

Scottish Bridge News

Editorial

The Camrose Trophy has been retained by England, but they did not win the Second weekend. We cover Scotland's improved performance. Our Junior Teams were also unable to compete with England's superior resources, but they finished very creditably best of the rest in both Under 26 and Under 21 events.

Clive Owen shares his experiences of the Winter Foursomes in a team captained by Charles Outred, who scored a record-equalling 9th win.

We are sorry to record the passing of Iain MacIntyre, one of our most talented players. To quote Jill Arthur: "he never said a bad word about anybody." Paul Maiolani's tribute is on Page 15.

This edition's SBNews Bidding Panel is conducted by Patrick Shields in his usual insightful style. The May problems are on the last page.

If you would like a personal copy of the Bidding Panel article and the new set of problems please send an email to the editor, who will add you to her mailing list.

Contributions and entries should be sent to:

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She really would love to hear from you!

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Camrose Weekend 2

Scotland went to Dublin for the second weekend of the Camrose looking to restore some pride after their luckless performance in January. They succeeded, winning four of the five matches.

First up was Northern Ireland. Friday evening is always tough after travelling, and we were rather lucky to snatch a small win, thanks largely to this board:

Match 1 v N Ireland, Board 18

	♠JT	NS Vul
	♥J4	Dealer E
	♦AQT854	
	♣Q62	
♠Q986		♠542
♥T865		♥Q97
♦—		♦J7632
♣87543		♣T9
	♠AK73	
	♥AK32	
	♦K9	
	♣AKJ	

Northern Ireland reached the Grand Slam in three bids: 2♣ - 3♦ - 7NT. This needs a 3=2 break or a singleton ♦J, well with the odds – but not on this Friday evening in Dublin. Scotland had a longer auction that stopped, fortuitously, in 6NT to gain 17imps. In the other matches the board was flat: England and Wales in 7♦-1; Ireland and the CBAI in 6NT=.

On Saturday morning Scotland faced Wales. Too early for our players: the match was a rather sloppy affair. This time we were on the wrong side of the slam swings. We bid three, Wales bid none. Two of ours were hopeless, but Board 20 was unlucky.

Match 2 v Wales, Board 20

	♠AQT752	All Vul
	♥4	Dealer W
	♦T73	
	♣Q84	
♠83		♠KJ6
♥QT763		♥J85
♦64		♦QJ952
♣7532		♣T6
	♠94	
	♥AK92	
	♦AK8	
	♣AKJ9	

When a Vulnerable North opens a weak 2♠ in second seat it looks normal for South to punt the 75% slam, but 3 pairs stopped in game.

On Saturday afternoon we faced Ireland in a match of many flat boards. The one and only slam was bid by Ireland.

Match 3 v Ireland, Board 16

	♠AJ	EW Vul
	♥AJ94	Dealer W
	♦98	
	♣AKQ73	
♠6532		♠874
♥Q87		♥K52
♦Q76		♦KJ542
♣J98		♣T4
	♠KQT9	
	♥T63	
	♦AT3	
	♣652	

North reached 6♣ after an extremely long Strong Club auction. This looks a reasonable shot: draw trump, discard a diamond on spades and take the double heart finesse. The flaw was revealed when Stephen Peterkin led a diamond, removing a dummy entry before declarer could use it. Now he needed West to have a doubleton heart honour or ♥KQx – unlucky.

Sunday was a good day for the team. The fourth match against England had lots of possible slams. Scotland bid three, all making. England also bid three, but this one failed.

Match 4 v England, Board 16

	♠J	EW Vul
	♥AK7	Dealer W
	♦KQJ9	
	♣T8732	
♠95		♠842
♥52		♥QJT643
♦T876		♦543
♣AQJ54		♣9
	♠AKQT763	
	♥98	
	♦A2	
	♣K6	

They reached 6♠ by South after 5 rounds of bidding. It looks an excellent contract, with 13 Sure Tricks and the ♣K protected from the opening lead. But Sam Punch led the ♣A and gave partner a ruff – unlucky! 6NT by South is best but hard to reach when North rebids 1NT. The Welsh North made 6NT when East did not lead a club. Scotland stopped safely in 5♠, made all 13 tricks on a diamond lead, and gained 11imps.

Our last match was against the CBAI, the second Irish team. They lay in third place after the first weekend but were less successful this time.

Three pairs missed the excellent slam on board 14 (see *top of next column*). Scotland bid:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	5NT
Pass	6♥	Pass	7♥

Match 5 v CBAI, Board 14

	♠8754	None Vul
	♥J97	Dealer E
	♦AT3	
	♣643	
♠KQ6		♠T32
♥643		♥52
♦QJ742		♦K9865
♣J8		♣972
	♠AJ9	
	♥AKQT8	
	♦-	
	♣AKQT5	

Those of us old enough to remember the heyday of the Acol 2 will sympathise with North's single raise, promising an Ace. Others will side with South, who needed so little for the Grand – a fourth heart and a spade less would do nicely. An unfortunate -14. But what goes around comes around...

Match 5 v CBAI, Board 23

	♠AK	All Vul
	♥AQ96	Dealer S
	♦J852	
	♣AQ5	
♠652		♠Q8
♥872		♥J43
♦AQ64		♦T973
♣873		♣JT42
	♠JT9743	
	♥KT5	
	♦K	
	♣K96	

Most Souths opened a weak Two, but two intrepid players chose 1♠, over which North naturally drove to slam. Ireland played in 6♠, which had a fair chance when West did not lead the ♦A. (If the ♠Q does not drop you may discard the diamond loser on the long heart.) Scotland bid 6NT, relying entirely on the favourable spade position, to gain 13imps.

The overall scores on weekend 2 were much closer than on the first weekend.

Camrose Weekend 2		
1	Wales	59.24
2	Scotland	59.11
3	England	57.37
4	Ireland	54.20
5	CBAI	36.61
6	Northern Ireland	33.47

But England dominated weekend 1, so the final table reads:

Camrose Trophy 2023		
1	England	138.84
2	Wales	120.11
3	Ireland	102.90
4	CBAI	94.67
5	Scotland	84.97
6	Northern Ireland	58.51

Our team was:

Gints Freimanis & Derek Sanders
 Alan Goodman & Brian Short
 Stephen Peterkin & Sam Punch
 Npc Alex Adamson

Gints and Derek deserve particular mention: they headed the Butler averages with a score of 0.682

Junior Camrose

The Juniors treated us to an exciting even this year – there were slam swings on no fewer than 15 boards. A more effective opening lead might have turned our -10 imps on these boards into a large plus.

What would you lead from the West hand on these auctions?

1 Game All, Dealer S

♠T94	S	W	N	E
♥QJ842	1♠	P	2NT*	P
♦KJT	6♠	End		
♣86				

*2NT = 3- or 4-card game-forcing raise

2 EW Vul, Dealer E

♠QJ852	S	W	N	E
♥964		P	1♦	P
♦Q8542	2♣	P	2♦	P
♣-	3♥*	P	4♥	P
	4NT	P	5♦	P
	6NT	End		

*alerted, but no explanation available

3 NS Vul, Dealer S

♠QT8	S	W	N	E
♥KT98	1♠	P	2♦	P
♦Q6	4NT	P	5♥	P
♣AJ85	6NT	End		

NS play 2-over-1 forcing to game

4 EW Vul, Dealer E

♠Q5	S	W	N	E
♥7432	1♠	P	2♦	2♥
♦Q854	3♦	P	3♠	4♥
♣AT4	P	P	4NT	P
	5♠	P	6♦	Dbl
	P	P	6♠	End

(All the boards have been rotated to make West the opening leader.)

In Match 1 v Northern Ireland there were 3 slam boards. We gained 12 on a Good one; lost 13 on an Ugly one; and missed a Good one on minimal values that no-one bid.

Match 2 v the EBU also had 3 slam boards. We gained 13 by bidding a Dodgy 6NT; missed a Good 6♠ for a flat board; and gained 11 in an Excellent 6NT no-one else found.

Match 3 v Ireland saw only 2 slams. We were the only country to bid one that makes if only declarer trusts Restricted Choice for once; sadly -11 We missed a Good one bid only by the EBU.

Match 4 saw us face our nemesis, Wales. We lost 13 Imps by bidding a Bad slam no-one else attempted, and then came Lead Problem 1:

Match 4 v Wales, Board 29

	♠KJ3	All Vul
	♥765	Dealer S
	♦Q86	
	♣KQJ7	
♠T94		♠72
♥QJ842		♥AT9
♦KJT		♦975
♣86		♣T9542
	♠AQ865	
	♥K3	
	♦A432	
	♣A3	

The bidding has given nothing away. If you guess to lead a heart partner wins the ♥A and South cannot avoid a second loser in diamonds. The actual ♦J lead gave declarer a chance. He can win the ♦Q, draw trump, discard both hearts on clubs and establish a long diamond when the suit breaks 3=3. Our South did not play the ♦Q. He could lead towards it later but lacked the entry back to hand to cash the long diamond. 13 out that might have been 13 in.

Worse followed on Problem 2:

Match 4 v Wales, Board 32

	♠64	EW Vul
	♥Q832	Dealer S
	♦AKJT3	
	♣J4	
♠QJ852		♠T73
♥964		♥AKT5
♦Q8542		♦96
♣-		♣8752
	♠AK9	
	♥J7	
	♦7	
	♣AKQT963	

The bidding has a distinctly Welsh flavour. You might lead a top spade and hope that bad breaks sink the contract, but the double changes things. If partner thinks he has two tricks they are unlikely to be in diamonds or spades. It may not matter what you lead if partner can stop clubs, but if he has an AK where can it be but in hearts? Our NS pair stopped safely in 3NT, so the spade lead was -12 that might have been +11.

Matches 5 and 6 were quite dull; just the single slam on an enormous misfit where taking the finesses that worked gained 14 imp.

Problem 3, from Match 7.

Match 7 v EBU Juniors, Board 9

	♠94	NS Vul
	♥J	Dealer S
	♦AKJT987	
	♣964	
♠QT8		♠762
♥KT98		♥76532
♦Q6		♦43
♣AJ85		♣T32
	♠AKJ53	
	♥AQ4	
	♦52	
	♣KQ7	

When you have 12HCP and opponents bid 6NT you can be sure someone is overbidding. Here South seems to have a big balanced hand, so North may have stretched with a long suit. What is the safest lead? A diamond seems least likely to give away a trick. Declarer wins and tries a club. You take that and play a second diamond, forcing declarer to run the suit. He discards ahead of you, and since you know he has all the high cards you need only watch his discards carefully. Our heart lead lost 13 imps where a diamond gains 13.

Problem 4 comes from the same match.

Match 7 v EBU Juniors, Board 12

	♠Q43	NS Vul									
	♥AT6	Dealer S									
	♦AKJ97										
	♣KJ										
♠J5	<table border="1" style="background-color: #c8e6c9; width: 100px; height: 100px; 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		♠97
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥7432	♥KQJ985										
♦Q854	♦—										
♣AT4	♣98762										
	♠AKT862										
	♥—										
	♦T632										
	♣Q53										

A long auction where partner has been quite active. What did his double of 6♦ mean? Normally it asks for a diamond lead, but with opponents bidding and raising the suit it seems unlikely that he has a top diamond. He clearly does not want a heart. Do you trust partner enough to lead the ♦4, suit preference for clubs, in order to give him two ruffs? Or should you cash the ♣A to have a look and settle for -1? Partner has pushed them out of a making slam into one that can be beaten. Our pair did not bid slam, so the heart lead meant -11 instead of +11.

These were the results:

Junior Camrose 2023 (U-26)			
		VP	Wins
1	England U25	152.00	7/10
2	England U21	140.68	7/10
3	Scotland	110.06	6/10
4	Ireland	91.16	5/10
5	Wales	65.01	3/10
6	N Ireland	38.49	2/10

Playing each team twice, Scotland scored one great win against both England and EBU Juniors. Surprisingly, the only team they didn't beat was Wales.



Our team (l to r)

Adam Tobias, John Russell.
Lydia Foale, Alisdair McLeod (npc)
Tamsin Munro, Rufus Behr,
Antone Huang

Scotland at the Peggy Bayer

Danny Hamilton

One weekend in February I went to Altrincham near Manchester for the 2023 Peggy Bayer, the Under-21 Home Nations tournament. Our bright young team was hoping to compete with England (boldly playing their Under-16 team), Ireland and Northern Ireland. There was no Welsh team, though they did have one in the Junior Camrose.

Our first match was against Ireland. When I dared to check the scores we were 30 IMPs up. That was a surprise as Kevin and Michael, bid to 6♥-2 on the very first board. (I'd told them to play their usual game and unfortunately that includes bidding dubious slams.) They asked me not to print the auction. Luckily, on the other table Harry and Jamie defeated 4♥ to hold the loss.

Here is a better 6♥.

	♠K5	EW Vul
	♥952	Dir E
	♦T432	
	♣KJ87	
♠Q4		♠A9832
♥AQJ64		♥T87
♦AK987		♦Q
♣3		♣AQ95
	♠JT76	
	♥K3	
	♦J65	
	♣T642	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Kevin		Michael	
-	-	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♥	End		

The 2♥ response shows 5 cards, allowing them to find the 5-3 fit quickly.

North led the ♣7. Even though there is a singleton club in hand, I think the correct thing is to take the finesse. If it loses you break even by throwing your spade loser on the ♣A. The West hand is then nearly high, just needing to ruff a diamond or two. When the Club finesse works you can even eschew the Heart finesse and safely take 12 tricks.

At the table there was some confusion about what lead might be from and believing it to be top of nothing declarer went up with the Ace and had to rely on the heart finesse. 6♥ = was a big gain against 4♥+2 at the other table.

Across the 10 tables in both events 6♥ was bid five times, including by the U25 Scotland pair, Lydia Foale and Antone Huang.

Here is a rare 6♥ that Kevin and Michael missed - the key as so often with low point count slams is to diagnose the shortage opposite small cards:

	♠J743	Both Vul
	♥K	Dir E
	♦KQJT75	
	♣72	
♠85		♠AK2
♥AJ8753		♥Q42
♦-		♦8432
♣KJ984		♣AQ6
	♠QT96	
	♥T96	
	♦A96	
	♣T53	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Kevin		Michael	
-	-	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
4♥	End		

All of our Peggy Bayer team play weak NT and 4-card majors, hence Michael's 1♦ opening and 1NT rebid. Kevin then sensibly jumped straight to 4♥.

Here is a possible route to the slam - West bids Checkback Stayman over 1NT and when he hears 2♥ from East he can splinter with 4♦. Now East knows his cards are all useful, which is often more important than overall strength or shape (doesn't matter that you are 4333 when partner has 6=5 shape).

4♥+2 was a flat board. Across the 10 tables slam was bid just once, by the England U-21 pair, Charlotte Norman and Lucy Bedford.

In the end we beat Ireland 59-29, for a strong start. Highlights at the other table included Jamie making an excellent 3NT that went down at the other table, and a bizarre auction that I think involved someone asking for Kings and their partner passing 5NT – which just made!

Late on Friday evening the Under-25s had a second match, and I watched Scotland against the EBU Juniors in the Vugraph theatre. They make every board exciting and I really enjoyed Michael Byrne's commentary, sarcastic and supportive at the same time.

On the first board Scotland made 3NT redoubled with a couple of overtricks, then gave it back with a massive penalty in 5♣. "On a part-score hand" someone in the audience said. "Not in this match," said Michael, "both tables are at the five level." A few 6NT= later and Scotland won the match, to leave them top of the U25 table after two matches played and two wins.

Here is a hand Scotland gained on:

	♠872	Both Vul
	♥94	Dir N
	♦KJT6	
	♣AQJ5	
♠953		♠J64
♥Q6532		♥J
♦43		♦Q9852
♣KT4		♣8762
	♠AKQT	
	♥AKT87	
	♦A7	
	♣93	

After North (Adam Tobias) made the dubious decision to open South (John Russell) was never stopping out of slam. As Michael Byrne, said "At some point in this auction South is just going to punt 6NT". Everything went nicely for 12 tricks. Slam was bid and made at only two of the six tables.

With no U20 Wales team, we played each of the other teams three times. In our second match we beat Northern Ireland before recording a loss against England – though the match was not without hope.

When we played Ireland again I sat in the Open Room to watch the action. Frustratingly, the Irish kept under-bidding and getting away with it, staying low with a combined 25 count as we went down in game. But, as I told my team, the side that bids games normally wins out in the end, and we pulled quite a lot back, to finish Saturday firmly in second place behind England.

On Sunday morning I went down for breakfast a full two hours before my team. Twice the hotel staff asked me to move into the lounge as soon as I was finished eating, as they were very busy. To keep the table I had to have multiple breakfasts, which I was actually planning to do anyway.

With the crunch match against England starting at 10 am, the first of my team arrived at 09.30. They weren't late, just playing it cool.

The board below was a missed opportunity, as Scotland got to a slam missed at the other table but couldn't take advantage:

	♠7	EW Vul
	♥Q9763	Dir S
	♦KJ4	
	♣6542	
♠AKJT95		♠42
♥A4		♥K52
♦83		♦AQT75
♣AKT		♣983
	♠Q863	
	♥JT8	
	♦962	
	♣QJ7	

6♠ was played by West on a club lead. There is work to be done, as you have a potential loser in spades, diamonds and clubs. I would suggest winning the club lead then taking an immediate finesse of the ♦Q, followed by a spade finesse, then crossing to the ♦A and finessing trumps again. Making 6 spades, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds, 2 clubs. But then, I can see all the cards.

Our declarer went one off. I don't have the play details, but there are many ways of losing two tricks (most likely a trump and a club). Across all 10 tables 6♠ was bid one other time, making on a heart lead.

Although we lost to England again we were playing well. With just 20 minutes between this match and the next one, Alexander sensibly went for a walk outside (looked like a lovely day), the rest of the team stayed indoors and discussed the previous set of boards.

For the next round against Ireland I sat in the open room watching Kevin and Michael for the first few boards. They seemed to be playing quite well. Normally they play worse when I'm sat behind them.

On Board 1 Michael had a weak distributional hand with 7 hearts to the Queen and four points. When partner opened the bidding 1♦ he replied 1♥, then when the opposition got to 3♣ made a disciplined pass.

	♠KT86	EW Vul
	♥J	Dir S
	♦J932	
	♣AK98	
♠AJ542		♠973
♥K2		♥A74
♦T74		♦AKQ65
♣QJ7		♣T6
	♠Q	
	♥QT98653	
	♦8	
	♣5432	

Beating 3♣ by West gained 5 IMPs when 2♠ made at the other table. Almost every declarer went down on this board, often in 4♥ or 4♠.

I left the playing area and went to the lounge to follow the rest of this round with Wayne Somerville. We noticed that Northern Ireland had taken a lead against England. Miraculously, NI held on for a famous win, a popular result all round! This was England's only loss.

Now Scotland, usually the underdogs, were Northern Ireland's next targets. I'm pleased to say we'd gone from underdogs to being a team-to-beat, at least in the Home Nations.

With Kevin and Michael heading home early (and me on a train back too), our group of five players was down to three

for the last two matches. Not quite enough for a bridge team. Tournament Director Gordon Rainsford allowed us to field substitute players from the U25 ranks. This however made us *'playing without standing'*, ineligible for the trophy. This didn't matter as we were well behind England now anyway.

Against Northern Ireland our ringer was Antone Huang, a skilful cardplayer I'd enjoyed watching on Vugraph earlier. He did well, barring a 6NTx-5. Given that most of our team have similar bridge backgrounds (they went to my school bridge club), and play simple systems, we had no bidding misunderstandings at all as far as I know. Certainly people could have bid better, and been more accurate in slam auctions, but no out-and-out calamities.

As ever though, the play's the thing, and I'm scratching my head as to how we went down in 5♦ here:

	♠A5	EW Vul
	♥KT954	Dir S
	♦T53	
	♣A64	
♠KQT764		♠J
♥-		♥A8632
♦K972		♦AQJ86
♣KJT		♣Q8
	♠9832	
	♥QJ7	
	♦4	
	♣97532	

East declarer, ♥Q lead. The contract went two down, which must have meant a few Heart losers. I imagine the Heart lead was ruffed, trumps drawn, then the defence take the ♠A and a few Hearts too. Perhaps it's not as easy a hand as it looks, as even though you don't need ruffs I think declarer has to set up the side suits before drawing trumps.

At our other table, after some ambitious bidding, NS got to 5♣, a good advance sacrifice, especially undoubled and only three off. This was clearly a hard board to bid as in the other match it was also 5♦-2, and 4♥-5 (by East). The U-25's did a bit better: one pair made 5♦ and Tamsin Munro and Rufus Behr reached 4♣. This ought to go down on a diamond lead, but actually made an overtrick.

We beat Northern Ireland narrowly, and in the final match ran England close, losing just 47-45 IMPs (impressive scoring in 16 boards), with Tamsin Munro subbing in.

Peggy Bayer 2023 (U-20)			
		VP	Wins
1	England U-16	142.11	8/9
2	Scotland	99.40	5/9
3	Ireland	65.91	3/9
4	N Ireland	52.58	2/9

We beat Northern Ireland three times (just), Ireland twice, and England no times (nearly at the end though).

Adapted from

<https://bridgedanny.blogspot.com/>



Scotland Peggy Bayer (U21) team
 Jamie Day, Michael Kennedy, Harry Stuart, Al Duncan, Kevin Ren

"I should have bought a lottery ticket.."

Clive Owen

Some days one is just lucky. Such as the penultimate day of the Winter 4s. I played two matches, one against David Stevenson and one against the Polish team Seligman.

Against Stevenson we were 25 imps down with 2 boards to play.

Board 23	♠K5 ♥JT ♦AKQ763 ♣K64	All Vul Dir S									
♠J64 ♥Q7 ♦JT52 ♣T982	<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		♠A3 ♥AK94 ♦94 ♣AQ753
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠QT9872 ♥86532 ♦8 ♣J										

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-		2♠
Pass	4♠	Dbl	Pass
4NT*	Dbl	5♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl	End	

*4NT = 2 places to play

Declarer can go 2 down by guessing clubs correctly. When they did not we collected 800.

At the other table things were significantly different:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-		Pass
Pass	1NT	2♣	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
Pass	4NT	Dbl	5♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl	End

1NT was 14-16.

2♣ showed clubs and another suit.

4♣ showed both Majors.

4♦ "You choose".

4NT "Not so sure now..."

When the dust settled that was -1100, and 18 imps. Only 7 imps down now...

Board 24	♠QJ963 ♥75 ♦A83 ♣Q73	None Vul Dir W									
♠742 ♥A6 ♦QJ965 ♣J92	<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		♠K5 ♥Q2 ♦KT42 ♣A8654
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠AT8 ♥KJT9843 ♦7 ♣KT										

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	1♣	4♥
End			

A diamond was led, and declarer tried a heart to the King. East won the next heart and led another diamond. The ♣K was ducked and declarer was endplayed to lead away from his ♠A for one down.

At my table the auction was:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣*	Pass	2♦	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♣
End			

*2♣ = either a weak 2or a normal artificial strong opener

2♦ = pass or correct.

A diamond was led, but this time declarer got hearts right for +420 and +10 imps. -25 had turned into +3!!

On to the evening. Only 27 imps down with 5 boards to play. This had reduced to -17 with 2 boards to play.

Board	♠8	All Vul
23	♥K74	Dir S
	♦AK964	
	♣KQJ3	
♠KT94		♠7
♥T53		♥AJ9
♦T53		♦QJ872
♣A87		♣9654
	♠AQJ6532	
	♥Q862	
	♦—	
	♣T2	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♠
End			

I led the ♥3 to the ♥J and ♥Q. Martin Seligman played ♠A and another. A second heart took the contract 2 down.

At the other table:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			3♠
Pass	4♠	End	

Starkowski led the ♣A His heart switch was ducked to the Queen, but Vi Outred could cross to dummy in clubs to discard two hearts on the ♦AK and one on the third club. 4♠ made, 13imps. The deficit is down to 4.

Board	♠T6	None Vul
24	♥QJ9	Dir W
	♦T52	
	♣QJ762	
♠QJ94		♠K832
♥874		♥3
♦AK6		♦J98
♣AT4		♣K9853
	♠A75	
	♥AQT652	
	♦Q743	
	♣—	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥	Dbl
3♠	End		

A fairly straightforward 9 tricks.

The auction started similarly at the other table:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
2♠	3♥	3♠	4♥
Dbl	End		

The 3♥ raise persuaded Seligman to bid game. He won the trump lead in dummy and ducked a spade. A heart was returned and he played ♠A and ruffed a spade. He crossed to hand with a club ruff, drew the last trump and ducked a diamond to the ♦J, leaving this:

Board	♠—	None Vul
24	♥—	Dir W
	♦52	
	♣J76	
♠J		♠K
♥—		♥—
♦AK		♦98
♣AT		♣K9
	♠—	
	♥QT	
	♦Q74	
	♣—	

South is running out of trump! He ruffed a spade and led another diamond but was forced to ruff a club and lose the last two tricks for -300, -4imps. A tie!

The result is determined on Point-a-Board. We had won 11-9. Phew!

The Outred team went on to beat Thomas in the semi-final and Shenkin in the final – how could they not?

The Expert's Bid or The Reflex Bid?

Iain Sime

♠ AJ
♥ AK93
♦ KQ54
♣ K76

Before reading on, what would you bid after partner opens 1♠, you respond 2♦ and partner rebids 3♣?

Love All, Matchpoints – System Acol

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
?			

The clue is in the title.

It is great to see the New Melville Bridge Club nearly full again, even if only once a week. The full house is on Monday afternoons. There are more than 20 tables in the Pairs game, as well as a class in the teaching room.

The field is diverse, both in playing standard and experience. There are usually some Grand Masters; some players who have just finished the classes; and some who learned to play more than 40 years ago. (I know because I played with and against them when I first started playing in 1983.)

On the first Monday in December there were 23 tables. This did not include me, I was watching Croatia v Japan in the World Cup. That was a mistake. The game was drab, and I would have been home in plenty of time for the penalty shoot-out.

I missed this exciting hand.

♠ AJ	N W E S	♠ KQ542
♥ AK93		♥ 2
♦ KQ54		♦ AJ9
♣ K76		♣ AQ95

East deals and the auction starts:

1♠ – 2♦ – 3♣

3♣ (new suit at the 3-level) is Game-forcing. 2♦ promised at least 9 points. East adds his 16 points and has enough for a Game-forcing bid. When West adds his 20 points he should be thinking “possible Grand Slam.” What did you bid over 3♣?

The **Reflex Bid** is 3♥, Fourth Suit Forcing

But where will that get us? East will respond 4♦. Now diamonds are trumps. West might persuade East to bid a Grand after 4NT – 5♥ (two key cards) – 5NT (all key cards). More likely East will sign off in 6♦. He will reckon that he did enough when he bid 3♣ with his minimum Game force. Not knowing how many spade tricks can be made, West settles for 6NT, as did most of the field.

The Expert looks further ahead.

The **Expert Bid** is 3♠.

West realises that to make 13 tricks he will probably need 5 spade tricks. The critical cards are the ♠K and ♠Q. Without both of them, a small slam will be enough.

How do we find these?

Set spades as trump. Since 3♣ was Game-forcing, 3♠ is stronger than 4♠. East can cuebid over 3♠, but may decide that 3♣ was a stretch and settle for a raise to 4♠.

Next, West uses Roman Key Card Blackwood. That reveals that East does have the 3 missing key cards (A 5♦ response if playing 4130). West bids 5♥ asking for the trump Queen. East bids 6♠, showing the ♠Q and no outside King (West suspected that last bit).

West can now count 12 probable top tricks, 5 spades, 3 diamonds and 2 Ace-Kings. East has shown us only 13 of his presumed 16 points. He must have one of the missing Queens or the ♦J.

West bids 7NT. East protests “hog.” He cheers up when West is soon claiming an overtrick. But the Bridgematic won't accept plus one.

The full auction:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♠	Pass
7NT	End		

Only one pair bid the Grand.

Six of the 23 pairs languished in game.

And someone passed 5♥! These 4/1 fits can be tricky, and declarer went two down.

6NT + 1 scored an undeserved 70%.

I told you that the standard was diverse.

Play Challenge

Jim Patrick

1 None Vul Dealer South

♠72
♥KQT73
♦A952
♣72

♠AT3
♥75
♦K8
♣AKJ943

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♠5

You duck East's ♠Q and ♠K and win the third round. At trick 2 West plays the ♠4, indicating that he has led from a 5-card suit. How do you play?

2 All Vul Dealer East

♠K96
♥AKJ63
♦T54
♣T5

♠AT3
♥T982
♦AK72
♣A7

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

Contract: 4♥ Lead: ♣K

You win the ♣A and play Ace and King of trump. On the second round West discards a club. How do you continue?

Solutions on Page 17

Iain MacIntyre

1957 -2023

Iain was brought up in Glasgow and educated at Allan Glens school

I first met Iain at the Glasgow University Union in 1977. We soon discovered we had a common past in that in that we had both been taught bridge at school by our Physics teachers who curiously were both called Douglas (Newlands and Mitchell).

Despite an excellent academic record Iain had dropped out of medicine in his third year realising that this was not what he wanted to do with his life . He took a year out and returned to study English Literature and it was about this time that we formed a partnership which lasted for over 42 years.

He soon showed he had a natural gift for Bridge and his analysis after a hand was quick and insightful .

After University Iain joined the Civil Service initially in Glasgow and then in Edinburgh in the Land Registry Office. He played with several strong players during this time and achieved success in many National events . However one of his idiosyncrasies was that he never bothered to send in master points and so was probably one of the strongest players not to achieve the Grandmaster title

He was also very generous of his time playing with aspiring players never failing to encourage them and give advice and this was especially true of the many mixed partnerships that he had . He was extremely proud when one of his 'proteges' achieved a notable result.

After several years he returned to Glasgow to work at the National Savings Bank and rejoined his beloved GUU team.

To the best of my knowledge Iain never possessed a TV set preferring to read, listen to the radio, go to the cinema or spend the evening with friends when not playing Bridge. He was an avid crossword solver and for several years contributed to the SBU magazine in this respect.

Our last outing was in 2019 at The Scottish Swiss Pairs. Going in to the final round just behind the leaders we bid and made an optimistic grand slam. Iain's first reaction was to apologise to our opponents for the injustice we had perpetrated on them..

Iain was remarkably stoic about his cancer treatment and other health issues but there was a rapid decline over the next few years which was exacerbated by the outbreak of the pandemic

He was good company a loyal friend and will be missed by all who knew him

Paul Maiolani

Iain and Paul represented Scotland in the 1982 Junior Camrose and played in many Trials. In those days the opposition was formidable, and they never quite made it into the Camrose team.

Thinking it Through

You are playing a Camrose match against the Auld Enemy. On Board 13, where both sides are Vulnerable, RHO deals and passes. You are East, looking at:

♠T42
♥AJT9876
♦K82
♣—

What is your call?

Not much of a problem? You have a nice suit and 6½ playing tricks. Some useful controls, but not quite enough to open 1♥. You choose a normal pre-emptive 3♥. LHO doubles for takeout, and everybody passes.

An unexpected development! South leads the ♠K and you see this dummy:

♠AQ86	N W E S	♠T42
♥2		♥AJT9876
♦JT974		♦K82
♣J95		♣—

The auction has been:

West	North	East	South
-	Pass	3♥	Dbl
End			

What are your thoughts?

Opponents have 24HCP between them. South will have the majority since North did not open and is now marked with ♥KQxx(x). South is likely 4=1=4=4 or 4=1=3=5, or 4=0=4=5. Which leaves North with 2=4=1=6, 2=4=2=5 or 2=5=1=5

You cannot avoid two heart losers. A finesse of ♠Q will probably work, and you might manage to discard your spade loser on a diamond if North has the ♦Q, but -1 looks a more likely outcome. Not too bad if NS can make 3NT...

What is your plan?

You ruff the club lead. It looks best to lead the first heart from dummy: if North does not split you can play 2 rounds of trump and start on diamonds.

A finesse of ♠Q wins. You lead the ♥2, North inserts the ♥Q, you win the ♥A and the good news is that South follows. You lead a second heart to North's ♥K; South and dummy throw clubs. North switches to the ♦5 and South wins the ♦Q.

South returns the ♦6 for North to ruff, and he plays the ♠J. This is the position, with each side having taken 3 tricks.

♠A86	N W E S	♠T4
♥—		♥JT98
♦JT9		♦K
♣J		♣—

How do you proceed?

If you win the ♠A you can ruff a club to hand and draw trump but South will make the ♦A and the ♠K for one down. You may as well duck the spade in case North has to switch to a club. When he does you ruff and run your remaining trump, discarding diamonds from dummy and squeezing South in diamonds and spades. Nice!

The full hand:

13	♠J5	All Vul
	♥KQ54	Dealer N
	♦5	
	♣QT8643	
♠AQ86	N W E S	♠T42
♥2		♥AJT9876
♦JT974		♦K82
♣J95		♣—
	♠K973	
	♥3	
	♦AQ63	
	♣AK72	

To beat the contract South had to cash the ♦A before giving partner his ruff. Now a spade return leaves you without resource.

Play Challenge Solutions

Jim Patrick

1 None Vul Dealer South

	♠72		
	♥KQT73		
	♦A952		
	♣72		
♠J9654		♠KQ8	
♥J92		♥A64	
♦QT74		♦J63	
♣T		♣Q865	
	♠AT3		
	♥75		
	♦K8		
	♣AKJ943		

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

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♠5

You duck East's ♠Q and ♠K and win the third round. At trick 2 West plays the ♠4, indicating that he has led from a 5-card suit.

You have 5 Sure Tricks. If you can make 6 club tricks you are home, but if you lose the lead to West he can cash two more spades for -1.

At the table declarer cashed the ♣K and crossed to the ♦A to take a club finesse. When he set up a long club, a diamond was returned to give him only eight tricks.

You have more chances by preserving your control of the diamond suit and playing clubs from the top. You gain outright against ♣Qx in West. You lose when East has ♣Qxx and West has the ♥A.

Already you are ahead, but you also gain when clubs are 4-1 with East holding ♥Axx, as happened at the table.

2 All Vul Dealer East

	♠K96		
	♥AKJ63		
	♦T54		
	♣T5		
♠Q752			♠J84
♥7			♥Q54
♦J863			♦Q9
♣KQJ8			♣96432
	♠AT3		
	♥T982		
	♦AK72		
	♣A7		

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

Contract: 4♥ Lead: ♣K

You win the ♣A and play Ace and King of trump. On the second round West discards a club.

Diamonds might split 3=3, but if they do not you want to force opponents to open up the spade suit for you. Then you will play for split honours.

Play ♦A, ♦K and another diamond. Only if East has 4+ diamonds and a cashable club along with his ♥Q will you go off.

Here, West can cash a club and play the 4th diamond, but you will throw East in with a trump later.

If East has a cashable club, West can play a club, but after cashing the ♥Q East is endplayed. If West exits on a diamond instead, whoever wins the club will be endplayed.

If East has the 4 diamonds, he can cash his heart and either put West in with a club or exit safely on the 4th diamond but not both.

March 2023 Bidding Challenge

Patrick Shields

We have 21 panellists this month with external contributions from Northern Ireland (Ian Hamilton) and from Wales (Adrian Thomas). Our thanks to them and to all the Scots who contributed. All these problems were from real-life and mostly not solved at the table. There was a majority on only three of the questions, and even for those there are questions to ask.

Problem 1 Teams None Vul

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

The two questions on this hand are how to pick a trump suit and what level to aim for. With the possibility of 11 top tricks, it takes only a suitable Ace (or less) and some trump support for there to be an easy slam. The handling of two-suiters over a pre-empt is a topic worthy of partnership discussion. By default we would expect the 4♣ cue here to be both majors (at least 5=5) and a few but not many have discussed what 4♦ means in this context. It is not of great value as strong with diamonds (going past 3NT as it does) so a two-suiter with diamonds and a major is a useful gadget. One reason this position is not often discussed is because it's not quite the same over a 3♦ opener – yes, 4♦ would show the majors but 4♣ is the lowest level at which to bid clubs – so is that natural or conventional?

The focus on a slam was not strong in the discussion by panellists but the most optimistic were always bidding a slam.

GORDON: 4♦. Leaping Michaels and forcing. I will bid 6♦ over 4/5♥ and let partner decide what to do. If partner is looking at the ♥A, he will know I have first round club control. 4♣ over 3♣ would be both majors.

This choice is not without risk of two heart losers, and whether Leaping Michaels is forcing or not is subject to debate (the bid comes up a lot less often if it is forcing). There was one slam try with South taking control ...

MCGINLEY: 5♣. Hoping partner reflects on the calls I could have made (double; or 4♣ then 4♠ over 4♥) and reads this as Exclusion Key Card ask! I will pass his 5♦[=0], but bid 6♦ over 5♥[=1].

This tackles the issue of two heart losers but might miss slam when partner has ♥KQ. It won't get to some grand slams, but it's a nice choice. (Notice that even if your first response to a 4NT key card ask is 1/4, you are better – for cases like this – to switch the first two steps for an Exclusion ask.) That does look the best use for 5♣, but not everyone would take 5♣ that way...

WHYTE: 5♣. Two places to play. If my partner bids 5♥, as is likely, I bid 5♠. Will I miss a slam, possibly? The only way to be sure to avoid that is to bid 6♣. But who knows whether there are 11, 12, or 13 tricks?

SHORT: I've a sneaking admiration for 5♣, which I've invented to say "I've got a 2-suiter with 11 tricks".

And this option might get one to a slam but with partner looking at low spades and low diamonds, not very often.

FREIMANIS: 5♦. Struggling to find a good avenue ... The good news is that 5♦ is a strong bid, so partner might be able to find a raise to 6♦ when it makes.

And of course there is the option of a delayed slam try, as with these.

SMITH: 4♣. Give partner four spades and the ♥A and Grand is close to laydown. If he bids one of my suits I'll cue my club void to see if I can extract a heart cue from him. If, as expected, he bids 4♥, I will continue with 5♦, which must show a hand happy to play at the 5-level in both diamonds and spades.

ASH: 4♦. Partner can bid 4♥ as pass or correct to find the major fit. I can then bid 5♠ to show a really strong two suiter.

The majority focussed on getting a choice between spades and diamonds for trump; most starting with 4♣, in the hope that continuing over 4♥ shows the other two suits – but there were four brave souls who were willing to trust that 4♦ showing diamonds and a Major was part of the common expert treatments we would expect here. A further six talked about the option – so it is clearly close to being assumed.

SYMONS: 4♦. If ever there was a hand for Leaping Michaels...

ASH: 4♦. I know this will not be considered part of the agreed system, but I will 'take the zero' to make the point that any '4 of a minor' over a pre-empt at the 2-level or 3-level is best played as that minor and a Major.

At the one table in the event where 4♦ was chosen, that finished the auction! Slightly surprising was that almost nobody had any doubts that starting with 4♣ and moving on over 4♥ would be read correctly, for example

PATERSON: 4♣. When I bid spades over hearts, partner should work out that I also have diamonds.

McGOWAN: 4♣. This shows a 2-suiter, often but not exclusively, a Major 2-suiter.

SHORT: 4♣. This should be any 2-suiter, not just majors. I'll correct 4♥ to 4♣ and rely on partner to know I have diamonds also in a strong hand.

My confidence in partner getting the message would be a lot less that has just been expressed. There was one maverick who chose a third route to show a two-suiter

SIME: 4NT. I assume our methods do not include 4♦ shows diamonds and a Major. So 4NT must be diamonds and a major. And, obviously, a very strong hand.

Pushing the bidding to the 5-level with 4NT does suggest a stronger hand than the "willing to chance a game" implied by 4♣. But the willingness to stop in game was evident in some of the feedback, most fully from:

HAMILTON: 4♣. If partner starts to cue I may reconsider, but settling for a near-certain game looks pragmatic. Mike Lawrence's advice – "don't play me for the perfect hand – I don't have it" looks right.

What do we learn from all this? One point is that 4♦ showing a two-suiter here is very much favoured as an approach. Another is the enormous consensus for describing our hand rather than taking control. But the two exceptions to that (McGinley's 5♣ and Freimanis' 5♦) have a lot of appeal as ways to get to a slam.

In the event, partner holds ♥KJ and values in clubs, and either slam makes as long as they don't lead a heart through partner at trick one. Insisting on a slam is a winner as long as you get partner to be declarer.

Problem 1	Votes	Marks
4♣	11	10
4♦	4	9
5♣	2	8
5♦	1	6
4N	1	6
X	2	3
6♦	0	5

Problem 2 Pairs E/W Vul

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

1♣=clubs or balanced (2+clubs)

The issue on this hand is that you have a decent 15-count, but no clear bid. What should you do in a case like this? There are only three options. Those who chose to pass were very relaxed about the future:

SIME: PASS. Some of the time the auction stops here. If so, I am happy. Plus 200 for a partial is quite likely. If I had overcalled 1♠ or 1NT, and the auction stopped there, I would not be so happy. I would need a lot of overtricks to beat plus 200.

WILKINSON: PASS. At this vulnerability we might get away with waiting.

I thought the fact that partner was a passed hand might discourage a few more for venturing forth, but the boss suit was a clear attraction –

PATERSON: 1♠. ...It is the sort of hand which could play well in a 4-3 fit, and also 1♠ is a good lead indicator.

SHORT: 1♠. Opposite a passed partner I'm not overly concerned about missing game, and a 1NT overcall is just horrible. A 4-card strong suit overcall has worked very well for me in the past.

Partner often has 4- or even 5-card support! Oh yes- good for a lead too!

McGOWAN: 1♠. Perfect for the 4-card major overcall: good suit, good hand, no better choice.

These were all positive statements, but for the majority of the panel the preference was 1NT.

SMITH: 1NT. A balanced 15+ count. That what I have and that's what I'm showing.

HAMILTON: 1NT. This shows a (semi)-balanced hand and 15-17 hcp – exactly what I have got. Am I missing something?

It's not inaccurate, but there are 11-hcp in the long suits and 4-hcp in the short suits and that doesn't feel well balanced. I would hate to be doubled in 1NT. Some did see a positive side in a 1NT overcall:

SYMONS: 1NT. Not the best shape but gets me in to the bidding early.

GORDON: 1NT. Influenced by the club spots, without which I would bid 1♠.

My experience is that the opponents never lead clubs when I want them to, but maybe that's just bad luck!

FREIMANIS: 1NT. Could be wrong, but with a short club opening we might have a decent combined length and source of tricks there.

Only one panellist had a hint of concern that this was match-points rather than teams scoring, and for him the vulnerability of the opponents drove his Pass – but does it affect the choice between spades and NT? What it should mean is that gaining an advantage in a part-score becomes (opposite a passed partner) rather more important than finding game.

At the table, partner had a 4342 hand with a 5-count and you just had to avoid getting too high if you bid spades. Your only making contract was 2♠ (1NT goes off on any suit lead) and the opponents will make 1NT or two of either red suit if given the chance to play there.

Problem 2	Votes	Marks
1NT	12	10
1♠	5	8
Pass	4	3
others	0	0

Problem 3 Teams N♠ Vul

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

This problem produced the largest consensus, avoiding the disaster which occurred at the table. A double in these circumstances shows extras (quite a lot since you have passed) but never in the trump suit – they have to be useful values if partner bids on. The question is whether it will be easier for the defence to take 4 tricks, or for your side to collect 11 tricks. There was no doubt in the minds of

FREIMANIS: 5♥. The heart length bodes badly for defence, so there is a good chance that 4♠ might actually make here. As well, with the right cards, 5♥ could also make..

SHORT: 5♥. It is amazing how often opponents have shape on these sort of auctions. A secondary point is that they might well misjudge and bid 5♠ and I'll accept partner's double now.

MCKAY: 5♥. "Insurance" as 4♠ may well make.

The vulnerability here encourages bidding as a successful contract will score well and the penalty might be small. But some still went for the penalty –

WILKINSON: PASS. I am hoping that my irregular partner will have the ♣A, after which this contract may fail on a club lead. Partner does have other bids available if he does not want to defend.

CLOW: PASS. It's more likely that partner can beat 4♠ than that we can make 5♥.

For most it was an easy choice:

GORDON: 5♥. Automatic to take out a take-out double.

The fact of a choice to make was recognised by a few –

HAMILTON: 5♥. Pass could be right, but ... partner can't credibly hold a 4-card 1♥ opener so we have at least 9 hearts and the opposition 9 or 10 spades. This means there should be 18-19 total tricks. The odds favour advancing.

WHYTE: 5♥. It depends on whether my partner has the ♣A since that almost guarantees we can beat 4♠. But, even then, the reward is likely to be slim.

There were a few who were not sure that hearts is the right suit, but Hamilton above argues well that it should be. The alternatives were

ASH: 5♣. As I didn't bid on the last round, this can only be heart support and a club control. This will score a goal if partner has void, AKxxxx, KQx, Axxx or similar.

But it will be an own goal if partner assumes (as I would) that it is natural! Somewhat safer is

VALENTINE: 4NT. 5♥ is an alternative but pulling 5♣ to 5♦ should show diamonds and hearts and might give partner a better idea of what to do.

PATERSON: 4NT. Clear-cut at pairs to bid 5♥, as the penalty would be paltry and diamonds score less than hearts. However occasionally partner is 1444

At the table pass and a club lead resulted in 13 tricks, and bidding on was the winner with 5♦ or 5♥ going one down. Partner held 85-AK876-AKQ43-Q so we had a double fit.

Problem 3	Votes	Marks
5♥	15	10
4NT	2	7
Pass	3	3
5♣	1	1
others	0	0

Problem 4 Teams None Vul

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

The two questions we have to ask here are whether or not to bid, and if we do bid then what do we bid. Only a small number chose to pass

WILKINSON: PASS. I don't think I have enough to invite here, though I suppose partner won't be pleased if he rattles in eleven tricks, having a sound overcall.

PATERSON: PASS. If we were vulnerable I would dredge up something, but it is OK to miss a non-vulnerable game occasionally.

The case against passing was put strongly by:

HAMILTON: 2♦. One has to make some kind of forward-going noise and this is the cheapest, most helpful.

SIME: I need to bid something as overcalls can be 18 points nowadays...

SHORT: 2♠: Overcalls nowadays with WJOs can be pretty strong.

Indeed overcalls with up to 17-hcp are not uncommon, so passing with this 10-count is just too much. Four distinct choices were made, and I have great sympathy for this loner, as it gets the hand type across and it is not forcing ...

WHYTE: 1NT. I don't have a heart stopper. So what? I do not promise one; I show a hand of 9-11 pts, no three-card spade support, scattered values and no worthwhile suit.

The red suit bids at the two level are treated by everyone as forcing; those who chose 2♦ understood it was not a great suit, but comforted themselves that partner would bid and ♠QJ would not be a disappointment when seen; only one of the nine suggested he would bid on over 2♠ from partner. They didn't sound happy.

VALENTINE: 2♦. Not ideal, but preferable to 1NT or a spade raise. Shows constructive values and rates to get us to our best strain and level.

SIME 2♦. This is closest to what I have, although 2♠ would not be silly.

Almost as many chose to support spades in preference to introducing diamonds, with two showing a good raise, saying:

DRAGIC: 2♥. My spade support is as good as three small. If I bid 2♦ I will have to pass 2♠ by partner.

THOMAS: 2♥. Good spade cards so lie a bit with this choice, even if partner will expect three card support.

Those making the simple raise did understand their hand was rather good ...

MURDOCH: 2♠. Simple though a little heavy value bid.

Is there a “right” answer? The arguments for 2♥ sound the most positive to me, and the most likely to miss a game (after Pass) is surely 2♠. At the table showing spade support immediately was important, as otherwise partner would not bid 4♠ over opener’s 4♥ and push them to the five level down one.

Problem 4	Votes	Marks
2♦	9	10
2♥	2	9
2♠	6	6
1NT	1	5
Pass	3	1
Others	0	0

Problem 5 Teams None Vul

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

It does look like we want to play in hearts on this deal, and the question is how high – but there were two who thought differently.

WHYTE: 3NT. Difficult to choose between the two possible games. 3NT is easier to make than 4♥, and 4♥ risks RHO having a singleton spade. On the other hand, 3NT runs the risk of a wide-open diamond suit. Opposition still have to find the diamond lead. So go for the lower-hanging fruit.

McGINLEY: 3NT. Prefer the 9-trick game as their defence to a 4♥ contract might start with a spade lead and a ruff / trump promotion.

Indeed, there could be a loser in hearts we would not see in NT, but partner has bid at the 3-level, so with this collection we do not expect game to be in jeopardy. Most panellists are therefore willing to lose a spade ruff – although we should bear in mind that the little we know is that partner has a lot more hearts than RHO, and it is therefore more likely that partner has the spade shortage. One bidder is again alone, and will be in trouble if partner is not on the same page (and I would not be).

ASH: 4♦. I would not introduce a new minor suit at the 4 level (if I had a lot of diamonds I have to bid 5♦) so this must be cue-bid agreeing hearts.

Counting this one, we have a 10-9 vote in favour of showing slam interest in hearts on this deal. Here are some committed to the simple raise.

PIPER: 4♥. Trickiest problem but aceless and you are worried about a ruff so don’t make a slam try.

HAMILTON (and **SHORT** likewise): 4♥. I may effectively have six hcp, the spade honours being of limited or no value, except in defence. however I have four card support, so I owe him a raise.

And some rate it as a close call:

THOMAS: 3♠. Aceless soft spade but a bit good for just a raise to 4♥; 3♠ is just a good 4♥ bid.

SYMONS: 3♠. Maybe should settle for 4♥ with my wasted spade values, but it doesn’t cost anything to show a good raise, and partner may have the right cards for slam - in my dreams at least.

The last two make the most important point, we are not forcing to slam when we bid 3♠, we are just showing a good raise – the rest is up to partner. So for some the cue is clear.

GORDON: 3♠. Partner might do something interesting... Why is this a problem?

DRAGIC: 3♠. I have good support for hearts and will cooperate if partner cue-bids. KQ in spades is not ideal as we still need partner to have spade control for slam to make.

FREIMANIS: 3♠. Intended to show a good raise to 4♥, as opposed to just a stretched one which is what a 4♥ bid would likely contain.

At the table either raise would work out fine, and there was no spade ruff as the 2♠ bidder had only a 5-card suit. 3NT was going off if opener led his four-card diamond suit.

Problem 5	Votes	Marks
4♥	10	10
3♠	8	9
3NT	2	5
4♦	1	1
4NT	0	1
other	0	0

Problem 6 **Teams** **Both Vul**

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

There can be no doubt you must bid here and there are plenty of options. There is a majority go for double, despite the fact that it has two downsides – first is that partner may choose inappropriately to defend and

the other is that you could miss a 5-3 spade fit. On the plus side it might sometimes be right to defend, it brings all three suits into consideration, and it doesn't overplay the spades. How strong is the concern over defending 2♥ doubled?

THOMAS: 2♠. I don't like to double with all my values in diamonds as partner may leave it in, so ...

SYMONS: DBL. This may give partner a problem if her only suit is hearts, but I'm not keen on overcalling spades with that suit. At least this keeps spades in the picture, and she might even bid them with a three-card suit.

CLOW: DBL. Partner has some length in hearts, possibly even five. If he's too weak to pass then he might bid a three card spade suit.

But more common was a concern that we could end up defending a much higher heart contract and we want to optimise our defence to that, which led to:

PATERSON: 3♦. I may bid again later, but this is what I want led.

WHYTE: 3♦. I hesitate to introduce the spades, which might encourage a disastrous lead to a 4♥ contract.

PIPER: 3♥. I do think 2♠ is wrong. You could let 4♥ make when you have 5♦ on.

There were a few concerned with missing a 5-3 spade fit, as the lowest sacrifice over their 4♥ might be the best you can do.

MURDOCH: 2♠. A 5-3 spade fit will be hard to find if I don't bid 2♠ now.

SHORT: 2♠. Ugh, but double is unlikely to expose a 5-3 spade fit and my poor spades are definitely compensated by good, possibly running, diamonds.

And indeed we might even make 4♣. Another approach which catches a 5-3 spade fit is to show a two-suiter at this point. There were two approaches to this mentioned:

GORDON: 3♥. Michaels.

DRAGIC: 2♠. I think 3♥ in this auction is stop asking, solid minor, same as (1♥)-3♥. 4♦ should be leaping Michaels and I assume we don't play that in vanilla SBU system.

THOMAS: 2♠. I have always played 3♥ as one-suited good hand asking for a stop.

It is attractive to show a two-suiter but it does seem too risky to foist this on partner without discussion. By the way, the argument for a simple 3♥ Michaels rather than Leaping Michaels is quite strong, as you are able to stop in 3♣ when appropriate – something that doesn't work when it is a cue in spades. Avoiding the uncertainty, the next choice is not likely to be misinterpreted, although it does get us a level higher than we might like.

FREIMANIS: 4♥. Probably taken as spades and a minor which likely is the most practical bid. It will be difficult to get this hand across otherwise after a likely 4♥ bid coming next.

Which leaves us with double as one way to avoid some of these problems, and for some there was no other consideration.

SMITH: DBL. ...double is more flexible and should allow me to describe my hand more fully later in the auction.

MCGOWAN: DBL. I hate to double on 2-suiters but am downgrading the spades. I hate to double with a void in their suit. I hate this problem! Provided partner does not pass I may be well placed later.

VALENTINE: DBL. Seems the most flexible without overstating values, quality of hand or suits.

There was an expectation that Lebensohl principles should apply here, so we might hear 3m showing some values. There was some doubt as to what do when partner heads for the club suit ranging from

SIME: DBL. ... and we might belong in clubs.

to the less enthusiastic

MCGINLEY: DBL. Over 3♣ from partner, will follow up with 3♦ as Equal Level Conversion.

[ELC is commonly applied over higher level takeout doubles, and it allows correction of the contract without suggesting extra values]

So in this situation should we be showing one suit or two suits or three suits? When they have both bid before we do, we start with an expectation that we are more likely to be defending, but on this deal, when I have a five-card spade suit, the deal can still belong to our side. Partner will be able to judge better what to do if I am known to be 5-5 shape, which makes Gordon's Michaels bid very attractive – but it's not clear partner will understand that, so those who steer clear of it are on firmer ground.

Problem 6	Votes	Marks
Dbl	11	10
3♦	2	8
4♥	1	7
2♠	5	6
3♥	2	5
other	0	0

Problem 7 Teams Both Vul

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

We are clearly going to support spades on this hand, and the question is how best to do that. There are two considerations in mind – one is whether or not we might have a slam, and the other is to help the partnership act sensibly if there is further bidding from the opposition. The clear favourite amongst the panellists was a bid which contributes on both those fronts, the 4♦ fit-jump. Only one other problem in this set produced a stronger majority.

Let's look at the minority choices first. The simple raise to game had a few supporters. It takes a lot of high cards in partner's hand to make a slam, and all but these were confident about game:

CLOW: 4♣. As little as AKxxx gives 4♣ play.

MCKAY: 4♠. A bit pushy

But some chose 4♣ in recognition of a potential problem ...

WILKINSON: 4♠. Interested to hear if many try 4♦ fit jump with this irregular partner.

SHORT: 4♣ for me... I'd like to bid a "fit" jump of 4♦, which would help him to decide what to do over 4♥ but might he read this as a splinter? In real life I would sniff out my partner and if I thought he would read 4♦, this is the best bid.

Avoiding that ambiguity, some others found a cue bid more appealing than 4♣

Ross: 3♥. Toss-up between that and 3♦.

PATERSON: 3♦. If 4♦ were a jump fit I would choose it, but partner might think it a splinter and be misled for both bidding and leading.

VALENTINE: 2NT. This should be a 4-card spade raise, perhaps on the lighter side but I don't see a more attractive alternative to get my strength and support across. 4♦ would be my second choice; that seems like more of a punt but could make competing easier if we need to make a 5-level judgement.

For the rest of the panel this was a non-problem, best expressed by:

SYMONS: 4♦. If ever there was a hand for a Fit Jump....

WHYTE: 4♦. I show a good suit and 4-card support for spades. Page 76 in the standard book on competitive bidding.

SIME: 4♦. This time I am confident that a Fit Jump is best. It will help partner decide whether to bid more than 4♣. It will also suggest the lead if we end up defending.

THOMAS: 4♦. Fit jump seems perfect.

We have a strong consensus, but a few have expressed concern about how partner would interpret the bid. Next time, I would expect everyone to be confident in the interpretation of 4♦. It was surprising to find no votes for 4♥, which at least might make it easier for partner to bid on sometimes.

Problem 7	Votes	Marks
4♦	13	10
3♥	1	5
3♦	2	5
2NT	1	5
4♥	0	5
4♣	4	3
3♣	0	2
other	0	0

Problem 8 Teams N/S Vul

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

What is your lead?

Being on lead against a pre-emptive auction is very common these days, and there is a different logic to apply here from other types of auction. Where at other times our first concern is setting up our winners (and declarer's losers), in pre-emptive auctions we are more concerned about not seeing our winners disappear while the hand with the long suit discards its losers.

This lead problem found supporters for all three plain suits – and they were very evenly split with a small majority for clubs over diamonds or hearts. Let's hear from the majority first –

HAMILTON: ♣. It is hard to know whether to get seriously active by trying the ♦A or ♥K, or go semi-passive, with the chance of setting up a quick winner. The latter approach looks best. The club lead could set up a trick, or at least give nothing away. Remember that even Meckstroth and Rodwell give up a trick on opening lead 18% of the time.

SMITH: ♣. Ten or nine according to agreed style. This seems too normal to be a problem, so presumably at the table the contract was doomed on some other lead.

VALENTINE: ♣. Probably a case for the ♦A but I will be unexciting.

PIPER: ♣. We all know the ♣10 is the wrong lead that is why it's a problem but that's what I would lead.

These people do not sound as positive as you would like them to be. How about those leading the heart suit?

THOMAS: ♥K. A plucky King seems best way of trying to defeat contract.

SIME: ♥K. Leading from Kx is often a way to let unmakeable contracts through. However, the pre-empt makes it quite likely that partner has the Ace or Queen of hearts. (I would not lead Kx in a BBO online game, not that I still play in many of these).

WHYTE: ♥K. We may need to cash out quickly, and thus an attacking lead is called for. This says that spades is the first suit to eliminate. A club lead of the ten is too opaque for my partner to read accurately. Leading or underleading the diamond ace is equally abhorrent, so we are left with the heart king by elimination.

Not sure why the ♦A is "abhorrent". Also for the ♥K but less strongly is

SHORT: ♥K. Also a case for the ♦A but that commits us too much. The ♥K is only wrong if the opponents have Ace and Queen, as it could result in a ruff or set up winners for partner and if opener has the ♦K, it gives partner an early chance to lead a diamond through. More upsides than downsides.

A key point is made by:

ASH: ♦A. I think it is a bit of a guess as to what will work but if a heart ruff is the only way to beat this contract then leading my Ace will let me see dummy and then I can switch. ... [a club] may avoid teammates' derision if A♦ gives the contract but I do not think being 'safe' is right here.

and for some others it's an easy choice

...

GORDON: ♦A. You might learn what to play at trick two. The ♦K is a favourite to be with dummy – reducing the risk of blowing a diamond trick.

McGINLEY: ♦A. We may need to cash out.

McGOWAN: ♦A. I like to take a look at dummy before committing to a line of defence.

Of course any lead could work out – but it feels like the Ace-leaders are more confident about the future direction of the defence, so that gets my vote. In the event from which this came (a match in the ALT series), the lead choices were in almost exactly the same ratio as the panellists provided. On the day, all leads beat the contract, but the club lead gave away one trick in doing so.

Problem 8	Votes	Marks
♣ any	9	10
♦A	6	9
♥K	6	6
♠J	0	1
♦2	0	0

Many thanks to the panel again for all the contributions. Well done to Harry Smith on collecting a perfect round – matching the plurality on all eight boards. My favourites – if you can tell from the write-up – would only have scored 64. Anne Symons came second with 78 and our visitor from Ireland, Ian Hamilton, was third was 75.

Scottish Bridge Players Fantasy Football League

We are now in our third season with a record 19 teams.

At the end of March, seven of our teams are in the top 10% of all teams (more than 11 million of them) proving again that bridge players are good at this:

1. No One Likes Us (Marina Evans) 1777
2. Unsporting Lisbon (Jim Mason) 1769
3. Sheriff Ten Haag (Kevin Ren) 1729
4. Simeone (Iain Sime) 1728
5. Inter Nolan (Tony Nolan) 1710
6. Bruntsfield Athletic (Fiona McQuaker) 1704
7. Nodrogila (Ali Gordon) 1681

Former champions Marina and Jim lead the race. With more than a quarter of the season to go, any of the top teams could still win the £100 first prize.

The remaining teams may be keeping their powder dry for the KO Cup competition which runs for the last five weeks.

There are cash prizes for the Cup winner, League runner-up and slow starter (best score after the World Cup outside the top two).

To see how it all works visit <https://fantasy.premierleague.com/help>

If you would like to join next season, please email iain.sime63@gmail.com

The league is expected to start on Friday 11 August.

It is FREE to play and be included in the standings.

We ask for £10 to be eligible for the prizes.

Panel Answers

March 2023

Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Top Scoring Choice	4♣	1NT	5♥	2♦	4♥	Dbl	4♦	♣	Tot	
1	Harry Smith	4♣	1NT	5♥	2♦	4♥	Dbl	4♦	♣	80
2	Anne Symons	4♣	1NT	5♥	2♦	3♣	Dbl	4♦	♣T	78
3	Ian Hamilton	4♣	1NT	5♥	2♦	4♥	Dbl	3♦	♣T	75
4=	Miro Dragic	4♣	1NT	5♥	2♥	3♣	2♠	4♦	♦A	73
	Liz McGowan	4♣	1♠	5♥	2♠	4♥	Dbl	4♦	♦A	73
6=	Gints Freimanis	5♦	1NT	5♥	2♦	3♣	4♥	4♦	♣T	72
	Mike McGinley	5♣	1NT	5♥	2♦	3NT	Dbl	4♦	♦A	72
8	Adrian Thomas	4♣	1NT	5♥	2♥	3♣	2♠	4♦	♥K	70
9	Ronan Valentine	4♦	1♠	4NT	2♦	4♥	Dbl	2NT	♣T	69
10	Irving Gordon	4♦	1NT	5♥	2♠	3♣	3♥	4♦	♦A	68
11=	Douglas Piper	4♣	Pass	5♥	2♠	4♥	3♥	4♦	♣T	64
	Iain Sime	4NT	Pass	5♥	2♦	3♣	Dbl	4♦	♥K	64
13	Bill Ross	4♣	1NT	Pass	2♠	4♥	Dbl	3♥	♦A	63
14=	Mike Ash	4♦	1NT	5♣	2♦	4♦	Dbl	4♦	♦A	60
	John Murdoch	4♣	Pass	5♥	2♠	3♣	2♠	4♦	♥K	60
	Bill Whyte	5♣	1♠	5♥	1NT	3NT	3♦	4♦	♥K	60
17=	Bob Clow	Dbl	1NT	Pass	2♦	4♥	Dbl	4♠	♣T	59
	Brian Short	4♣	1♠	5♥	2♠	4♥	2♠	4♠	♥K	59
19	Tim McKay	Dbl	1NT	5♥	Pass	4♥	Dbl	4♠	♣T	57
20	Jack Paterson	4♣	1♠	4NT	Pass	3♣	3♦	3♦	♥K	54
21	Tony Wilkinson	4♣	Pass	Pass	Pass	4♥	2♠	4♠	♣	46

Competitors Top Scores

Another tough set, with scores biased towards the panel's choices even where the conductor did not agree!

Congratulations to **Marilyn McDonagh** of the **Carlton BC**, recent graduate from the Bronze Bidding Challenge, on leading the field with **65**.

Other good scores:

John MacNab	(Direct)	64
Derek McLachlan	(Peebles)	62
Ken Rae	(Lerwick)	62
Anne Perkins	(New Melville)	60
Sheila Templeton	(Kyle)	58
Bob Brown	(GBC)	57
Frances McKeon	(GBC)	57

SBNews Bidding Panel Problems

May 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 May, 2023

Problem 1 Teams None Vul

♠T765 ♥5 ♦K4 ♣AKQT9	S	W	N	E
	1♣	Dbl	1NT	P
	?			

Problem 2 Teams All Vul

♠A7 ♥5 ♦JT8742 ♣QJ98	S	W	N	E
	-	1NT	Dbl	2♣
	?			

1NT = 12-14. Dbl = PEN.

(Your double would be takeout. Pass is not forcing.)

Problem 3 Teams All Vul

♠K93 ♥A9 ♦K62 ♣AJT98	S	W	N	E
	-	-	P	2♦
	?			

Problem 4 Teams NS Vul

♠JT43 ♥9 ♦A653 ♣KJ63	S	W	N	E
	-	3♣	Dbl	P
	?			

Problem 5 Teams None Vul

♠Q82 ♥AQ95 ♦A6 ♣KJ97	S	W	N	E
			3♦	3♣
	?			

Problem 6 Teams None Vul

♠92 ♥AJT87 ♦A83 ♣KQT	S	W	N	E
	1♥	2♣	4♦*	4♣
	?			

1♥=5+ 2♣=Weak.

4♦ = Fit Jump, typically 3♥, 5+♦

Problem 7 Teams All Vul

♠A9 ♥AK8 ♦KT93 ♣T762	S	W	N	E
	-	-	1♠	2♣
	?			

Problem 8 Match Points EW Vul

♠Q ♥T743 ♦AJT9 ♣JT86	S	W	N	E
			P	1♠
	P	2♣	P	2♥
	P	3♣	P	4♠
	End			

What is your lead?