

## Improvers Bidding Challenge (22)

January 2021

I suppose a shortage of volunteers to take over this feature was to be expected! My thanks to the panel of teachers who submitted answers, and my apologies for giving them too little notice. Finding suitable problems is not an easy task, so if you come across a hand where you are unsure what to bid please Email it to me.

### Problem 1 Teams NS Vul

	N	E	S	W
♠KQ9	-	-	1♦	P
♥AJT97	1♥	P	1♠	P
♦JT	?			
♣T42				

An awkward hand with enough to at least invite game but no real idea of which game, if any, is best. Mike sums up some of the options:

**GALLACHER:** 3♠. South has 5 diamonds and 4 spades with 12-15hcps. ♦JT are useful for her opening bid. I have choice between 3♠ (Moysian fit), 2♥ (wimpish) and 2♣ (fourth suit forcing).

I'm not so sure South is limited to 15 HCP – a jump to 2♠ is game-forcing, so needs at least 18?

At the more pessimistic end of the spectrum we have Steve and Gill:

**MALE:** 2♦. False preference. Not good enough for 4th suit forcing, but happy to advance if partner makes another move – partner is fairly unlimited.

**ROBERTS:** 2♥. Showing the 5-card suit. Not strong enough to bid FSF and no fit unless opener rebids spades to show 5 cards (or 2NT to show 15-17 count.)

Russell offers another possibility.

**FRAME:** 2NT. A difficult decision with no ideal solution - I don't have a club stop but can't force to game with 2♣ so prefer to show my limited invitational values in case partner has extras in which case he'll bid again.

Any of these answers might work well. If partner has four good spades and a club control and his diamonds run 4♠ will likely make, as will 3NT; if partner has a singleton club and some heart support we may belong in hearts; and if he has a completely unsuitable minimum 2♦ may be high enough. But this is teams, where missing a making game is costly, so the majority of the panel opt for the 'pitiful crutch' (Reese) of Fourth Suit, hoping to find out more. There was a time when bidding the fourth suit forced only as far as 2NT, but nowadays it is generally played as forcing to game.

**SANDERS:** (Similarly **EDMOND**, **HAMILTON** and **TUDOR**) 2♣. Fourth suit forcing to game. Happy to upgrade this hand by 1½ points with the great intermediates.

This should at least get us to the right strain, even if we are a little high.

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

Partner held T865 5 AKQx A964, so this was a good time for pessimism.

### Problem 2 Teams EW Vul

	N	E	S	W
♠KQT8	1♥	P	2♣	P
♥KT864	?			
♦K				
♣KJ4				

Most of the panellists were happy to reverse into 2♠ despite the lack of Aces.

**EDMOND:** 2♠. This hand is an excellent example of why I don't teach / recommend reverses to my students. For me 2♠ is normal showing 4=5 -- and in this case, given that partner does not have 4 spades, looking for NT if partner has a diamond stop. For normal students I guess you have to believe you are close to good enough for a reverse and just bid 2♠, otherwise rebid 3♣ hoping that partner has 5 cards in clubs.

Peter makes a good point: partner would normally respond 1♠ with a 4-card suit. If he has 4 spades he has enough for a responder's reverse and will surely bid spades himself over any rebid. Whatever strength we show with our reverse 2♠ must be forcing: opposite a two-over-one it shows enough to force to game.

**TUDOR:** (Similarly **FRAME**, **HAMILTON**, **ROBERTS** and **SANDERS**): 2♠. Whilst the value of the singleton ♦K is uncertain, the club support for partner does improve my hand - making a simple heart rebid, or raise to 3♠, a little wimpish.

I wonder how they will feel if partner gives preference to 3♥? Which game will they choose?

Steve is consistent:

**MALE:** 2♥. Lots of potential, but just 2♥ for now, not good enough to reverse by bidding 2♠, the ♦K may or may not be worth anything, I like the club fit.

Nobody voted for a raise to 3♠, but it is certainly worth considering.

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

Partner held 73 72 T9 AQT9852 – not the normal strength for a two-over-one but 1NT seemed a worse distortion and he planned to rebid 3♣ to show this hand. So the question arises: is 3♣ forcing after a reverse? Can you still stop out of game?

### Problem 3 Teams All Vul

	N	E	S	W
♠Q4	-	-	1♥	P
♥Q94	2♣	P	2♦	P
♦QT7	?			
♣KQT74				

Just 2 choices for the panel here: to bid game or just to invite.

**HAMILTON:** (also **TUDOR**) 4♥. I think 3♥ would be invitational here, though we've a decent hand and 3♥ might be confusing so I'll just bid game.

*Others were less enthusiastic about their slow values:*

**EDMOND:** (representing the rest):3♥. Invitation to game – don't like my honour cards enough to bid 4♥

Problem 3	Votes	Marks
3♥	6	10
4♥	2	7
2NT	0	6
2♥	0	4
2♠	0	2

*Partner held K9 J7632 AK43 93 so there were 4 top losers in 4♥. Perhaps next time he will have a real opening bid!*

**Problem 4 Teams All Vul**

	N	E	S	W
♠AK8653	2♣	P	2♦	P
♥Q8	2♣	P	3♣	P
♦AK	?			
♣AK3				

*They say that a good bidding panel problem is one that attracts lots of different answers, which makes this a good problem! No fewer than 6 different responses from our panel – all with merit, so the scores are quite generous.*

**ROBERTS:** (also **MALE**) 3♦. Assuming a 2♣ opener is a game-forcing bid you can take your time. Extemporise with a 3♦ rebid to see if responder bids hearts. If hearts not bid, return to spades. Others may prefer to rebid spades showing a 6-card suit.

**FRAME:** 3♠. We're in a game-forcing auction so I'm happy to show partner my 6-card suit and await his next bid with interest.

*2♣ auctions are quite rare, so we have little practice in how to proceed. The strong hand finds it hard to describe all its assets, while the weaker hand may quickly run out of things to say.*

**EDMOND:** 3NT: Don't like it but for me nowhere else to go.

*This seems to describe a big semi-balanced hand – perhaps better than rebidding a spade suit that lacks intermediate cards.*

*The best way to proceed rather depends on what partner's 3♣ means. The remaining panellists are confident that partner has at least 5 clubs.*

**SANDERS** (similarly **HAMILTON**): 4♣. Partner should have reasonable clubs given they could bid 2NT after 2♠ (double negative) with very little. Not worried about bypassing 3NT since if they don't have a heart stop we can play 4♠ or 5♣ and with a heart control 6♣ looks the place to be.

**TUDOR:** 4♦. Cue bid, agreeing clubs. I need to know if partner has first or second round control in hearts. Simply raising to 4♣ is less likely to elicit a 4♥ cuebid if partner has an uninspiring hand with, say, ♥Kxx.

**GALLACHER:** 4NT. partner's bid of 3♣ shows values but not in spades. I have the ♣AK so where are her points? She can pass 2♠. With 3 Ace-Kings in the other suits bid 4NT. Can always duck out if partner turns up with no Aces.

*In SBU Standard a 2♣ opener is forcing to game unless you rebid 2NT. So even the weakest responder has to find another bid over 2♠.*

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

*Partner held 9 AT6 QT84 QT986. There were 12 fortunate tricks in spades when the hand on lead held the ♥K and trump broke 3-3. Which made it an excellent 6♣.*

## January Top Scores

*Congratulations to the following top scorers in the various categories, particularly Norma for her perfect score:*

<b>2Star Master</b>		
Iain Bannatyne	Largs	36
Charles Fogelman	Maccabi	33
Will Iles	Stewartry	33
<b>1Star Master</b>		
Jean Parker	Prestwick Riggs	35
Maureen Annan	Dundee	34
Alasdair Adam	Direct Member	30
<b>Master</b>		
Fiona McElhinney	Dunfermline	36
Roy Heanes	New Melville	31
<b>District Master</b>		
Norma Fingland	GBC	40
Roddy McLean	Torphins	35
Alastair Chambers	Cults	34
Robin Key	Peebles	32
<b>Local Master</b>		
Alistair Smillie	Moray	36
Angela Ford	Maccabi	35
<b>Club Master</b>		
Liz MacPherson	Kirkcudbright	36
Jack Silverstone	GBC	35
May Armour	Kyle	33
James Campbell	Ardeer	32
Neil Atkinson	Stirling & Union	31
Miles Harrison	Stirling & Union	31
<b>Novice</b>		
Susan Belford	Ness	31

