

2022 Bronze Bidding Challenge: August

These problems come from the European Youth Championships in July. Our thanks to Iain Sime for volunteering to join the panel.

Problem 1 Teams: None Vul, Dealer West

♠Q64	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥AKJ2	1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
♦KT743	?			
♣5				

When I pick up this particular distribution I open 1♦ with some trepidation. Occasionally partner responds 1♥ and I raise with a sigh of relief. Occasionally she responds 1NT and I pass quite happily. Very rarely she responds 2♣ and I have to rebid this grubby diamond suit. Mostly she responds 1♠.

Mike sums up the options, and opts for rebidding the grubby suit, hoping 2♦ will not end the auction:

BARON: 2♦. There is no right bid here. 2♦ should promise a 6-card suit; 2♥ is a reverse showing 15+HCP; 2♠ suggests a 4-card suit. The opposition are quiet so partner may have points and will bid again. Your 3rd bid will be easier. 4 spades with a 4=3 fit may be the best contract but no need to suggest it at this stage.

Most of the others choose the 3-card raise as the lesser lie, as suggested up by Russell:

FRAME: 2♠: Least bad of a few options - I'd prefer 4-card spade support but I do have ruffing values in clubs; 2♦ is not attractive with KTxxx and I am not strong enough for a reverse bid of 2♥.

MALE: 2♠. 2spades, even though it's a 3-card suit, the singleton club makes a suit contract favourable.

As Douglas Piper was wont to say: "Better to lie about your distribution than to lie about your strength."

Peter has a personal view of reverse bids: for him they do not exist.

EDMOND: 2♥. Yet another example of why I do not employ / teach reverses and I just bid 2♥ showing a maximum of 17 HCP.

Alas, a reverse is not a convention – it is a bridge reality. It forces partner to give preference at the 3-level. Peter's partners are allowed to Pass 2♥ – but what can they do with a weak hand and a doubleton heart? The other problem with the style is that when you have a stronger hand you have to rebid 3♥, reaching an uncomfortably high level with less room to investigate the best game / slam.

Most players require extra values for a 2♥ bid here.

(Some may suggest opening 1♥, planning an easy rebid of 2♦. This solves some problems but creates others: how do you feel about a 4-2 trump fit?)

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♠	7	10	16
2♦	1	7	23
2♥	1	4	14
3♠	0	2	3
1NT	0	2	1
3♦	0	1	1
5♦	0	1	1
3♥	0	1	1

Partner had J987 T2 A54 A987. An easy pass of the single spade raise, making at least 9 tricks. Over a 2♦ rebid most felt they owed partner another bid. 3♦ is a fine spot, but our team discovered that 3NT was too high. Half the Under-31s had to cope with interference on the first round; best scores went to the pairs that passed out 2♠ and jumped on the chance to double when opponents re-opened.

Problem 2 Teams: None Vul, Dealer East

♠KT9854	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥865	-	-	1♣	2♥*
♦6	?			
♣Q84				

* weak jump overcall

This is really a question of style. To bid or not to bid? The panel splits into two camps. Boldly going:

GALLACHER: 2♠. As dealer I would happily open 2♠ with this hand. I might only get this one opportunity to bid if North supports South.

FRAME: 2♠: This is a real stretch but I'm persuaded by my 6-card suit and the vulnerability. I can pass 3♣ from partner with my 3-card support.

More cautiously passing:

SANDERS: Pass. Give me the ♠Q extra and I would respond 2♠. More pertinently, what action do I take if partner re-opens with a double or 3♣ on the next round of the auction?

HAMILTON: Pass. If partner re-opens I might need to jump in spades.

The best action depends on how strong partner is: if they have a weak hand you should bid now; if they are strong enough to re-open with a double you do best to pass, then jump to game. Frustrating!

An overcall sometimes compels you to respond at an uncomfortably high level. For example, after 1♦ (1♠) you might have a 5-card heart suit in a hand not strong enough for a forcing 2♥ bid. Many players use a negative double, followed by 2♥ on the next round, to show this type of hand. Iain hopes this applies here:

SIME: Dbl. I could Pass, but might be fixed by whatever happens next, eg 4♥ by North. I am an Ace light for 2♠ on this round. Double then spades shows a weaker hand with 5+ spades.

It is perhaps unlikely, that you will be allowed to bid 3♠ next time. Should 4♠ over 4♥ by opponents, or 3NT by partner, show the 6-card suit in a weakish hand?. Something for partnership discussion.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
Pass	5	10	12
2♠	3	9	36
Dbl	1	8	9
3♣	0	4	1
3♠	0	2	1

Partner had A AK8 AQT5 K9853. (A few Under 31s opened this 2NT.) Clubs broke badly, 3NT did not make. The best game was 4♠. Our East expected rather more from 2♠ and drove to an unsuccessful slam.

Problem 3 Teams None Vul, Dealer West

♠KQ83	West	North	East	South
♥AJ5	1♦	Pass	1NT	Pass
♦A543	?			
♣Q8				

Some of you may remember my June rant about what to open with a balanced 15+ and 4-4 in the red suits. Naturally questions were asked about the 1♦ opener: why not 1♠?

There is a difference between opening 1♥, when you are guaranteed to find a Major suit fit if one exists (partner will raise hearts or bid spades if held); and 1♠, where partner, with no spade fit and lacking the values for a 2-over-1 response, must bid 1NT, leaving you to guess whether to invite game or not.

When you are 4-4 with spades and a minor a reasonable approach is to open 1♠ with a minimum 15 that can pass a 1NT response happily enough; or a good 17 that is worth a raise. With in-between values you may prefer to open the minor, planning to rebid 1NT over partner's 1♥ response, transferring the guess. Here the guess transfer ploy has failed, but you do know that partner does not have a 4+card Major. Should you invite game or not? The panel splits again.

HAMILTON: 2NT. I'll risk going down in 2NT for a chance to make game.

MCKAY: 2NT. I invite, but it depends in part on how strong partner's 1NT can be. If she can bid 2♣ with a good 9-count then I would pass.

SANDERS: Pass. Playing a weak no-trump partner's 1NT response shows a hand not strong enough to go to game opposite a minimum strong NT (15-17). Note: since East does not have diamond support or a Major they must have club length, so should not have 9 HCP since this is enough for a 2♣ response.

I think partner needs at least 5 good clubs to respond at the 2-level with a 9-count. A 3334 distribution, even 3343 with a poor diamond holding, may bid 1NT.

MALE: Pass. Flat shape, partner has to be maximum for game to have any chance, not worth an invite non-vulnerable even at teams.

SIME: Pass. Bidding 2NT seems more likely to turn plus into minus than to reach a making game. Partner will need tricks from the minors and my hand is not a lot of help. Even 1NT might be a struggle after a (quite likely) heart lead. Imagine something like Ax, xxx, QJx, xxxxx. And that is not even a minimum.

If we are picking specific cards... how about JTx, QTx Tx KJTxx? But I tend to agree: the chance of going one down in 2NT seems greater than the chance of reaching and making a non-vulnerable game

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2NT	5	10	32
Pass	4	9	19
3NT	0	3	5
2♠	0	1	4

Partner had 92, Q62, QT9, KT765. He sagely passed the raise to 2NT, but even 1NT was too high on a spade lead. The strong no-trumpers in the other room made overtricks in 1NT with a friendlier defence.

Problem 4 Teams EW Vul, Dealer South

	West	North	East	South
♠A864	-	-		Pass
♥-	?			
♦T9				
♣AJT9743				

Only three options here. Danny, npc of our Under 26 team, loyally makes the bid chosen by our West.

HAMILTON: 3♣. I recognise this hand! I remember applauding the 3♣ bidder as it led to a rare success, though actually it looks a bit too strong. But it's the right position / vulnerability so I'll stick with 3♣.

As Danny points out, a pre-empt in second seat vulnerable should be sound. Most of the panel feel that the 7-4 distribution and rich controls make this just too sound.

BARON: 1♣. 3 first round controls and a 7-card suit make this a powerful hand – slam is a possibility. Open 1♣ to find out what partner has.

MCKAY: 1♣ I don't like to pre-empt with 2 Aces and a club suit of good quality.

SANDERS: 1♣. It's fine to open this hand at the 1-level. You have a pair of Aces, a great 7-card suit and an outside 4-card major. One of the criteria to use when opening at the one-level is to consider if you mind if partner penalty doubles opponents later in the auction.

A third group feels that this hand does not suit either opening:

GALLACHER: PASS. I have a 4-card major and 7 clubs and plenty of time to show the clubs. If my partner bids spades I have good support.

EDMOND: PASS. I don't like opening 3♣ here with a 4-card spade suit so Pass and await developments.

It is hard to see how passing will make the hand easier to bid next time. A delayed entry to the auction generally shows a hand without opening values but with compensating distribution – but how will you cope if opponents have bid to the 3-level in a red suit? If you choose to bid 4♣ why not open 4♣? Over the years I have found that it pays to get into the auction early with weakish unbalanced hands – if there is a misfit you can generally stop low. Once both opponents have there is a greater risk losing a large penalty

In general a 7-4 distribution should try to play in the 7-card suit – here your hand may not play well in spades unless partner has a very good suit and can establish and run the clubs – which may be hard to do if your hand is forced to ruff early.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
1♣	6	10	38
3♣	1	8	15
Pass	2	6	6
1♠	0	1	1

Partner had 32, K842, AK74, Q52. Our man opened 3♣, RHO overcalled 3♥, so East bid 3NT. Opponents bid 4♥ over that, offering a 500 penalty. Our hero now realised he had underbid a tad and compensated with 4♠! 5♣ played very nicely, with 3NT failing on a heart lead when the club finesse loses.

Competitors Top Scores

Lots of new faces this month – I wish you all success in the new season.

2* Master	Charles Fogelman	GBC	40
	Will Iles	Stewartry	37
1* Master	Roy Heanes	New Melville	35
	Robin MacPherson	New Melville	34
	Tina Peowrie	Stewartry	33
Master	Marilyn McDonagh	Carlton	38
	Pam Warner	New Melville	37
	David Edelman	Maccabi	36
	David Hartley**	St Andrew	36
	Neil Bulleid	Buchanan	35
	David Olive	Caledonian	34
	Alan Kirk	Bearsden Academy	33
	Alex Sutherland	New Melville	31
District Master	Alastair Kerr	New Melville	39
	Alan Morrison	GBC	39
	Graham Vincent	Linlithgow	39
	Rosemary Jamieson	Carlton	38
	Ken Latham**	Carlton	38
	Alan Paterson	Johnstone	38
	Jean Cousins	Buchanan	36
	Paul Kerr	Troon	35
	May Armour	Kyle	34
	Sheila Ritchie	Dundee	34
	Quentin Stephens	Aberdeen	34
	Susan Young	Fort Matilda	33
	Tony Goldberg	GBC	31
	Peter MacLaren	Colinton Castle	30
Local Master	Gavin Easton	Longniddry	36
	Angela Ford	Maccabi	36
	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	36
	Peter Beckett	New Melville	35
	John Ramsay	Carlton	35
	Nicola Corbyn	Berwick	34
Club Master	Helen Adamson	Kirkcaldy	39
	Jacky Lindsay	New Melville	37
	Stephen Carr	Ness	36
	Ron & Fi Gill	Montrose	36
	Linton Horsfall	Carlton	34
	Vicky Rennie	Buchanan	31
	George Stevenson	Kilwinning	30
Novice	Andrew McBride	GBC	38
	Anthea Phillips	Prestwick	35
	Ian Lowson	New Melville	34
	Ena Cochran	Buchanan	31
	Fiona Lewis	St Andrews	31
	Martin Tolhurst	Ness	31

**Congratulations to David and Ken on moving up a rank