negative double shows a limited hand with 6+diamonds that wants to play there. An immediate 3♦ is stronger.

ROSS: 3♠. Can't think of anything else.

Really? Any self-respecting panellist should be aware of the 'flexible' choice.

ASH: Dbl. Who was it who said "if you can't think of a descriptive bid, try double"? Partner is by no means guaranteed to have 6 spades so I think my double shows exactly this kind of hand. I would like to have been a little stronger, but if we get too high I will claim I miscounted my high card points!

Double gives partner the option of passing if she happens to have 4 good clubs. But, as FREIMANIS and PATERSON point out, partner has opened in 3rd seat and might appreciate a little leeway. She might even open 1♠ with a weakish 5=3=3=2 for the lead.

Quitting while we might be ahead: .

MURDOCH: PASS. I have bid my hand

SIME: PASS. In part-score battles at imps it is important to go plus. The Law, which is useful at the 3-level, advises that we need 9 trumps to compete. We might not even have an 8-card fit. Unless partner decides otherwise, let's try for our plus by beating 3♣.

WILKINSON: PASS. Leave this alone! Playing with myself 2♠ was likely to be high enough and they may well have a game... let's not push them into 3NT...

Problem 1	Votes	Marks
3♠	10	10
Pass	7	9
Dbl	1	5
3♦	1	2

Problem 2 Teams NS Vul

♠632	S	W	N	E
♥AQJ72	-	1NT	Dbl	2♣
♦A8	?			
♣732				

1NT = 12-14. Dbl = PEN

Have you discussed follow-ups when partner doubles 1NT? You should!

If 3rd hand passes most agree that a suit at the 2-level is natural and weak. Is a jump to the 3-level game-forcing or invitational? Does it make a difference if third hand bids?

A couple of panellists cut to the chase, but can we be sure this is best?

MCKAY: 4♥. Normally a double here is take-out and in any case the vulnerability pushes you in the direction of trying for game rather than penalising non vul opponents.

Seems a bit unilateral. Nearly half the panel believes that 3♥ here is forcing and offers a choice of game.

SIME: 3♥. I would prefer a take-out double. Or a Forcing Pass. However, since Pass would presumably be nonforcing, 2♥ now would show values. Therefore 3♥ should be forcing.

SMITH: 3♥. This must be forcing. It expresses my hand well, game values and a good 5+card heart suit. The problem with double as take-out or 3♣

as a general force will be getting the quality of your heart suit across.

Others are not so sure, and choose the undisputedly forcing cuebid:

FREIMANIS: 3♣ - general force to explore game options as Double of 1NT can be made with a large variation of hands and the heart suit is not long enough.

A valid point. If this heart suit is good enough to be trump it will make lots of tricks in No-trump also.

ASH: 3♣. It is critical for any aspiring partnership to have agreements in place for this common situation. Assuming 2♣ is natural, I need to force and, if partner does not bid 3NT, then show my hearts. Clumsy I know - so if I was sure that partner would take a double as takeout – by far the best way to play a ‘free bid’ by 4th hand – I can double and then jump in hearts to show game values and 5 good hearts.

A third group opts for the panellist's flexible friend. They are confident that it is not a penalty double in this situation.

PATERSON: DBL. This simply shows values (it's our hand). 3♣ uses space needlessly. Partner needs 4+ clubs to pass, and in the unlikely event 2♣x was passed out I would expect to get 800 or more.

CLOW: DBL. Take-out in my world. Keeps both Majors in the frame as well as a slightly unlikely penalty.

I agree. Provided, of course, partner follows the rule for undiscussed doubles: "When in doubt, take it out."

Problem 2	Votes	Marks
3♥	9	10
3♣	4	8
Dbl	4	7
4♥	2	3

Problem 3 **Teams** **NS Vul**

♠—	S	W	N	E
♥KJ53	-	-	-	1♠
♦AQ942	Dbl	2♠	3♣	P
♣AJ64	?			

I confess that, short of time, I pinched the remaining problems from the 1989 Bridge World, to see how things have moved on. This one was all about hand evaluation, and nothing has changed. We have the optimists:

GORDON: 6♣. It's a sandwich so your finesses are favourites. Don't bother to look for 7 – that needs exact cards and there is no room to find out.

WILKINSON: 6♣. On values this contract should be ok and I doubt whether partner can fill all the gaps for 7.

I suppose 6♣ might make if partner has a suitable minimum such as xxxxx x x KQxxxx. But when did partner last have perfect cards? And when did all your finesses actually start to work?

SHIELDS: 5♠. There are five important cards missing and we need to find four of them to make a small slam. Partner is unlikely to have four for a non-forcing 3♣ bid, and with three, slam won't be much better than 50%.

Ronan is even more pessimistic:

VALENTINE: 4♣. This feels slightly like a nothing bid, but I also have a nothing hand. I think this should show some extras and a willingness to compete and partner may now be able to judge the level correctly. I could have bid 3♠, but 3NT seems unlikely to be the right spot and 3♣ followed by supporting clubs probably shows a better hand,

The remaining panellists are heading for game, but trying to keep slam in the picture:

PIPER: 4♠. A lovely old crude bid.

*The 4♠ bidders all agree that this bid shows a void. For **WHYTE** it is Exclusion Blackwood, but the others do not make this assumption.*

PATERSON: 4♠. If N has wasted spade values, 5♣ will be enough.

FREIMANIS: 4♠ - shortage with club support and interest in slam as not much is needed from partner for one to make here.

Mike is accustomed to opponents who do not require points to bid.

ASH: 4♠. If we 'know' that partner has 10+ hcps (she would use a Lebensohl 2NT with a weaker hand with long clubs), then I am looking for a slam. Without this common agreement I will show good club support, a suitable hand and shortage in spades and subside if partner just rebids clubs.

I am not sure this agreement is common? After (1♠) P (2♠) dbl (P) 2NT is surely lebensohl, but here partner is not compelled to bid.

The others prefer to take things more slowly.

DRAGIC: 3♠. At first 4♠ appears to be the descriptive bid but partner will not know the full value of my hand with this space consuming bid. I will be able to continue slam investigation with more space and more information: if partner has wasted spade values or not.

PEDEN: 3♠. Either asking for a stop or an advance cue. If he shows a stop settle for 5♣; if he bids 4♣ bid 4♦, a cue confirming advance cue.

SIME: 3♠. The problem with 4♠ (splinter) is that it leaves no room. Partner would be forced to stick or bust. 3♠ might fetch 3NT by partner. I wouldn't pass that, but 3NT would diminish my slam hopes.

CLOW: 3♣. Partner can't have much more than a 9 count and he also must have some spade length. Even so 6♣ might be possible. If he bids 3NT, I shall remove to 4♣ and he should get the message.

The original panel voted similarly, except:

REESE: 4♣. There is no need to tell partner you are short in spades – he can work that out for himself. 3♣ is utterly foolish and 4♣ an absurd exaggeration.

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

Problem 4 Teams All Vul

♠J7	S	W	N	E
♥A64	-	-	1♦	1♠
♦943	2♣	2♠	3♥	P
♣AK942	?			

Another question of hand evaluation. What is this hand worth opposite a big red 2-suiter?

SMITH: 4♦. A difficult one. The other option is 3♠, looking for 3NT, but this could be under-cooking the auction as partner has shown a huge hand, happy to go to the 4-level with minimal support from me. We're in a game-forcing situation, so I'll tell partner I have support and let him show his hand. A 4♠ cue from him would be gold dust.

SHIELDS: 4♦. Partner has reversed after I bid at the 2-level, so the auction is game-forcing and holding 3-card support and A-AK makes mine an

excellent hand. Let's find out next if partner has control of spades.

The 4♦ bidders all mention that this bid is forcing. Does that suggest they are not entirely sure?

GORDON: 3♠. Must be forcing to game - 4♦ is nonforcing. Partner might do several interesting things like bidding 4♣, 4♦ or 4♥. Partner has made a serious bid but does not need prime reversing values to bid 3♥ if she is 6-5 for example. Another point is only 33% of my hand is in partner's suits, so I will not co-operate in any slam moves. I have done enough and will pass 3NT.

DRAGIC: 3♠. Partner could double 2♠ to show hearts and strong hand, so 3♥ indicates a more distributional hand, possibly 5-6 in red suits but 5 hearts are not guaranteed. So I'll bid 3♠ to find out more about partner's hand and also confirm that I have more than a bare minimum for my 2♠ bid.

Other panellists are less interested in slam, for various reasons.

PATERSON: 4♥. With only 4 hearts partner could have doubled. Given the opponents have not competed to the 3 level, North may well be 2=5=6=0. We may have 3 losers in 5♦.

ASH: 4♥. Partner should be 5/6 as I have already denied 4 hearts. 5♥ would find out about the spade control situation but I am worried that xxx in diamonds is a poor holding. Also, it sounds as if opponents have only 8 or 9 spades between them, so partner is less likely to have a singleton

ROSS: 4♥. If partner is 1=5=6=1 he will surely cuebid his singleton spade.

WHYTE: 4♥. My partner should be 6-5, but I am not that excited, as his strength is unknown.

Quite so. It seems unlikely that opponents have even 10 spades between them, and why would partner bid this way with solid diamonds and hearts?

On his own, less convinced about partner's distribution

PEDEN: 5♦. Partner could have doubled to show a strong no-trump without a stopper or a good-ish 5/4, so he either has 6/4 or a very good 5/4.

This might be best if partner has only 4 hearts, but there could easily be 2 spades to lose, in which case 11 tricks might be difficult.

Problem 4	Votes	Marks
4♦	8	10
4♥	5	8
3♠	5	6
5♦	1	3

The original panel chose the same bids – just not in the same order. 4♥ topped the list.

Problem 5 Teams None Vul

♠J73 ♥AKJ ♦AKJT3 ♣T9	S	W	N	E
	1♦	P	1♥	P
	?			

The majority believes that “Balanced Hands Bid No-trump”. Some even like the hand enough to upgrade.

VALENTINE: 2NT. Very crisp hand means that I will upgrade this to 18-19 balanced,

ROSS: 2NT. Will show my points first (partner's points are obviously not in hearts)

SIME: 2NT. Too strong for 1NT. The fifth diamond is usually a trick.

ASH: 2NT. A classic problem with no satisfactory solution. Reese, in his classic “Develop your Bidding Judgement”, has a hand like this where he rebid 1♠. But he doesn't explain what happens if partner raises spades so I will take my chances in no-trumps – after all they may not lead a club!

Others believe that the flaws outweigh the plusses.

FREIMANIS: 1NT - showing the 15-17 HCP I have. Maybe could upgrade to 18-19 HCP for a 2NT rebid with the loose ♠J being put to a better use.

MURDOCH: 1NT. Pity about the shaky guards.

PEDEN: 1NT. I am too good for 2♥ and partner won't expect 3-card support for a 3♥ bid.

PATERSON: 1NT. Swap the clubs and hearts and I would go 2NT. Second choice 2NT, third 3♦. 1♠ or 3♥ are just silly.

SMITH: 1NT. I expect some caustic comments from the moderator on this one as my black suit stoppers are somewhat limited. However, I am showing 15 – 17 balanced-ish, and that I do have. If he passes, they may well take an uncomfortable number of black tricks, but if he bids on, his values must be in the black suits, and I'll be in a good position to describe my hand.

Caustic? Moi? I happen to agree with Harry here – why misdescribe your hand just because you lack a stopper or two?

The remaining panellists join the original crew in raising partner's hearts. But, as SHIELDS points out, partner's response, bidding suits up-the-way might easily be made on ♥xxxx.

PIPER: 2♥. My rare underbid

WILKINSON: 3♥. I realize that not everyone will make this bid, as many bridge players avoid supporting partner's suit wherever possible....

DRAGIC: 3♥. Least of all available evils: 1♠, 1NT and 3♦. 3♦ says nothing about hearts and lies about 1 diamond; 3♥ just lies about 1 heart but it could turn out to be as good as Qxxx.

GORDON: 3♥. Although 1♠ is reasonable. So is 3♦ but that might make it difficult to find a heart fit.

MCKAY: 3♥. Always tricky – don't be scared of the potential Moysian fit.

Problem 5	Votes	Marks
1NT	8	10
2NT	6	8
3♥	4	5
2♥	1	3
2♦	0	2

Problem 6 Teams NS Vul

♠AKQT	S	W	N	E
♥5432	-	-	1♣	P
♦QJ	1♠	P	3♣	P
♣J53	?			

There were complaints about the original response. We bid 4-card Majors up-the-way, do we not?

SIME: An unusual problem as I have re-sorted my hand and discovered that I am actually 4/4 in the Majors.

Following on from Iain's comments last time, we need not bid like Robots, we may use judgment when there is such disparity in suit quality. When you respond in a Major you may occasionally end up in a 4-3 fit. Do you fancy 4♥ opposite ♥Jxx?

As MURDOCH points out, here you might make 4♠ on even a 4=2 fit if partner is short in hearts.

PIPER: 3NT. I'd have responded 1♥ and been a lot happier.

SMITH: 3NT. The practical bid. I would call 1♥ first time and now 3NT could be bid with a clear conscience. My real worry on this hand is that I haven't done enough, but it really needs perfect cards in partner's hand (solid clubs and both red suits sufficiently controlled) for the club or no-trump slam to be on.

Harry seems to assume that a 1♥ response will deter a heart lead v 3NT. I suppose it might – but it certainly will not deter a switch if clubs do not run...

The non-complainers produce bids in all 4 suits. Some hanker after 3NT, but do not want to bid it themselves.

PATERSON: 3♦. Probe for 3NT. Best of a bad lot!

ASH: 3♦. Tough problem. We could be making 3NT or 5♣ but could also be going off in either contract. If partner can bid 3NT now, I will hope that my 3♦ bid has put them off leading that suit. And if he bids 3♥, showing half a stop because if I had a full stop in hearts I would have already bid 3NT, then I will risk 3NT. If partner rebids 3♠ over 3♦ then I think 5♣ is the best bet.

SHIELDS: 3♦. Showing a potential stopper and, given RHO didn't overcall diamonds, I won't worry about that lead unless LHO doubles this bid. In that case we have more options available to help us get to the best contract. Should I raise clubs? It could be right, but it's too easy to have 3 top losers in 5♣.

WHYTE: 3♦. What's that, you say? I haven't got a diamond stopper. If the oppos think I have one, that is all that

matters. I postpone the critical decision (clubs or NT?) for the moment,

The alternative probe is less popular:

VALENTINE: 3♥. Slight lie about my spade length, but the quality of my suit compensates. I also think this is the most flexible call to keep 3NT, 4M and a club contract in the picture.

SIME: 3♥. I will try 3NT over 3♠ which partner might bid with a doubleton. If partner bids 4♠ the Moysian should have a chance. If all we are missing is tops in the red suits, 5♣ has less of a chance.

Some decided to describe their values rather than their distribution:

GORDON 3♠. If pard bids 4♠, I bid 5♣ which turns 3♠ into a cue denying a red control. If pard bids 3NT, I will bid 4♣, slow train with clubs, so a slam try. Incidentally, my preferred method is to play 4♣ over 3♠ as forcing and often a slam try, but not in competition.

DRAGIC: 3♠. Will correct 4♠ to 5♣. Bidding 3♦ or 3♥ could land us in a no play 3NT where 5♣ is on. This way we explore both options. Difficult to bid 4-3 spade game confidently.

The last group decided to play in clubs. Some showed no interest in slam.

MURDOCH: 5♣. 3♦ and 3♥ are untrue; 3♠ is near the truth; and 5♣ is the truth.

PEDEN: 5♣. Because we are playing weak NT I assume partner is missing a stopper in one of the outside suits or void in spades because he didn't rebid NT. I think it's more likely he is missing a stopper so I bid game in his suit.

The 4♣ bidders don't bother to make a strong case – too obvious?

WILKINSON: 4♣. Time to support partner's jump rebid.

FREIMANIS: 4♣. starting a slam try with no other convenient bid available. Over 4♦ I will show my spade control.

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

Problem 7 Teams NS Vul

♠QJ3	S	W	N	E
♥K7	-	1♦	2NT*	P
♦KQ6	?			
♣JT652				

*2NT = 5-5+ 2-suiter with ♥ + ♣

If the rounded suits were swapped round so that we had 5-card heart support and Kx in partner's second suit I am sure the panel would bid 4♥, "What else?" But 5♣ is a level higher, so some opt for an alternative game.

MURDOCH: 3NT. 2NT should be no worse than xx AQJxx x AQxxx at this vulnerability

PATERSON: 3NT. At any other vulnerability, 3♣.

ASH: 3NT. I like to play that 2NT is either weak or very strong, in which case 3♣ is safe. But, as she is vulnerable, I will hope she has a reasonable hand. If they double, I am running to 4♠!

CLOW: 3NT. My soft values would be better placed if I was declaring but partner must have a decent chance of making 5 clubs, 3 hearts and a diamond or a spade.

If 3NT is the spot you have to bid it now. Other bids commit you to a suit contract. Some are happy with that:

WHYTE: 5♣. Yes, we might have a slam, but this is too difficult to bid from my side. If my partner has perfect cards, Ax AJxxx x AQxxx, for example, he can add one more, but my partners seldom have the perfect cards.

PIPER: 5♣. Anyone bidding 3NT is a lunatic.

I found it hard to come up with a hand where 5♣ makes but 3NT does not.

DRAGIC: 4♣. Too much in their suits for immediate 5♣ and they have not found spade fit yet. Partner will move on with suitable hand.

SIME: 4♣. Invitational. We have wrong-sided 3NT. If partner doesn't have extras 4♣ will probably be high enough.

VALENTINE: 4♣. I do not want to overcommit the partnership with a weak hand. I do want to show values, and willingness to play game if partner has a decent hand. Also I don't want to preclude 4♥ if partner has 6 hearts.

Some roll out the cuebid. It seems a bit much if game-forcing, and none-too-helpful if not.

SMITH: 3♦. This hand has powerful defensive assets so there is no need to make a pre-emptive blast. The question is whether partner's 2NT has been bid on his usual heap of rubbish or with constructive connotations. This bid should allow us to find out.

FREIMANIS: 3♦. Intending to bid 5♣ later on, but to also show a good raise along the way so that partner can raise to 6♣ with a decent hand.

SHIELDS: 3♦. Although most of the values are in their suits, this hand deserves a game try. I have not yet

discussed the continuations here with any of my partners – homework to be done!

WILKINSON: 3♦. Happy with either suit or even NT, and perhaps this bid might help, maybe not, but partner will have a decent hand in this position.

GORDON 3♦. Forcing to game. Partner might do something intelligent and bid 4♥ with 6 of them. That's the objective.

No-one voted for 4♥, but it is surely worth consideration.

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

I split the tie by using the BW panel vote: they really did not fancy 3NT.

Problem 8 Teams NS Vul

♠KJ42	S	W	N	E
♥J8		1♥	P	1♠
♦QJ64	P	2♦	P	2NT
♣K52	P	3NT	End	

What is your lead?

If the definition of a good lead problem is one where panellists suggest all four suits we seem to have cracked it.

The auction tells us that North probably has 5 hearts and at least 4 diamonds (1=4=4=4 is a remote possibility.) Declarer has at least 4 spades, has advertised a stopper in clubs and is unlikely to have 3-card heart support. The most popular choice is to attack in dummy's second suit:

McKAY: ♦4. You need to find partner with something – diamonds looks the best bet.

PEDEN: ♦4. Partner doesn't have much. It's unlikely I can set up his club suit and he have an entry, so I go for him having ♦T9 and ♥Q9xx.

VALENTINE: ♦4. 4th best through dummy's second suit. A black suit lead may work, but it is very committal when I appear to have quite a few slow defensive tricks. I want to set up tricks to go with my presumed slow winners.

ASH: ♦4. I am betting the house on partner having some good diamond pips. Partner will likely get in only once so clubs are a long shot as declarer will be able to block the suit even with something like AJxx opposite xx.

On his own with the choice of card:

SMITH: ♦Q. As so often with lead problems, a process of elimination, as all other options seem worse.

Not wishing to be caustic, this cannot be right! You need partner to have a useful card, and it may be doubleton...

If playing against some of the complainers about the 1♠ response in Problem 6, this might work well.

WHYTE: ♠2. When in doubt, take the quickest poison. (You will immediately know when you see dummy whether this lead is working or not.) Spades have it by a slim margin over diamonds.

SIME: ♠2. Even if partner doesn't have a spade honour, the spade lead tells him what to return if he wins a trick.

ROSS: ♠2. I have been in this situation before and didn't lead a spade to find East had 4 spades to the nine and partner had Ace, Queen small. Probably wrong this time!

Some go passive, giving nothing away. Passivity is often best when opponents have stretched to 3NT, but here dummy

is unlimited so passivity may not work well.

PATERSON: ♥J. Is this any more than a guess?

MURDOCH: ♥J. Partner has 4/5hcp at best. The heart lead is likely to be safe when it is not a good attack as declarer will normally have only 1 or 2 hearts.

GORDON: ♥J. Opponents might not have much to spare, and this is least likely to throw a trick.

PIPER: ♥J. Partner has 4 hearts. A small diamond could work, as could a spade. Not a club. My 3rd spade isn't good enough.

I was beginning to think no-one would lead clubs, the unbid suit. For good reason – on this auction clubs are often declarer's strongest suit. Then Barnet emerged with an imaginative shot:

SHENKIN: K♣. Any lead can give contract. No lead is safe. Partner has 4 to 6 pts likely. Let's play for 5 clubs headed by Ace or Queen and we retain communication later. I am sure I am on my own here but it won't be the first time.

He wins the prize for Best Prediction of the Month.

The marks reflect my preference for attacking leads – conductor's privilege.

Problem 8	Votes	Marks
♦4	10	10
♠2	3	8
♣K	1	6
♥J	4	5
♣2	0	3
♦Q	1	1

Thanks again to our panel for submitting their answers, and themselves, to possible causticity.

Panel Answers

January 2023

Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Top Scoring Choice	3♠	3♥	4♣	4♦	1NT	3♦	4♣	♦4	Tot	
1=	Barnet Shenkin	3♠	3♥	4♣	4♦	1NT	3♦	3NT	♣K	75
	Patrick Shields	3♠	3♥	5♣	4♦	1NT	3♦	3♦	♦4	75
3	Gints Freimanis	Pass	3♣	4♣	4♦	1NT	4♣	3♦	♦4	74
4	Bob Clow	3♠	Dbl	3♣	4♦	1NT	3NT	3NT	♦4	72
5=	Mike Ash	Dbl	3♣	4♣	4♥	2NT	3♦	3NT	♦4	68
	John Murdoch	Pass	3♥	4♣	4♦	1NT	5♣	3NT	♥J	68
	Jack Paterson	Pass	Dbl	4♣	4♥	1NT	3♦	3NT	♥J	68
	Iain Sime	Pass	3♥	3♣	4♦	2NT	3♥	4♣	♠2	68
9	Derrick Peden	Pass	3♥	3♣	5♦	1NT	5♣	4♣	♦4	66
10=	Miro Dragic	Pass	3♥	3♣	3♠	3♥	3♠	4♣	♦4	65
	Harry Smith	3♠	3♥	3♣	4♦	1NT	3NT	3♦	♦Q	65
	Ronan Valentine	3♠	3♣	4♣	4♦	2NT	3♥	4♣	♦4	65
	Bill Whyte	3♠	Dbl	4♣	4♥	2NT	3♦	5♣	♠2	65
14	Tim McKay	3♠	4♥	3♣	4♥	3♥	4♣	4♣	♦4	64
15	Bill Ross	3♠	3♥	3♣	4♥	2NT	3NT	3♣	♠2	63
16	Tony Wilkinson	Pass	Dbl	6♣	3♠	3♥	4♣	3♦	♦4	58
17	Douglas Piper	3♠	3♥	4♣	3♠	2♥	3NT	5♣	♥J	55
18=	Bob Ferrari	3♦	4♥	4♣	3♠	2NT	4♣	5♣	♦4	52
	Irving Gordon	3♠	3♣	6♣	3♠	3♥	3♠	3♦	♥J	52

Competitors Top Scores

Not an easy set on which to score well, as you can see from the panel's card.

So particular congratulations to **Danny Hamilton** of the Buchanan BC whose inspired **79** outscores them all!

Other good scores:

Ena Wood	(Dalbeattie)	64
Janice Thomson	(Doon)	61
Anna Hamilton	(Buchanan)	60
Anne Perkins	(New Melville)	59
Maurice Franceschi	(Carlton)	58
Ken Rae	(Shetland)	57
Pam Warner	(New Melville)	56
Alan Paterson	(Johnstone)	55
Walter Ewing	(Perth)	54
Michael Kennedy/Kevin Ren	(SBU Juniors)	53

SBNews Bidding Panel Problems

March 2023

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 Editor:

liz.mcgowan@blueyonder.co.uk

quoting your SBU Membership number.

Closing date: 26 March, 2023

Problem 1 Teams None Vul

♠AKQ83	S	W	N	E
♥98	-	3♣	P	P
♦AKQJ42	?			
♣—				

Problem 2 Pairs EW Vul

♠AKJ7	S	W	N	E
♥A6	-	P	P	1♣
♦52	?			
♣K9872				

1♣ = 2+, clubs or balanced

Problem 3 Teams NS Vul

♠942	S	W	N	E
♥JT42	-	-	1♥	2♠
♦J9875	P	4♠	Dbl	P
♣8	?			

Problem 4 Teams None Vul

♠QJ	S	W	N	E
♥75	-	1♥	1♠	P
♦KT543	?			
♣KJ98				

Problem 5 Teams None Vul

♠KQ63	S	W	N	E
♥K853	-	2♠	3♥	P
♦9	?			
♣K743				

Problem 6 Teams Both Vul

♠J9842	S	W	N	E
♥—	-	1♥	P	2♥
♦AKQT2	?			
♣QJ3				

Problem 7 Teams Both Vul

♠6532	S	W	N	E
♥3	-	1♥	1♠	2♥
♦AKJ974	?			
♣54				

Problem 8 Teams NS Vul

♠J	S	W	N	E
♥K3	-	-	-	4♠
♦AJ92	P	P	P	
♣QT9852				

What is your lead?