

2022 Bronze Bidding Challenge: October

A selection of problems from the National League, weekend 1.

Problem 1 Teams: EW Vul Dealer West

♠K63	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥AKQ4	1♣	Pass	1♠	2♦
♦J	?			
♣KQJ85				

Most of the panel make the bid they would choose without interference.

SANDERS: 2♥. Pass would indicate a minimum unbalanced hand with less than 3-card spade support. So forcing partner to give preference at the 3 level shows extra values and, with this hand being so strong, can even follow it up with a 3♠ bid exactly describing the hand.

HAMILTON: 2♥. A natural reverse. Could also double but I think reversing is better as it shows our strength. The most likely game is 4♠.

The hand is indeed perfect for a reverse, planning to pattern out with 3♠ next time to show this precise shape. The worst that might happen is that we reach a 4-3 spade fit opposite a very weak hand.

Steve believes he can describe the hand faster with a takeout double.

MALE: DbI. Perfect hand with diamond shortage, 4 card heart suit and 3 cards in partner's suit.

It is often the case that 'double' means exactly what the doubler wants it to mean, no more and no less. What should West bid with something like K3 AK4 J42 AQJ85: 18 points and no sure diamond stopper?

SIME: DbI. Take out for me, but, even if we play that double shows 15/19 balanced without a stopper, this hand is close enough.

A third opinion:

MCLEOD: In this position, this should be a support double, showing exactly 3 spades. If partner runs from spades they only have 4 of them and you'll play 3NT or 5 Clubs (outside chance of slam). If they are happy with spades, it's just a matter of whether you're playing in 4♠, or slam. There is no point in bidding 2♥. If you have an 8-card heart fit you also have an 8-card spade fit, since partner would respond 1♥ with 4-4 in the majors. Maybe if partner is 5-5 in the Majors, you're playing in an 8-card fit rather than a 9-card fit, but with the heart suit running, it might be preferable as a side suit anyway.

SBU Standard has not yet adopted Support Doubles! It is true that if partner has 4 hearts they will also have 5 spades, but you can find that out just as well by rebidding 2♥ – partner will rebid spades with a 5+card suit unless he can raise hearts with 4 cards.

Peter sticks with his idiosyncratic style (we all have our idiosyncrasies):

Edmond: 3♥. Jump shift rebid showing 18+ HCP with 3-card spades a bonus.

Many of the competitors agree, which rather worries me. It should not be necessary to jump when a simple bid is forcing for one round. (See my effort in the September Monthly News, inspired by some of the competitors' answers to this event.)

3♥ may make it hard to reach your 5-3 spade fit – are you going to bid 4♠ if partner responds 3NT? For most expert players the jump to 3♥ would be a splinter bid, a shortage agreeing partner's spades. Something like KQxx x Ax AKxxxx.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♥	5	10	16
DBL	4	9	4
3♥	1	4	13
4♠	0	2	2

Partner has QJ742 T653 A 972. Both major suit games look reasonable, but 4♥ fails on a 5=0 trump break. 4S has better chances: spades break 4=1 but North has the singleton Ace. Opponents may 'sacrifice' in 5♦ – they do have 11 diamonds between them – and that actually makes!

Problem 2 Teams: **EW Vul,** Dealer **North**

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠J76				
♥92	-	1♥	Pass	Pass
♦QJT92	?			
♣AQJ				

They say you should never defend a 1-level contract, but like most 'nevers' that is an over-simplification. Half the panel choose to pass.

BARON: PASS. North may have big hand and find a game. The club holding is not worth 7 points. At pairs I may be tempted but not teams.

FRAME: PASS: Partner hasn't doubled or overcalled so I'm worried that LHO has a big hand, possibly with spades, and I give them the chance to bid game - I also have an 8-loser 11-count, not enough to enter the auction in the protective seat IMHO.

MCLEOD: PASS. Every day of the week and twice on Sunday. If you said anything else, you're probably one of my Juniors.

MALE: PASS. At this form of scoring. Only 3 spades is not good. And if partner can't overcall over 1♥ ...

Partner's silence is indeed worrying. Might he have a heart stack? How would you feel if you re-opened with a double and he passed?

For the rest of the panel re-opening is automatic, the only question is how? Danny bids 2♦ without comment, but he is alone. The others all trot out the 'flexible' double.

SANDERS: DBL. No need to put all your eggs in one basket with a 2♦ overcall, bring all three suits into the game not to mention NT too, with a takeout double.

Iain is aware that this might not work too well:

SIME: DBL. This (partner 3=4=3=3) is how to find your 3/3 fits! (They are very difficult to defend against).

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
PASS	5	10	8
DBL	4	9	12
2♦	1	7	15

Partner has KT92 AT85 AK5 32, surely maximum for the Pass. You can make 3NT on this occasion, but it is not clear how to get there.

Problem 3 Teams: **None Vul** Dealer **East**

	West	North	East	South
♠-				
♥KJ7653	-	-	1♠	Pass
♦QT64	2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
♣A74	?			

We have made a normal 2-over-1 response with 10+HCP. What should we do when partner rebids their suit? Iain lists the not-very-appealing options:

SIME: 2NT. Least of evils - right on values but a spade short. Other (im)possibilities:

- Pass – risks partner playing in a 5/0 fit with FOUR better strains
- 3♦ – game-forcing, so way too much,
- 3♥ – OK on values, but the suit is so poor that we will average nearly three trump losers.

HAMILTON: 2NT. I may regret this when partner bids 3♠, but unless he is 6133 we should be OK, I hope.

One panellist decides to rebid the ropey hearts:

TUDOR: 3♥. If I say 3♦ partner might well say 3NT, which I don't want to hear. I'd prefer a better 6-card suit for the bid but passing seems a bit cowardly. Although I suspect it might be the winning call!

The others decide that enough is enough:

MALE: PASS. When in a hole stop digging.

Good advice, as a rule. Clearly best if you have a modicum of support for partner. But with no support at all do you not owe partner another bid? This is particularly problematic when you bid the suit immediately below partner's, as here. On a good day partner raises hearts, or rebids 2NT. Most days their only choice is to rebid spades, often with a 5-card suit, because a new suit at the 3-level would be forcing to game. So before you respond to 1♠ with 2♥, (or to 1♥ with 2♦) decide what you will do when partner rebids 2♠ (or 2♥).

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
PASS	5	10	10
2NT	4	9	9
3♥	1	7	4
3♦	0	4	10
3♣	0	3	1
3NT	0	1	1

Partner has KQJ985 4 KJ5 QJ5 so all games are hopeless. As the cards lie both 3H and 2S are likely to make, though both fail on double dummy defence.

Problem 4 Teams: NS Vul Dealer West

♠T842	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥Q97	Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
♦A87	?			
♣AJ7				

This one produced more answers than I have ever seen in this event.

You have sensibly passed your 4=3=3=3 11 count, so, whatever you do, partner knows your hand is limited.

The most popular choice was:

GALLACHER: 1NT. With a 4-card spade suit and 10hcps I am happy to bid 1NT here.

You may be put off no-trump by the lack of a spade stopper, but that should be the least of your worries. The chances are that partner has an honour, which will be enough to stop the suit; if short in spades partner will remove 1NT; and when LHO has 3 spades to an honour and they can cash 5 spade tricks he may bid 2♠. Some think 1NT is not enough:

HAMILTON: 2NT, natural. Since we play a weak NT partner will either have 15+ or be unbalanced, so should be fine. Small risk we are off 5+ spade tricks but I can live with that.

Others decide to emphasise their diamond support:

MCLEOD: 2♠. When forced to lie, lie about your shape and not your strength, then make the lie about minors. An Unassuming Cue Bid (or at least, a bid that is obviously artificial) seems the safest option. Partner will know you have a maximum pass, and yes, they'll expect an extra diamond. But they won't go past 2/3NT if they have a spade control, and they won't go past 3♦ with a poor hand. You may think T842 constitutes a "stop" – are you jumping to 2NT to show your strength? Seems unnecessarily risky to me.

SANDERS: 3♦. (Or 2♠, whichever shows a good raise in diamonds.) If partner only has a 4-card diamond suit they will be strong balanced i.e. 15+HCP, so 3NT comes into the picture. Otherwise they will have a 5-card suit and if strong with a singleton, 5♦ becomes a prospect.,

Two panellists preferred not to bid at all

FRAME: PASS. Hoping that partner is good enough to reopen the bidding and I can then show my maximum pass and explore game options, possibly 3NT if partner has a few big cards in spades.

BARON: PASS If E re-opens with double, cross fingers and pass!

I am not sure this is a winning action. If partner has a balanced 15-16 will they find another bid? And what if LHO raises spades? As for passing 1♠ doubled – that is too rich for me!

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
1NT	3	10	5
2NT	2	9	11
2♠	2	8	1
3♦	1	7	2
PASS	2	5	3
2♦	0	4	6
DBL	0	3	4
2♣	0	2	3

Partner has KJ AKJ4 KQJ64 5, so 3NT is an easy make – if you bid NT he should raise to game, trusting you to guard the clubs. 5♦ is also fine on reasonable breaks.

Competitors Top Scores

This was a tough set, and nobody managed a perfect score. Special congratulations to Roy Heanes for his 39. Everybody who achieved 25 or more deserves a mention.

2* Master	Will Iles	Stewartry	37
	Charles Fogelman	GBC	31
1* Master	Roy Heanes	New Melville	39
	David King	Berwick	26
Master	Marilyn McDonagh	Carlton	34
	Pam Warner	New Melville	31
	Brian Rattray	Oban	30
	Jane Smithson	Berwick	30
	David Hartley	St Andrew	27
	Neil Bulleid	Buchanan	26
District Master	May Armour	Kyle	37
	Quentin Stephens	Aberdeen	35
	Rosemary Jamieson	Carlton	33
	John Smithson	Berwick	32
	Graham Vincent	Linlithgow	32
	Sheila Ritchie	Dundee	31
	Alan Paterson	Johnstone	29
	Paul Kerr	Troon	27
	Jean Cousins	Buchanan	25
Local Master	Liz Forbes	Oban	36
	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	35
	Chris Mickley	Nairn	34
	Peter Beckett	New Melville	32
Club Master	Helen Adamson	Kirkcaldy	32
	Fiona McCourt	Bearsden Improvers	30
	Jacky Lindsay	New Melville	26
Novice	Evelyn Watson	Stepping-Stone	30
	Wilma Currie	Kilmacolm	29