

Scottish Bridge News

Editorial

Congratulations to Mike Ash and his team on winning the Scottish Cup. This will be the last time the Final is played online. The Scottish Cup is our oldest and most prestigious event and offers generous master point awards. This year's event is underway, with only 24 entries. Let us all make a big effort to increase that number in 2024.

Once again Scotland has failed to retain the Lady Milne Trophy on home soil. It is a Fascinating Fact that Scotland's women have won at home only twice: in 1956 and 2018. We hope it will not be another 62 years till the next home win.

Our Women's third place was matched by our Seniors. Reports on both events appear on pages 5-10.

We are sorry to record the passing of two pillars of Scottish Bridge. Russell McClymont was the 55th President of the SBU. He worked quietly and

efficiently to introduce many of the technical innovations that make our game what it is to-day. Simon Muir was another quiet man, a member of Falkirk Bridge Club. The club has died with him and a History of Falkirk Bridge Club will appear on the website in June.

Mike Ash, Director of Selection, has an update on the current situation and an appeal for support in encouraging young players to learn bridge.

This edition's SBNews Bidding Panel is conducted by Iain Sime. The July problems are on the last page.

Please note that the SBUNews now appears online every two months! Contributions and entries to the Bidding Panel Problems should be sent to:

liz.mcgowan@blueyonder.co.uk

She really would love to hear from you!

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2023 Scottish Cup Final

Mike Ash

(The Scottish Cup final was played on RealBridge over 2 days on April 1-2. 64 boards in one day were deemed to be too many for online play.)

After 29 of the 64 boards ASH was a comfortable 52 imps ahead thanks to 3 game swings and quite a few good part score results. Then came Board 30.

Session 1, Board 30

	♠J942	None Vul
	♥T832	Dealer E
	♦A543	
	♣4	
♠63		♠K85
♥AJ654		♥K
♦KJ		♦9762
♣QJ97		♣AK865
	♠AQT7	
	♥Q97	
	♦QT8	
	♣T32	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Ferrari</i>	<i>Commins</i>	<i>Ash</i>	<i>Stevenson</i>
-	-	1♠*	Pass
1♦*	Pass	1♥*	Pass
2♦*	Pass	3♣	Pass
5♣	End		

After the short club opener, transfer response and game-forcing 2♦ enquiry Ferrari knew that Ash had at most 3 spades and a reasonable 5-card club suit, so he bid to 5♣ – 1 off with the ♠A off-side. In the other room, with less information, EW just bid the normal 3NT. When South won the ♥Q he can count 5 clubs and 4 heart tricks so he must play partner for ♦A and a good enough spade holding to make 4 tricks.

Would North find the ♠J or ♠9 play after winning the ♦A? Who knows? South continued hearts. 10 IMPs out.

Then North had an 'app malfunction' on his ipad. He tried to click on the 'auction' button and so played the ♦3 instead of the ♦K. Another -10 IMPs, leaving the overnight lead a slightly worrying +32.

On day 2, after 4 flattish boards, we played in 5♠X, losing 800 when 5♥ was going off in the other room. We slowed their recovery by winning 21-12 on the next 10 boards - several tight defences to part scores. This was the last board of the first stanza :

Session 2, Board 16

	♠T6	EW Vul
	♥432	Dealer W
	♦A9754	
	♣972	
♠A		♠975
♥AKQ986		♥JT7
♦J6		♦KQT32
♣KQ64		♣83
	♠KQJ8432	
	♥5	
	♦8	
	♣AJT5	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Chambers</i>	<i>Commins</i>	<i>Dragic</i>	<i>Stevenson</i>
1♥	Pass	2♥	4♠
5♣	Pass	5♥	End

West knew about the heart support, so went to 5♣ over 4♣. Would you have found the only lead to beat 5♥?

We gained when North did not lead the ♦A. Their East player responded 1NT to their 4-card major opener, so that his partner felt that doubling 4♠ was the best way to get a plus score. Only +100 though, and 11 IMPs to us.

Session 2, Board 18

	♠AKT	All Vul
	♥752	Dealer W
	♦985	
	♣AJ74	
♠Q93		♠J872
♥A84		♥JT6
♦A6432		♦QJT7
♣32		♣T8
	♠654	
	♥KQ93	
	♦K	
	♣KQ965	

COMMINS hit back with a 'cheeky' 3=4=1=5 1NT. The ♦K scored at trick 1. East's ♣T at trick 2 was a Smith Peter, indicating a better-than-expected diamond holding, so West might get it right by continuing diamonds. But when he won ♥A he returned a heart, playing partner for the ♥Q entry to lead a diamond through. That was -12IMPs when our pair, knowing diamonds were wide open, opted for 5♣. Declarer might (should?) get hearts right by finessing the ♥9 – East is known to have ♦QJ so isn't West favourite to have the ♥A?

Session 2, Board 25

	♠Q54	All Vul
	♥864	Dealer W
	♦AT64	
	♣653	
♠JT63		♠K7
♥75		♥AKT3
♦Q8		♦K97
♣KQT87		♣AJ42
	♠A982	
	♥QJ92	
	♦J532	
	♣9	

Chris Chambers beat 3NT when East's 4-card Major 1♥ opener steered him into the diamond lead from Jxxx.

Session 2, Board 28

	♠J95	All Vul
	♥AKJ5	Dealer W
	♦AKQJ4	
	♣5	
♠AKT62		♠8743
♥4		♥Q98763
♦T2		♦9
♣Q9874		♣32
	♠Q	
	♥T2	
	♦87653	
	♣AKJT6	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Murphy</i>	<i>Dragic</i>	<i>Roderick</i>	<i>Chambers</i>
1♠	Dbl	4♠	4NT
5♠	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	6♦	End	

West went on to 5♠ over 4NT, which was right in that he would concede only 500 against a Vulnerable game but wrong in that it pushed NS to a making slam. Their NS stopped in 5♦, so we gained 13 IMPs.

Despite a very pushy – but making – game on board 29 the Commins team were only able to win the second half by 2 IMPs, leaving the overall score as 137 to 107.

This was my 3rd final (same for Miro but first for other two). We lost the first one by a mile, the 2nd on the last 2 boards. I was mightily relieved – but exhausted – by Sunday night.

Congratulations to the winners, ASH: Mike Ash, Robert Ferrari, Miro Dragic & Chris Chambers.


Commiserations to the Welsh runners-up; CoMMINS: Liz Commins, David Stevenson, Paddy Murphy & Mark Roderick.

A complete record of the match can be found on RealBridge.

Blind Spot 2

John Matheson

Board 32 from the Scottish Cup final on April 1st had some interesting features. (Rotated for convenience.)

Board 32	♠K8642 ♥KJT7 ♦9 ♣T92	EW Vul Dir W
♠QJT ♥42 ♦T754 ♣AKJ5		♠A953 ♥853 ♦Q86 ♣876
♠7 ♥AQ96 ♦AKJ32 ♣Q43		

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

*3♥ = forcing

Contract: 4♥. Lead ♣K.

West led the ♣K asking partner for count. Finding partner with an odd number, giving declarer one or three, West had a problem: does he play declarer for 1=4=5=3 and partner having the ♠A, or partner having the ♣Q and the ♥Q?

At one table West played partner for the ♠A and switched to the automatic Queen. This was allowed to hold and the ♠J followed which declarer ruffed.

Declarer had a blind spot here. He crossed to dummy in trumps and led a diamond to the Jack, which held.

He could still make by discarding dummy's clubs on high diamonds and cross-ruffing but took only one discard before ruffing a diamond.

He ruffed a spade and discarded a club on the ♦K which was ruffed by East. He returned his last trump to hold declarer to nine tricks.

A much simpler line after ruffing the second spade is to use the quality of the trumps to score them separately. Cash the ♦AK and try to ruff a third diamond low in dummy. If that passes off, you have four tricks and can make the other six high trumps ruffing spades and diamonds. This line fails only if diamonds are 6-1, or if East has two diamonds and the eight of hearts.

It was difficult for East to eat the ♠Q as West might have been trying for two spade tricks and two club tricks. There was more chance of his rising on the Ten or Jack of spades. In a difficult situation any partnership cashing the first four tricks is doing well.

At the other table West quite reasonably played Ace and another club. Declarer again missed the now even better crossruff line and played a spade to the King and Ace. Ruffing the spade return declarer then cashed a diamond and eventually made ten tricks.

Holding almost solid trumps usually make a crossruff an attractive line.

Lady Milne Trophy

Gints Freimanis

This year's Lady Milne was hosted by Scotland. Our traditional venue, the Holiday Inn in Edinburgh, has priced itself out of the market, so we moved to the Mercure Hotel in Perth. (Some of you may remember it as the City Mills.)

The weather was mostly warm and sunny which made for a very pleasant and picturesque location for those who decided to explore the city.

After winning this event in 2022 there was hope that this achievement could be replicated, and we could spare the trophy some travel mileage. An unfortunate match against Ireland on the Saturday morning made the task significantly harder, but the team did its best to come back and kept in contention throughout the event.

There were a lot of interesting and distributional hands which gave a lot of opportunities for IMPs to be exchanged. This one comes from our match against England. The contract at both tables was 4♥ by East.

Match 4 v England, Board 14

♠AJT6	NonE Vul
♥84	Dealer E
♦T73	
♣AQ53	
♠7543	
♥Q65	
♦T4	
♣J986	
	♠Q8
	♥AKT73
	♦AKQ92
	♣K
	♠K92
	♥J92
	♦J65
	♣T742

Sam and Anne, sitting NS, started off with 3 rounds of spades. East ruffed the third spade and led a heart to the Queen, then played two rounds of diamonds. She played the ♥A and ruffed a diamond. She led a club from dummy, but Sam won the Ace and played her fourth spade to promote Anne's ♥J for -1.

At the other table, the play started in a similar fashion, Abi ruffed the third spade, then played the ♥A and a heart to the Queen. She now played three rounds of diamonds off the top. When they split 3-3 she could draw the last trump and claim 10 tricks.

Both lines of play were looking at either diamonds being 3-3 or the player with 4 diamonds also holding 3 hearts. The only difference in play was that with diamonds 3-3 Abi did not allow for a scenario where North could get in and promote the ♥J in South.

Another good board was against Northern Ireland where both tables played in 3NT.

Match 3 v N Ireland, Board 15

♠Q974	NS Vul
♥A7	Dealer S
♦74	
♣KJ754	
♠T852	
♥T83	
♦KQ86	
♣A9	
	♠A3
	♥KQ62
	♦AJT
	♣Q632
	♠KJ6
	♥J954
	♦9532
	♣T8

Anne was declaring as East and received the defence of a small heart to the Ace, followed by a heart back which

she won. A club to the Ace and a club back brought 9 tricks.

At the other table, Fiona and Liz managed to beat the 3NT contract through a careful defence after declarer failed to find the winning line. The only lead to beat this contract legitimately is a spade. However, Liz had made a lead-directing double of the Stayman response and Fiona led the ♠T. Declarer immediately won the ♣A and led a heart towards her King-Queen. The ♥K scored and she played four rounds of diamonds with Liz pitching a club and a spade. Liz won the next heart and switched to a spade to Fiona's ♠J. Fiona played the ♥J, establishing her ♥9. Declarer had to lead a small club from her hand and go down.

Fiona created a swing against England with a nice deceptive bid.

Match 4 v England, Board 21

	♠A643	NS Vul
	♥AQ	Dealer N
	♦J5	
	♣QT853	
♠T92		♠K85
♥9543		♥8
♦K82		♦AT97653
♣AJ9		♣K7
	♠QJ7	
	♥KJ9762	
	♦Q	
	♣642	

The auction was:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Fiona</i>		<i>Liz</i>	
-	1♣	3♦	3♥
3NT	End		

North was persuaded that Fiona must have a heart stopper and led a club.

In the other room East overcalled just 1♦ but sacrificed in 5♦ when her

partner raised. That was doubled by Sam, and -1 brought 11 imps.

Wales were the only team allowed to play in 4♥ as NS. Theoretically this contract should fail, but the defence is quite hard to see. When clubs are played West must rise with the Ace on the first round to lead a spade. She did not.

This was an interesting board.

Match 3 v N Ireland, Board 24

	♠AT8	None Vul
	♥QJ952	Dealer W
	♦AK9	
	♣95	
♠KJ6		♠Q95
♥AK743		♥T86
♦-		♦JT743
♣AQ642		♣K8
	♠7432	
	♥-	
	♦Q8652	
	♣JT73	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	Dbl	End	

North seems to have an automatic double of 4♥ but she cannot beat the contract without some help from declarer! West never touches trump. She ruffs the ♦A lead and plays spades. She uses the ♠Q entry to dummy to ruff another diamond. She crosses to the ♣K to ruff a third diamond, thus making 5 trump in her own hand to go with two spades and two clubs. She now plays clubs, eventually making her tenth trick with dummy's ♥T.

No declarer actually found the winning line. They did not recognise the importance of making the small trump in

hand by ruffing. Some actually played a trump, giving North a chance that was not taken.

It is often best, when you have all the outstanding trump, to lead one, perhaps giving up a trump trick, to stop ruffs in dummy. Sam tried that, but it does not help here when declarer can lead clubs through North, restricting her to two trump tricks.

The SBU Team

As host nation Scotland had a second team in the Lady Milne this year. The SBU team, inexperienced at this level, struggled to score well. But they had their moments.

Match 2 v Wales, Board 20

	♠JT83	All Vul
	♥—	Dealer W
	♦Q854	
	♣K9843	
♠4		♠K72
♥A962		♥KJ875
♦AT976		♦32
♣AQ2		♣JT7
	♠AQ965	
	♥QT43	
	♦KJ	
	♣65	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	Pass	1♥	1♠
3♥	3♠	4♥	End

This was a typical auction to a perfectly respectable contract. South led a club, and when that finesse lost there were three inevitable losers in the side suits. The declarers had to play trump for no losers, so started with the ♥A. Which meant two down on this trump break.

Katharine Bailey did not fancy defending 4♥, so she 'sacrificed' in 4♠. East doubled, West led her trump. The

fortunate lie of the club suit allowed Amanda Douglas to establish the suit and make an overtrick for +990 and 13 imps.

The final table reads:

Lady Milne Trophy 2023		
1	England	67.07
2	Ireland	65.12
3	Scotland	58.72
4	Wales	53.27
5	N Ireland	38.91
6	SBU	16.91

The Scottish team:



Gints Freimanis (npc). Fiona McQuaker, Liz McGowan, Abi Milne, Sheila Adamson, Anne Symons, Sam Punch

The SBU team was:

Katharine Bailey & Amanda Douglas
 Lucia Barrett & Veronica Guy
 Joan Forsyth & Eilidh Rennie
 Jim Hay (npc)

Senior Camrose

The Senior Camrose for the Teltscher Trophy was hosted by Wales this year.

Scotland was one of only two teams that did not contain a Mixed pair this year. We made up for it with mixed results. We started with a big win over Ireland. The second match against Wales was a game of two halves: a good second half could not compensate for a rather unlucky first half. Then came a none-too-convincing win against Northern Ireland. On Sunday we held our own against England, but then had to face the second Welsh team. Wales has been our nemesis this season, and once again the WBU piled on the points in the first half. England were clear in first place, but a rally in the exciting second half saw us snatch third place behind Wales and ahead of Ireland.


Most top international partnerships nowadays favour a strong no-trump, 2/1 style, but 7 of the 18 pairs in the Teltscher were playing a weak no-trump. When the weak no-trump became popular, many years ago, it had a pre-emptive effect. Nowadays players cannot wait to intervene over it.

A weak no-trump was opened on 32 of the 160 boards in the Teltscher. It created few large swings. On deals where there was no interference strong no-trumpers opened one of a minor and took an extra round of bidding to reach the same spot.

There were a few minor swings on competitive boards. On the whole the weak no-trump seemed to hold its own, but off-beat efforts on a 5=4=4=2 distribution were mainly punished.


On a couple of boards the weak 1NT goaded opponents into a game they might not otherwise bid:

Match 2 v Wales, Board 27.

	♠65	None Vul
	♥T93	Dealer S
	♦Q842	
	♣AQ84	
♠T942		♠AKJ3
♥AKJ72		♥Q4
♦7		♦JT9653
♣JT6		♣3
	♠Q87	
	♥865	
	♦AK	
	♣K9752	

Our South opened 1NT and Tim Rees for Wales made an intrepid 2♣ overcall, showing both Majors. His partner bid 4♠, a contract that made easily, but one bid at no other table. Where South opened 1♣ East overcalled 1♥ and the spade fit never came to light.

Match 3 v N Ireland, Board 24.

	♠KQ6	None Vul
	♥AQ4	Dealer W
	♦T6	
	♣Q8542	
♠T73		♠A42
♥932		♥K65
♦9743		♦AKQ82
♣AKT		♣63
	♠J985	
	♥JT87	
	♦J5	
	♣J96	

Four Norths opened 1♣. East normally overcalled 1NT and played there. The two weak no-trumpers had mixed fortunes. At one table East passed. South escaped into 2♥ via Stayman and scrambled 7 tricks to gain 3imps.

Against Scotland East doubled 1NT and South ran to 2♥ showing both Majors. East re-opened with 3♦ and West bid a 3♥ stopper ask. The 19-count 3NT sailed home and Scotland lost 7imps.

John Matheson advocates a style where you should double 1NT for penalties whenever you have 14+HCP with a reasonable lead.

Match 1 v Ireland, Board 21.

	♠Q5	NS Vul	
	♥K63	Dealer N	
	♦KJT93		
	♣Q94		
♠963			♠AT74
♥JT874			♥A95
♦72			♦54
♣732			♣AT85
	♠KJ82		
	♥Q2		
	♦AQ86		
	♣KJ6		

Is this North hand worth opening? Three Norths thought so: two chose 1♦; the intrepid Tim Rees opted for 1NT. All three sailed into a normal 3NT. At a fourth table East opened 1♣, Alan Goodman overcalled 1NT and Brian Short raised him to game. No swings.

Where East opened 1NT. Neither South doubled. At this vulnerability West should probably pass – who minds losing a few 50s against a vulnerable game? Both Wests transferred into hearts. One North doubled 2♦, and his partner sprang to life with 3NT. The other North passed again and East was allowed to play in 2♥-2. 11imps to the English weak no-trump.

Many players avoid the weak no-trump for fear of a large penalty, but in this event there were none. This example of a double provided some amusement:

Match 1 v Ireland, Board 2

	♠Q83	NS Vul	
	♥KQJT	Dealer E	
	♦9854		
	♣Q5		
♠A7			♠T954
♥762			♥9843
♦AKJ3			♦72
♣AJ83			♣942
	♠KJ62		
	♥A5		
	♦QT6		
	♣KT76		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1NT
Dbl	End		

West's penalty double cannot be criticised, but the best he can do is to play ♦Ace-King other, establishing his ♦J as a winner and holding declarer to 8 tricks. He did not find that, and Derrick Peden made two overtricks for +580.

The other weak no-trumper fared less well. East pulled the double to 2♥. NS's agreements were that double would be takeout, so North had to pass that out. A sub-optimal defence allowed East to escape for -50.

The Irish NS play a strong no-trump, so the auction was:

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

The 1NT overcall cannot be criticised either, but this was not a good day. In 1NT West might make the same 5 tricks as were available in defence, but East tried to improve the contract. The defence was unhelpful and he lost 500. Only 2imps to Scotland.

The large penalties in the Teltscher had nothing to do with no-trump range.

Match 2 v WALES Board 20

	♠98	All Vul
	♥JT	Dealer W
	♦J8653	
	♣K862	
♠AK63		♠T
♥A9654		♥KQ8732
♦K2		♦AQT4
♣J7		♣53
	♠QJ7542	
	♥—	
	♦97	
	♣AQT94	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	2♠*	3♥*
4♥	Pass	Pass	4♠
Dbf	End		

2♠ = wide-ranging splinter raise

3♥ = 2-suiter, spades + a minor

South was perhaps over-enthusiastic about his 6=5 when the spade suit is so emaciated. But dummy was more suitable than he deserved, with spade fillers and a fit in clubs.

West led the ♥A. South ruffed and played the ♠Q to West's King, pinning the Ten. He ruffed the next heart and led a spade towards dummy. West won and played a third heart. When declarer ruffed that he had fewer spades than West. He could cash only one club before West ruffed and forced him again. That was 4 down, -1100.

There was a better line! Declarer sees 4 unavoidable losers. And if West has ♠AKT, or any 4 spades, as seems quite likely, the contract will be two down. A small gain when EW have at least 11 tricks in hearts. The focus must be on escaping for no more than two down.

South counters the threatened force by discarding a diamond at trick one, loser-on-loser. West may switch to diamonds but South has retained control. He ruffs the second diamond and plays a spade as before. The Ten is surely singleton, so declarer ruffs the next heart and plays clubs. Dummy can take care of a third round of hearts unless West plays a helpful spade. This way declarer always has at least as many trump as West. He retains trump control and holds the loss to 500.

The Double Dummy Solver says 4♠ should be -3, but that requires West to lead the ♦K.

These were the results:

Senior Camrose 2023		
1	England	72.07
2	Wales	53.16
3	Scotland	50.56
4	Ireland	46.59
5	WBU	46.25
6	N Ireland	30.47

Scotland's team:



Alan Goodman, Derrick Peden, Paul Maiolani, Anne Symons (npc) Robert Clow, John Hamilton, Brian Short.

Russell McClymont

SBU President 1995-96

Russell McClymont passed away recently after being diagnosed with cancer. I'm sure many of you will remember Russell from his involvement in Bridge as a Director and as a player.

Russell discovered bridge at home where he was taught to play by his parents. He was 9 when he first started to play and was soon partnering his dad at the local bridge club. He very quickly developed a lifelong love of bridge and all things bridge-related. While at school he was caught playing bridge when he was supposed to be doing homework and was taken to task by his housemaster. A couple of weeks later this very same housemaster asked Russell to make up his bridge four!

Post education Russell began farming sheep and cattle at Creebank, where he lived with his wife Anne and where they brought up their two children, Hazel and Donald. Russell was well known as a farmer and became involved in the National Farmers Union playing a prominent role on many committees. It was during this time that he became familiar with arbitration procedures and was a member of the National Panel of Agricultural Arbiters. It was these skills that Russell was later to take into the Bridge world. He also put his speech making skills to good use having won the Young Farmers National Speechmaking Competition in 1964.

During this time Russell played Bridge at Newton Stewart Bridge Club and in local and district Leagues. With a variety of partners he often travelled to play in National Bridge Events such as the Scottish Cup.

Having gained a Silver teaching diploma from the EBU in 1977, Russell taught many locals to play bridge and they in turn became members of the club. Little did he know that from this point he would become a well-respected Bridge Director at National level, starting his directing journey by running the Southern Bridge Congress in 1981. Charlie Bowman and the then SBU President Jim Allison invited Russell to be a rookie Director at Peebles Bridge Congress. From there he was invited to attend the first European Director's Course in Amsterdam, January 1982. He returned as one of five who had passed the exam to become a European Bridge Director.

Russell took over as Congress Manager at Peebles in October 1984 when the event was still scored by hand. Andrew Barnes arrived with his scoring programme in 1986. Russell and Andrew developed a rapport which meant that the Congresses were extremely professionally run. Always in the background was Russell's wife Anne who could be seen hurrying from one playing room to another, relaying slips of paper to the scoring room and helping to keep everyone sane.

From Peebles Russell became a 'well kent' face south of the Border, regularly involved in BBL congresses at Harrogate, becoming Chief TD at a number of Congress venues and becoming BBL President in 1999. He also very much enjoyed working with Anna Gudge, Secretary of the BBL.

As well as directing, Russell was there at ground level when computers began to be used to score bridge competitions. He wrote his own scoring programme which he used at many National venues as well as at his local club Newton Stewart and any regional competitions.

He often said that one of the main reasons he kept developing his own bridge programme was so that he could understand Andrew Barnes. Russell used his considerable powers of persuasion on the SBU in 1993, resulting in the purchase of a Duplimate machine. This was a game changer as far as he was concerned.

During the 90s Russell and Anne became involved as the Guest Entertainment Crew on P&O cruises. It was a phase of their lives which they thoroughly enjoyed. They ran the Malta National Championship in 1999 and Russell was one of a small group whose persuasiveness led to the dissolution of the BBL and the start of separate representations in Europe for England Wales and Scotland.

Russell was a very modest man and was delighted to be awarded the President's Prize in 1992 for his efforts to improve the standard of Tournament Directors in Scotland.

On retiring from farming he and Anne moved into Newton Stewart where they became very much a part of the local community. The farming life was ever with them though as they named their new house Creebank after their farm. Unfortunately Newton Stewart Bridge Club became a victim of Covid and, despite the efforts of the remaining members to re-open and offer face to face competition, the numbers were not sufficient to keep it running. Russell was still there playing every week until its closure although illness was starting to take its toll.

My memories of Russell are many but highlights for me are seeing him at Peebles dressed in his dinner suit always making sure that things ran smoothly but also having time to speak

to players. Russell moved from one playing room at Peebles Hydro to another very quickly so much so that Peter Van Dyke, then manager of the Hydro, on one occasion asked where the fire was.

His ready laugh is also something I remember and his patience when something went wrong at the club. We relied on him as our Mr Fixit at a local level while recognising his skills at a much higher level.

Russell is survived by his wife Anne, son Donald and his wife Donna and their children and son-in-law Chris and his children. Unfortunately their daughter Hazel passed away in 2014, aged 49.

They loved to spend time with their grandchildren who are now a support to Anne. Donald, also bridge player, played Junior Camrose with Alistair Macdonald and often partnered his father at bridge competitions

Russell will be sadly missed locally and it is not surprising that a huge number of people attended his Memorial Service on Tuesday 16th May 2023 to pay their respects to a well-liked member of the Community.

Valerie Marshall



Simon Muir



Simon came to Bridge relatively late, learning about the game from fellow-workers on the night shift at I.C.I. When he returned to more sociable hours he joined Falkirk Bridge Club, became hooked, and rose quickly through the ranks to become a Grand Master.

An early success was winning the Johnston District Master Pairs with Bridie Power in 1975. He won the Shenkin Individual in 1979. With David Perry he won the Senior Pairs, and also the Scottish Swiss Pairs in successive years. With Anne Symons he won the Helen Walton Mixed Teams. He won the Marion Hill Gold Cup Plate twice, with two different teams.

He had many other partners over the years; Kish Srinivasan, Dee Harley, JP Hamilton, Pam Stewart, Ian Patrick, Archie Leith, Jennie McCartney, to name a few. They, and others, benefitted from his patience, quiet, even temperament, kindness, generosity, and also his wry sense of humour.

If you were lucky enough to draw him in the Scottish Cup or any match that involved playing at home, his hospitality was legendary.

He was fine Bridge teacher as well as player and taught some classes in the Falkirk area.

Sadly, his health deteriorated in recent years and he was cared for in a Nursing Home till his death in March of this year.

Anne Symons

Play Challenge

Jim Patrick

1 NS Vul Dealer East

♠A642
♥Q84
♦QT64
♣AK

♠Q85
♥KT92
♦A75
♣QJ3

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

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♣2

You win the ♣A and play a heart to the King and a heart to the 8 which wins. Can you make East pay for his injudicious bidding and his misdefence?

2 EW Vul Dealer North

♠985
♥-
♦KT5
♣AKJT874

♠AT3
♥AK985
♦J62
♣92

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

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♠2

East wins the ♠K and returns a spade to the Ten and Jack. West switches to a small heart to the ♥T and your ♥A. You run the ♣9: West discards a heart and East ducks. How do you continue?

Solutions on Page 15

A New Approach to International Activities

An update from Mike Ash, Director of Selection.

You may have seen that the SBU board commissioned a Review Group to look at all aspects of how Scotland participates in international events. Although only a minority of SBU members are involved in these – the current database has about 120 names – competing on the UK, European and World stage takes up a significant share of the SBU's budget, even though the players themselves often make a contribution to the costs.

The Review made recommendations, which the Board supported. These were:-

- The Board will appoint a Director of Selection (DoS) who will be responsible for all aspects of international players' support, training and selection. The DoS will be answerable to the board but will be supported by a small group of experienced players who will advise on selection etc. (*The role was advertised but, in the absence of any applicants, I agreed to take it on.*)
- All Junior teams, including the new Under-31 category, will be part of the remit of the DoS.
- All activities will be designed to help players improve rather than just focus on Trials. Results from various performance events, including those outside of Scotland, will inform rather than determine selection.
- The SBU remains committed to supporting the various Home Internationals but will send teams to European Championships only if the available players are expected to achieve a reasonable result for Scotland or are younger players with the potential to improve. It is likely that there will be part-funding available for only 2 teams (out of 4 categories available).

Working with Marina Evans, Education Convener, we would like to increase the participation in schools, not least because this is the way we can develop players for the future. Many countries have 9- or 10-year-olds playing. To this end we are hoping to set up an Under 16 squad. If we can do this, we would like to send a team to the European Youth Championships in July next year.

You can help us in two ways:-

- 1 Do you know anyone who can **promote bridge in a local school**?
We have all the materials you would need to both explain the advantages of the game for developing minds and the equipment a person would need to start a club in a school. If you have any ideas – even a possible person to speak to – please contact Marina at education@sbu.org.uk
- 2 We need to raise money to pay for trainers and equipment to promote the game in both schools and universities. Would your club be prepared to run a **fundraising** event?

We will let you know about national simultaneous pairs we are running to support junior development in due course but any extra events – or even a raffle – would make a difference. Again, please contact Marina if you have an event planned or you or your club are willing to organise something.

Play Challenge Solutions

Jim Patrick

1 NS Vul Dealer E

	♠A642		
	♥Q84		
	♦QT64		
	♣AK		
♠KJT93		♠7	
♥J53		♥A76	
♦82		♦KJ93	
♣T52		♣98763	
	♠Q85		
	♥KT92		
	♦A75		
	♣QJ3		

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

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♠2

You win the ♣A and play a heart to the King and a heart to the 8 which wins.

This problem is a simple matter of counting East's hand. He must have 5 clubs and at least 4 diamonds for his double. From the play so far it is inconceivable that the hearts are not 3-3. He has at most 1 spade.

You have 3 clubs, 2 Aces, and can make 3 heart tricks. East surely has the ♦K and probably the Jack. You need to endplay him but if you play a heart now he can exit a club or a spade. Then your only entry to hand to cash the fourth heart is the ♦A. Exiting a diamond after that means you lose too many tricks - 1 heart, 2 clubs and 2 diamonds.

Cash dummy's club and spade winners before putting East in with a heart and he has to give you an entry to hand with a club. Cash your heart and play a diamond to the Ten.

2 EW Vul Dealer N

	♠985		
	♥-		
	♦KT5		
	♣AKJT874		
♠QJ62		♠K74	
♥QJ7643		♥T2	
♦843		♦AQ97	
♣-		♣Q543	
	♠AT3		
	♥AK985		
	♦J62		
	♣92		

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

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♠2

You duck two rounds of spades. West switches to a small heart to the Ten and your Ace. You lead the ♣9. West discards a heart and your ♣9 is allowed to score. What is going on?

West has led a 4-card spade suit even although he has a club void. He has a longer suit, which must be hearts, and his shape is surely either 4=5=4=0 or 4=6=3=0.

If the latter, you only need East to have the ♦A to get home. Cash your Major winners to strip East of exit cards and put him in with the fourth round of clubs. He will have to let you into dummy to enjoy your club winners.

Had West continued spades you could not have done it. East could win the first club and return a club to endplay dummy.

May 2023 Bidding Challenge

Iain Sime

Welcome to the Bidding Challenge. You are always South, playing with an excellent first-time partner.

The Editor gave me a choice of systems. Two of our regulars have vociferously argued for different methods. I am in the unhappy(?) position of being able to upset both of them. As I appeased the 15/17 Five Card Majors advocate last time, this time we revert to Acol, weak 1NT.

Problem 1 **Teams** None Vul

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

There was a rich source of bidding problems from the 2022 Lady Milne trial. It was a Pairs trial scored by cross imps. Let's start with half of the winning pair:

McGOWAN: 3♣. 1NT here usually has 8-10 HCP, but still opponents have about half the pack and lots of hearts. 3NT might be cold, or it might be decimated. If I settle for a pessimistic 2♣ it allows West another chance to find his fit. 3♣ might persuade partner to bid 3NT when it is making and may keep West quiet when it is not.

GORDON: 3♣. Too much missing for 3NT. 2♣ might be the winner.

PIPER: 3♣. And hope West doesn't bid 3♥.

Partner had ♠A4, ♥Q97, ♦QJT6, ♣8643. Those who bid 3♣ had better hope that they don't bid a hopeless 3NT or 5♣.

DRAGIC: 3♣. This hand has just become a single suiter.

MARSHALL: 3♣: This isn't meant to be an invitation, to bid on, but I have to do something. Maybe 3NT is the tactical bid? Yes, I think that is better. Can escape if, or rather when, axed.

That reminds me of a John Matheson "poker bridge" trap. If you think they are going to run from 3NT doubled, only double when your hand suggests that 3NT was going to make. Otherwise, Pass and pick up some imps for an easy down two. From the likes of:

SMITH: 3NT. Partner is showing about 8-10 with no major and is probably 3334 or similar in shape. I'm far from sure 3NT will make and will not stick it doubled. However, it doesn't need much in partner's hand for 3NT to come in especially with the strong hand on lead. In addition, if 3NT is not making then 4♥ must be a reasonable shot for East-West.

MURDOCH: 3NT. A heart trick on the lead and the diamond Ace = 9 tricks, on the other hand ...

ASH: 3NT. I am not sure that this 'shot' is the percentage bid, but I like to give opponents problems. It is quite likely that we have 9 tricks, but that East West can cash 5 tricks. East has a blind lead and that might also give me my 9th trick.

There was no lead that gave even an eighth trick. A heart from East's 5-card suit (who could have predicted that?) speeds up the play.

WILKINSON: 3NT. Of course, get your bids in first.

CLOW: 3NT. No point in messing around, partner has shown a decent hand by freely bidding 1NT over the double.

I am surprised that none of those who bid 3NT suggested 3♥ (surely an auto-splinter for clubs) en route. Partner can

then bid 3NT with a sound stopper, perhaps ♥KJx at worst. You are admittedly tipping off the opening lead, but it was 99% certain anyway.

There was another way to involve partner in the decision, which did not risk the 4-level:

SHIELDS: 2♠. We expect the opposition to have 9 hearts between them here, so that suit will be led and we really want to win that trick and have 8 cashing tricks to follow. We are offering only 6, so that makes game uncertain – but far from impossible, so we do want to show some strength. Although it is not a viable trump suit, bidding spades now shows extra strength and helps partner focus on the red suits. If partner bids 3♣ I can pass happily.

A couple of our recent juniors have learnt the value of plus scores. Maybe they can teach their elders.

FREIMANIS: 2♣. Seems like a reasonable bid with not a lot of additional values. If game is on, partner is likely to find another bid.

VALENTINE: 2♣. I don't see the case for much else. 3♣ overstates the value, if not the playing strength, of the hand.

SHORT: 2♣. I'm a bit of a wimp, but teams, non-vulnerable is not a huge loss if we can luckily make game. Vulnerable, with a greater reward, I might punt 3NT. The critical point is that opening leader will have 4 or 5 hearts so will probably make the correct lead. The problem is probably here because 3NT makes, but that's result merchanting.

Not this time. In the Lady Milne trial one pair bid each of the hopeless games, losing imps to those in club partials. East-West can make 9 tricks in hearts.

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

Problem 2 Teams All Vul

♠A7	S	W	N	E
♥5	-	1NT	Db1	2♠
♦JT8742	?			
♣QJ98				

1NT = 12-14. Db1 = PEN.
(Double would be t/o. Pass is not forcing.)

The biggest vote of the set was for 3♥ here. I doubt it shows a hand with this much playing strength. Partner would be entitled to pass with a minimum double, missing a vulnerable game.

MARSHALL: 3♦. This is a bit more suggestive of a decently long suit than going through 2NT would be in my opinion. If partner bids 3♥ now, he can make up his mind what to do over my subsequent 3♣.

MURDOCH: 3♦. If partner bids 3♥ I'll try to solve the problem by scratching my head.

SMITH: 3♦. I'll show what I have, a long suit and moderate values. If we belong in 3NT, it will play much better from partner's hand.

CLOW: 3♦. I suspect partner is about to roll out 4♥. My bits and pieces should help.

SHORT: 3♦. Hard to judge because if partner is an old Scottish "I can beat 1NT in my own hand" player I should do more, and if a sensible "double with a decent opening bid-plus" player 3♦ may be enough. I'm showing some values, so partner should move if strong.

WILKINSON: 3♦. Happy to compete in my best suit.

VALENTINE: 3♦. Bidding freely here should show additional values and partner will never play me for this good a hand if I don't take action now. Want to keep 3NT in the picture too.

ASH: 3♦. As Pass is non-forcing this bid must show some values. Partner will only bid on with a good fit or extras.

DRAGIC: 3♦. It feels wrong to jump to 3NT on a 6-4 hand.

Not only did it feel wrong, it was wrong.

FREIMANIS: 3NT. Assuming that double is about 15+HCP, this hand is too close to making a game, so I will take a bit of a risk as 3♦ probably would not be forcing.

Others who thought we were too strong for 3♦ avoided the 3NT trap.

GORDON: DBLE. Too much hand to bid 3♦. You don't promise hearts.

McGOWAN: 2NT. Where are the hearts? Not sure what 2NT means here, but I hope it suggests values in the minors. Maybe wrong-siding but seems the least revolting of my options.

SHIELDS: 2NT. In situations like this we need to be able to compete and we need to be able to force to game. I didn't have to bid so getting to 3♦ via 2NT indicates an expectation of making 9 tricks. Partner needs to double on a lot of hands to jostle them out of 1NT, so we cannot assume we have game on.

The majority would have been in luck. Partner would raise with ♠32 ♥AKJ4 ♦KQ965 ♣A7. With the ♣K onside, 6♦ would make. In the Lady Milne trial, four pairs reached 5♦, two went down in 3NT and one collected 500. 2♠ should have been held to 5 tricks, so 800 was possible.

Problem 2	Votes	Marks
3♦	12	10
Dbl	1	7
2NT	2	6
3NT	1	5
3♠	0	3
Pass	0	2

Problem 3 Teams All Vul

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

This one was a two-horse race with 2NT emerging as the panel's favourite. The noisiest advocates for each choice were:

SHIELDS: PASS. I have one hcp more than a weak NT, we are vulnerable, partner is a passed hand, they are not playing in my shortest suit – why would I ever think about bidding?

ASH: 2NT. What else? Passing allows them to talk us out of a possible game and this bid shows our strength and hand type.

It is a recurring theme of this feature that when somebody comments “what else?” about half of the panel bids “else.” The others were less dogmatic, with some even making a strong case for the bid they rejected. None more so than:

VALENTINE: 2NT. I think the case for pass is pretty compelling, so I will bid 2NT. My stop is flimsy, and partner is a passed hand, but I know myself and 2NT is the bid that I would make in the real world.

PIPER: 2NT. Reluctantly.

WILKINSON: 2NT This bid is probably completely unjustified and could cost a

lot, but I am not inclined to go through life assuming my partner has nothing.

DRAGIC: 2NT. Upgraded due to good clubs.

SMITH: 2NT. This is a 15+ balanced hand with a diamond stop. Passing is losing bridge at teams, and double with these major holdings is just wrong.

CLOW: 2NT. Either this or Pass, the lure of a possible vulnerable game wins.

MURDOCH: 2NT. No Trump might be better from partner's side, but I have a sound overcall.

I wonder what an unsound vulnerable overcall with a passed partner and unpassed opponent might look like. I might not be the only one:

GORDON: PASS. Too dangerous to bid 2NT. You could be sandwiched. Partner is still there.

SHORT: PASS. 2NT (or 3♣) are very dangerous opposite a passed partner, who will need to be absolutely maximum for us to make a game. And partner with very good shape may still protect of course. Note that to allow this, we must not tank before passing!

FREIMANIS: PASS. I could overcall 2NT, but it does not seem worth taking a risk. Would be more inclined to bid 2NT if partner was not a passed hand: the chance of missing game would be more significant.

McGOWAN: PASS. Might bid 2NT on another day, partner could have a suitable maximum pass, but it is too risky with only a single stopper.

The hand is from a BBO robot game. 3NT from your side made with care or a risky club Jack through West's ♣Qxxx. Passed partner had more than his (its') share - ♠AT85 ♥JT75 ♦Q5 ♣K32.

Problem 3	Votes	Marks
2NT	11	10
Pass	5	8
3♣	0	3

Problem 4 ... Teams NS Vul

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

Some of our panel were uncharacteristically conservative:

DRAGIC: 3♠. 3NT is tempting but a spade fit is more likely.

MCKAY: 3♠. Despite the lovely club stop, it's unlikely there's enough tricks in 3NT.

VALENTINE: 3♠. Don't see a case for anything else. The club King-Jack aren't good cards, so I have a working five count or so. Need partner to move over Three Spades to be happy in game.

They will make a plus score. Not the best possible plus score, but probably winning imps from:

FREIMANIS: 3NT. Passing out 3♣ doubled is very dangerous and sometimes could end really badly. However, we do have a decent enough club holding to give 3NT a try.

CLOW: 3NT. We could be missing a slam in spades, but my values are worth more playing in NT.

SHORT: 3NT. Three Spades is an underbid, and Four Spades is too committal. North is not guaranteed to have four spades after all. In any case 3NT is probably best. I think 80% of practical bidders will do this.

Some gave passing thought to successful and unsuccessful alternatives:

PIPER: 3NT. Horrible problem, 4♣, 3♠, 4♠, Pass could all be right.

WILKINSON: 3NT. As I probably have a club stop; the alternative may be to pass.

McGOWAN: 3NT. Pass could be right, but not if partner has a void club. This seems the most likely game if we have game. Blame Hammon.

Legendary American Bob Hammon is the traditional scapegoat for failing 3NT contracts. His doctrine- "if 3NT is a possible choice, bid it."

MARSHALL: 3NT. We might have a spade fit, but how do we find out that it is better?

SMITH: 3NT. 4♠ might be the better spot, but I want to be in this vulnerable game, and this seems the best way to make sure of that.

In a BBO teams match, partner had ♠A97 ♥AJ3 ♦KQT98 ♣T7. 4♠ had no chance but was only ever going one down. 3NT went two down at the other table, but GIB (Deep Finesse) would have made it. The winner was Pass and collect 500.

MURDOCH: PASS. No certainty we can make Four Spades even with a 4-4 fit. Opponents don't usually have their bid anyway.

GORDON: PASS. No game is assured.

ASH: PASS. The Law of Total Tricks suggests that there are 16 or 17 tricks available. So if we can make 10 in spades, they will be at least two off. With bad breaks possible, I will settle for a plus score.

SHIELDS: PASS. We might have game on and we might not, but my club values are not going to pull much weight in a spade contract and we have no source of tricks for 3NT. So defending stands out as the best option.

Problem 4	Votes	Marks
3NT	8	10
Pass	4	9
3♠	4	7
4♠	0	4
4♣	0	3

Problem 5 **Teams** None Vul

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

"You are always South, playing with an excellent first-time partner" (Conditions of Contest).

MCKAY: 4♦. 3NT is too risky when non vulnerable.

The only upside of 4♦ is that it might dupe West into believing that it is her partner who has the strong hand. So might the following:

GORDON: PASS. Why get involved?

SHORT: PASS. Good problem. I don't know my partner's pre-empting style, but these days, ♦Jxxxxx is possible. I considered 4♦, which might tempt them too high, but then remembered the ♦Jxxxxx possibility.

That was the abject last-time partner.

MURDOCH: PASS. Hope for a plus score; Queen-Jack to 7 diamonds and out produces a minus score in 3NT. King-Queen to 7 would be a miracle and that still might not be enough.

MARSHALL: PASS. Why take partner's bid seriously? He has, after all, asked me not to.

I am not sure what they expect partner to open if holding a standard first-in-hand, 3-level pre-empt at love all. Some gave partner the benefit of their doubt:

ASH: 3NT. Again, what else can we do? Playing with some people that I know we could be going down a lot but just occasionally even they have their bid!

SMITH: 3NT. With the first in hand NV pre-empts of some partners I would pass and wouldn't be surprised if the opposition could make game. However, if partner has any sort of sensible Three Diamond bid, 3NT must have chances.

Your "excellent first-time partner" should be delivering 6 tricks in 3♦. Our basic bidding discussion won't have discussed deviations from ♦KQxxxx in first seat at equal vulnerability. North had that and a bonus ♦J. With partner having a singleton spade and East's points under ours, 3NT and 5♦ made easily.

CLOW: 3NT. Hope we have nine runners.

FREIMANIS: 3NT. Expecting my spade holding to be a stop most of the time and partner is favourite to hold a good diamond suit for 6-7 tricks.

PIPER: 3NT. I would bid 3NT joyously, with aplomb and overwhelming benevolence for the world.

It is perhaps worth noting that 3NT has little chance if diamonds don't run. Five diamonds, however, may make opposite even Brian's feared ♦Jxxxxx, if accompanied by the club Ace and a singleton spade (that's still not six tricks partner).

DRAGIC: 3NT. It is obvious to bid 3NT if RHO passes. The 3♣ overcall did not change much for the worse - it is now more likely that club and heart finesses will work.

WILKINSON: 3NT. In case it makes.

All seven Lady Milne trialist pairs bid game. Two were further rewarded when West with ♠Jxxx "saved" in spades for

minus 1100. A couple of the 3NT bidders considered doubling:

SHIELDS 3NT. The options are to double or to play 3NT. If I double, declarer has very few tricks outside spades; but if they have 7 spades and we get end-played once or twice, it gets uncomfortable, while all partner needs is ♦KQxxxx and we stroll home in 3NT. Worth the chance.

MCGOWAN: 3NT. Tempted to double this time! 3NT is right opposite a classical pre-empt, but they have long gone out of fashion. If we have a diamond loser I should defend, but that is too big a view for me.

3♣ should be three down so a fewimps over even the less sceptical of the panel to:

VALENTINE: DBL. Maybe frisky but I have to do something, and I don't see any game being right. I will take my money.

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

Problem 6 Teams None Vul

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

1♥=5+ 2♠=Weak. 4♦ = Fit Jump, typically 3♥, 5+♦

If you knew that you were fiveimps ahead going into the last board of a major event, you would probably do this:

MURDOCH: DBL. 5♥ could very easily have three losers.

SHIELDS: DBL. Our hand is a NT shape and yes, we have an element of a double fit. But with such good clubs, where are the opponents going for tricks? I hope partner finds the trump lead at trick one.

SHENKIN: DBL Is 4♦ forcing thru 4♠ - likely not. You are unlikely to make 5♥ unless partner has a singleton spade. You do have good diamonds but the xx spades is a big negative. 5♥ might make but 4♠ is likely down when you have good clubs. It could be right to pass but I am not bidding 5♥.

DRAGIC DBL. We could have three losers in Five Hearts and I don't have a forcing pass available with this partner.

CLOW: DBL. Either red suit could bring in 11 tricks but the opponents are likely to go for at least 500. A slam might be on, but only if partner can bid again.

MARSHALL: DBL. Initial prospects of a successful 5-level contract, based on partner's minimum holding, don't seem too good, but I am better than minimum, and partner is still there if he is significantly better than he could be.

This was the last hand in the 2022 Soloway Teams Final, a recent addition to the American Nationals. Partner had ♠J ♥K62 ♦KQJT4 ♣7643, which is close to the worst hand possible. He had no reason to remove the double, you would collect 300, and lose 4imps to minus 450 at the other table. That would have been good enough to win by one imp. At the table, South misguessed in Five Hearts, losing 11imps and the Soloway Trophy.

ASH: PASS. I think this is the most challenging problem in this set. I can't see 5♥.making unless partner has a lot

more or a particularly suitable hand. He needs something like ♠Ax, ♥KQx, ♦KQxxx, ♣xxx – but with this hand he may well Double. But as in previous problems, at least I will get a plus score. Doubling myself is an option but this will discourage partner from bidding on with something like ♠x, ♥Qxxx, ♦KQxxxx, ♣xx.

GORDON: PASS. Forcing. I don't want to take this to the 5-level. Partner might.

Irving thinks Pass is Forcing. Like Barnet and Miro, I am not convinced. East is unpassed so they are not clearly saving. The following are going to have to solve the play problem:

MCGOWAN: 5♥. They may cash the first three tricks if East has found a 3-card raise, and suits may break badly. But it sounds like double fits all round, so more Total Tricks than usual.

FREIMANIS: 5♥. It seems like we should be able to make a 5♥ contract most of the time while there is great uncertainty over how many tricks we will be able to get while defending 4♠ doubled.

MCKAY: 5♥. Who knows what'll happen, but going for the penalty doesn't look like a big payday and bidding 5♣ might get you to a non-slam.

SHORT: 5♥. One of my favourite competitive bids, much to Alan's disgust. The danger is that East may well be very heavy in black cards and I can just about see a setup where Four Spades might make. At love all, players will not usually sacrifice risking -500. Slam for us is a long way away, and if partner has ♠void, ♥Kxxx, ♦KQxxxx, ♣Axx, he will bid a sixth.

Some thought 5♥ was not enough and were looking at slam.

WILKINSON: 5♦. I would like to invite six, but a few too many gaps perhaps....

partner with a spade void may well take it anyway.

SMITH: 5♣. I am certainly not passing or doubling. Do I just bid 5♥ or make a constructive noise on the way? 5♣ can only show club values as we have trump agreement, and for me to make a forward move he will know I have been encouraged by his diamond holding, so the problem suit must be spades.

VALENTINE: 5♦. Need to bid on here with partner's spade shortage and double fit. May as well keep partner in the loop as to how the hands fit together since we are on our way to 5♥ anyway. Could be very useful for partner to know what is right if opponents take 5♠.

PIPER: 5♣. Sound overbid; if my partner has only three hearts, I may make a deprecatory comment.

Save the comment for when partner did not support your 5-card major with three trumps in a competitive auction.

Problem 6	Votes	Marks
Dble	6	10
5♥	4	7
5♦	2	6
5♣	2	6
Pass	2	5

Problem 7 Teams All Vul

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

Another two-horse race, with a photo-finish. Again, there were some with misgivings and some without.....

PIPER: 2♦. Non Problem.

SHORT: DBL. Takeout - what else? To play that this 100% guarantees four hearts is simply daft and makes hands

like this unbidable. I'll accept the 4-3 fit if partner bids 4♥.

It looks like all roads will lead to an easy 3NT. This one certainly should.

SHIELDS: 2♦. The choice is between this and double, but that brings an expectation of four hearts and if partner's next bid is 3♥ then I am a bit stuck for a continuation. Partner might expect a 5-card suit for this but should not depend on that. I expect to follow up with 3♣ or a double if they bid 3♠ first.

MARSHALL: 2♦. Best of a bad bunch, a compromise, which, holding such a good hand, is a disappointment. But other efforts seem worse.

GORDON: 2♦. Normal – what I would have bid over a Pass by East.

MURDOCH: 2♦ Passing and then passing partner's reopening double may be the winning action. If partner raises to 3♦ I'll have to bid 3♥ so it could turn out nasty, but he may bid 3♠ which I can raise. Doubling tells a little lie about the heart suit. 4♥ with partner taking the force can lead to a loss of control.

ASH: 2♦ I think that Double is the only realistic alternative, but I don't think that it will be easy to untangle the auction when opener has 4 hearts.

WILKINSON: 2♦. Hoping partner's rebid will help.

VALENTINE: 2♦. I am fixed. Can't show support, 3NT is a punt, double should show 4-hearts here. Therefore, I make my most flexible call. 3♣ over 2♥/♠ should get us to the right strain.

Can anyone collect 1100 for a vulnerable game? Partner had ♠KQT3 ♥T74 ♦AQ6 ♣A43. Would she have passed a take-out double?

FREIMANIS: DBL. We certainly need to make a bid here as we have too many values, but 2♦ would promise a 5-card

suit. Will aim to make a 3♣ bid over partner's 2-level response and go from there.

McGOWAN: DBL. Tempting to bid 3NT – just needs a singleton honour in partner's hand and some tricks. But I had better try to find out a little more. 2♦ is possible, but the suit is not good enough for my taste. If partner bids hearts, I shall try 3NT.

DRAGIC: DBL. Shows four hearts unless very strong and flexible - which is the case now.

SMITH: DBL. The best of a series of bad options. I can always say sorry partner I had a diamond in with my hearts, but that excuse doesn't work well when playing online.

CLOW: DBL. Not perfect, but if partner bids 2♥ I will bid 3♣ and we will get to 3NT or 4♠. 4♥ will not be good as partner is likely to be forced.

My guess is that partner will bid 2NT over the double. So, has East dodged the bullet? Not always....

McKAY: PASS. And Pass again if partner doubles..

Problem 7	Votes	Marks
2♦	8	10
Dble	7	9
Pass	1	7
3NT	0	4

Problem 8 Match Points EW Vul

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

What is your lead?

Some chose a club. But which one?

SHENKIN: ♣6. I don't like any of the other suits, so I lead a club. Don't want to make it easy for declarer when he has ♣KQ9 or ♣AQ9 in dummy with ♣xx in hand.

SHIELDS: ♣6. There is a danger here that any suit chosen might help declarer. We have an expectation that partner has four spades, so life won't be easy for declarer, and we must take care to keep it that way. We want a safe lead, and we can focus on winning the board in the later play. Often one would lead a high club from this, but partner might well be short, and/or dummy might come down with ♠AKQ97. This is the most likely candidate for declarer's short suit, so we also have the potential with this lead of setting up a force.

Most club leaders selected the Jack. Miro was the only one to mention the alternative.

DRAGIC: ♣J. Prefer leading the Jack to a small club as 2♣ in this context does not have to be a real suit.

SMITH: ♣J. I'm not leading from either of my major suit holdings in this auction. The ♦A might strike gold, but, especially playing match points, I don't want to throw tricks on the lead.

CLOW: ♣J. Looks like the opponents have bid on minimum values so safety first. I expect partner has around 7-8 points along with 4 spades. I hope for the ♠A and a club trick to go along with my ♦Ace and ♠Q.

VALENTINE: ♣J. Process of elimination more than great excitement. Trump is out, as is heart. Diamond is too risky, so I will lead through dummy's suit and hope this can get partner in to fire diamonds through.

Diamonds are the unbid suit and we may need to cash out there before declarer takes pitches.

MURDOCH: ♦A. I think the field will lead a club so maybe that would be wisest if all you needed was an average.

Good point. Matchpoints trying to qualify and matchpoints trying to win have different strategies.

SHORT: ♦A. Almost anything (apart from a heart probably) could be correct. On balance, scoring diamonds before they are pitched on dummy's possible club winners, looks to be the best shot. The correct lead at the table will be favoured in the scores, but we would need to model this over 200 hands to determine the best answer statistically.

MARSHALL: ♦A. I do not wish leading Aces to be thought "normal", nor do I want to encourage such leads, but sometimes what else to lead? How many tricks do they have? Ten, 11 or 12, who knows? Likely 11, and partner might have the ♦K.

McGOWAN: ♦A. May blow a trick if declarer has Kx and partner has an entry. Everything else seems equally risky. A trump looks harmless but is unlikely to prevent at least one ruff in dummy and may make it easy to pick up partner's holding. The diamond works well when partner has the King and we can start forcing declarer.

I led the diamond Ace in a Melville club pairs, turning a good board into a bad one. Miro was right:

DRAGIC: Declarer is still the favourite to hold the ♦K.

WILKINSON: ♦A. I will just drop that singleton King of diamonds.

Nae luck. But the kingleton possibility is one reason why this seems wrong:

GORDON: ♦10. I decided to attack. Partner might not play the King if I lead

the Jack. Declarer might not play the King if it's in dummy.

Can one forfeit one's licence to underlead Aces v. suit contracts by doing it unsuccessfully in a bidding competition? There was another way to transfer the initiative to declarer:

ASH: ♠Q. This could 'blow' the trump suit but declarer may be getting it right anyway. I think hearts and clubs are out and I am concerned that the ♦A will cost a trick more often than the ♠Q.

PIPER: ♠Q. Tricky, ♠Q or ♣J? Probably the trump.

FREIMANIS: ♠Q. Nothing else appeals too much as the ♦A risks losing a trick. However, with a spade lead we might be able to shorten dummy's trumps and limit heart ruffs a little bit if partner has got the right cards.

I didn't consider the ♠Q. I entertained hopes that it would be a trick, e.g., partner has ♠Hxxx. Nobody tried it at the table so I cannot tell you the outcome. A strong declarer would place you with the diamond ♦A for the trump lead and plan accordingly.

I can tell you that the four defenders who led a club (two Jack, two six) beat 4♠. The three of us who led the ♦A didn't.

Problem 8	Votes	Marks
♣J	4	10
♣6	2	9
♦A	5	8
♠Q	4	7
♦10	1	4

Thanks again to the panel for their comments. Well done to Robert, Miro and Barnet for their top scores.

Panel Answers

May 2023

Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Top Scoring Choice	3♣	3♦	2NT	3NT	3NT	Dbl	2♦	♣T	Tot	
1=	Bob Clow	3NT	3♦	2NT	3NT	3NT	Dbl	Dbl	♣T	76
	Miro Dragic	3♣	3♦	2NT	3♠	3NT	Dbl	Dbl	♣T	76
	Barnet Shenkin	3♣	3♦	2NT	3♠	3NT	Dbl	Dbl	♣6	76
4=	Finlay Marshall	3♣	3♦	2NT	3NT	Pass	Dbl	2♦	♦A	73
	Douglas Piper	3♣	3♦	2NT	3NT	3NT	5♣	2♦	♠Q	73
6	Harry Smith	3NT	3♦	2NT	3NT	3NT	5♣	Dbl	♣T	72
7	Tony Wilkinson	3NT	3♦	2NT	3NT	3NT	5♦	2♦	♦A	71
8	Patrick Shields	2♠	2NT	Pass	Pass	3NT	Dbl	2♦	♣6	70
9	John Murdoch	3NT	3♦	2NT	Pass	Pass	Dbl	2♦	♦A	69
10=	Mike Ash	3NT	3♦	2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass	2♦	♠Q	68
	Liz McGowan	3♣	2NT	Pass	3NT	3NT	5♥	Dbl	♦A	68
	Ronan Valentine	2♣	3♦	2NT	3♠	Dbl	5♦	2♦	♣T	68
13	Brian Short	2♣	3♦	Pass	3NT	Pass	5♥	Dbl	♦A	64
14	Gints Freimanis	2♣	3NT	Pass	3NT	3NT	5♥	Dbl	♠Q	63
15	Irving Gordon	3♣	Dbl	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	2♦	♦T	58
16	Tim McKay	2NT	3♦	2NT	3♠	4♦	5♥	Pass	♠Q	56

Competitors Top Scores

This was a really tough set to score well on, so particular congratulations to

Ken Rae of Lerwick BC, on outscoring most of the panel with **72**.

Other good scores:

Alasdair Adam	(Stirling)	69
Moyra Forrest	(New Melville)	62
Marilyn McDonagh	(Carlton)	62
Bob Brown	(GBC)	59
Janice Thomson	(Doon)	59

SBNews Bidding Panel Problems

July 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 July, 2023

Problem 1 Teams None Vul

♠AK92	S	W	N	E
♥AKJ85	-	-	-	P
♦KT	?			
♣K5				

Problem 2 Teams All Vul

♠KJ4	S	W	N	E
♥AK86	-	-	-	P
♦AJ72	1♥	P	3♠*	P
♣Q8	?			

3♠ = Splinter raise

Problem 3 Teams NS Vul

♠-	S	W	N	E
♥T73	-	1♠	P	3♠*
♦AKJT3	?			
♣K7642				

3♠ = 4-card raise. 0-5, Bergen style

Problem 4 Teams None Vul

♠A65	S	W	N	E
♥AT7542	-	-	P	P
♦AQ	1♥	P	1NT	P
♣KQ	?			

Problem 5 Teams None Vul

♠AT643	S	W	N	E
♥J			1♦	P
♦A763	1♠	2♦*	X*	3♥
♣A64	?			

2♦ = ♥s + ♣s

X = 3-card ♠ support

Problem 6 Teams EW Vul

♠2	S	W	N	E
♥K9	-	-	2♦*	2♥
♦KJT94	?			
♣AKQ92				

2♦ = Weak 2

Problem 7 Teams NS Vul

♠8	S	W	N	E
♥KQ93	-	-	1♠	1NT
♦96	?			
♣AT9743				

Problem 8 Teams NS Vul

♠Q2	S	W	N	E
♥KT976			P	2NT
♦7642	P	3♥*	P	4♠
♣K6	P	4NT	P	5♦*
	P	6♠	End	

2NT = 20-21

3♥ = transfer to spades

5♦ = 1 / 4 Keycards

What is your lead?