

Improvers' Bidding Challenge 18 – January 2020

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We have input from a panel of 9 bridge teachers for our latest challenge which appears to have been extremely difficult as there were 41 different answers for the 4 questions! Challenge 19 details appear elsewhere in this magazine and will also be posted on the SBU website – if you are a Bronze category player, please have a go and submit an entry. Let's see what our panel of teachers has to say:

Problem 1 Teams NS Vul

	N	E	S	W
♠ AKJ4	-	-	-	2♥*
♥ A62	Dbf	Pass	3N	Pass
♦ KQJ62	?			
♣ 4				

*weak

Apologies to anyone who answered on the basis of the wrong hand quoted in the last edition of SB News. The majority of the panel decided to look for a slam:

Benson (similarly **Hamilton, Male, Pigott & Tudor**): 4♦: Partner probably has long Clubs without 4 Spades but should have something in Diamonds - removing 3N to 4D shows slam interest and is 100% forcing.

Liz and Derek preferred a general force:

McGowan (similarly **Sanders**): 4♥: Partner either has values with a double Heart stop or a long Club suit that he hopes to run and HKx – my cue bid should help to find out whether 6D is a likely make or whether we're missing both minor suit Aces.

Mike opted for a different way forward:

Gallacher: 5♦: My partner is showing both minors, no interest in the other major and we both have better than minimum hand - a jump bid should show this to allow partner to decide if there may be a slam here.

Peter trusted that partner knew best:

Edmond: Pass: I would expect partner to have 2 Heart stops, neither 4 Clubs or 4 Spades and a jump to 3N does not encourage me to try 4N. (*but would this be quantitative or Ace-asking?*)

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

At the table, partner held ♠Q6, ♥KQ5, ♦A543, ♣K953 so 6D could be made but only 10 tricks were available in NT by S on the lead of CJ.

Problem 2 Teams All Vul

	N	E	S	W
♠ A94	-	-	Pass	1♣
♥ AT98642	?			
♦ -				
♣ A32				

The majority of the panel chose a 1-over-1 overcall:

Tudor (similarly **Benson, Hamilton, McGowan & Pigott**): 1♥: Potentially a strong hand if partner has H support but, if not, then there's a risk of a big penalty so, at this vulnerability, go slowly initially.

Mike & Peter preferred a pre-empt:

Gallacher (similarly **Edmond**): 3♥: My partner has passed and I am 3rd in hand so a 3-level overcall should show this type of hand.

Derek chose a weak jump overcall:

Sanders: 2♥: No need to get too excited can bid 3H later if need be.

Steve preferred an advance sacrifice:

Male: 4♥: Partner has passed and we need too many good cards for slam - it looks like opponents may have a Diamond game so I'll up the ante!

Problem 2	Votes	Marks
1♥	5	10
3♥	2	9
2♥	1	8
4♥	1	7
Dbl	0	5
4♣	0	2

Partner's hand was ♠K8632, ♥753, ♦Q765, ♣8 so 11 tricks were available with Hearts 2-1.

Problem 3 Pairs All Vul

	N	E	S	W
♠ K9	-	-	1♣	Pass
♥ AKJ8764	1♥	Pass	1N	Pass
♦ AKT	?			
♣ Q				

Clearly slam was on but the panel was split on how best to proceed – the largest vote was for a jump in our own suit:

Hamilton (similarly **Edmond, Sanders & Tudor**): 3♥: The partnership has 35-37 HCP so I'll make a forcing bid (*see below*) and hope to ask for aces later.

Others invented a Diamond "suit":

Pigott (similarly **Benson & McGowan**): 3♦: No raise in hearts is forcing but, with 35-37 HCP, the grand looks highly likely - if partner shows support, I can check for controls before hopefully bidding 7N. If partner merely bids 3N, I'll settle for 6N.

Steve wanted to force in a different way:

Male: 2♣: Checkback Stayman to set up a GF situation - too good for 4H.

Mike opted for (Key Card) Blackwood:

Gallacher: 4N: This is grand slam territory - let's just check for Aces.

Problem 3	Votes	Marks
3♥	4	10
3♦	3	9
2♣	1	8
4♣	0	7
4N	1	6
7♥	0	5
6N	0	5
6♥	0	4
5N	0	3
5♦	0	3
3♠	0	2
4♥	0	1

Partner held ♠AT7, ♥Q9, ♦QJ4, ♣AK953 so grand slams were available in NT & Hearts!

Problem 4 Pairs NS Vul

	N	E	S	W
♠ AJT853	-	-	1♥	Pass
♥ AKJ8	?			
♦ A62				
♣ -				

The majority of the panel opted for the “old-fashioned” strong jump shift:

Gallacher (similarly **Benson, Edmond, McGowan & Sanders**): 2♠: We have values for game and the choice is between a Strong Jump Shift and Jacoby 2N but I want to get across where my values lie as partner’s values must be outside Hearts.

Jim, Steve & Maurice opted for a more gentle 1-over-1 response:

Tudor (similarly **Male & Pigott**): 1♠: Starting with a low level response hoping to glean some information about partner’s hand - 6♥ looks like it will be popular but can I improve on that: 6N or 7♥?

Danny preferred to show his Cub shortage:

Hamilton: 4♣: A splinter, though really all roads should lead to 6H as it's going to be hard to find out about the SK for 7H.

Problem 4	Votes	Marks
2♠	5	10
1♠	3	9
4♣	1	8
4N	0	7
2N	0	6
6♥	0	5
4♥	0	3
4♠	0	3
3♥	0	1
3♠	0	1

Partner’s holding was ♠K4, ♥QT654, ♦KJT9, ♣A4 so grand slams were available in Hearts & NT but not in Spades as W had a Heart void!

Congratulations to the following top scorers in the various categories, particularly Robert on his top score of 33 on a particularly difficult set:

2*	Will Iles	Stewartry	31
Master	Iain Bannatyne	Ardeer	30
1*	Tina Peowrie	Stewartry	30
Master	Graham Dempsey	Carlton	27
Master	Jane Smithson	Berwick	32
	Mary Stone	Kelso	32
	Peter Calder	Berwick	31
District Master	Robert Spode	Kyle of Lochalsh	33
	Marilyn McDonagh	Carlton	30
Local Master	Jennifer Bute	Carlton	32
	Robin MacPherson	New Melville	32
	Grace McVey	Doon	32
Club Master	Alistair Smillie	Moray	31
	Arthur Selman	GBC	29
Novice	Susan Allen	Hawick	30
	Barbara Strickland	New Melville	26