

March 2023 Bronze Bidding Challenge: Comments and Results

These problems come from a Women's practice session organised by the European Bridge League.

Problem 1 **Teams:** **EW Vul** **Dealer West**

♠KQJT92	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥—	1♠	3♥**	3♠	Pass
♦A92	?			
♣AK53				

3♥** = a weak jump overcall

Only one panellist settles for a sure plus by stopping in game.

The others are agreed about one thing – slam is in the air. You have a 4-loser hand and a known trump fit.

Received wisdom is that if partner can have a perfect minimum, say, Axxx xxxx Kxx xx, you should at the very least make a try.

Russell wastes no time:

FRAME: 6♠: Although I can cue or even ask for Aces or Keycards, neither helps to identify the possible Grand Slam as partner may have the ♥A, ♥K or ♦Q, none of which will necessarily be useful. So I'll just bid what I think we can make!

I have a lot of sympathy with this approach. If you ask for keycards and partner shows one, or even two, you are no further forward. Blackwood has its uses as a way of staying out of a bad slam missing two keycards but it is not the best tool for bidding good ones.

The rest of the panel are aware that partner may not have perfect cards: Axxx Kxx Qxx xxx would not play well in slam. Most opt for the cheapest cue-bid.

SIME: 4♣. Partner's bid is wide-ranging. It seems obvious to start with 4♣, hoping partner makes a noise en route to 4♠.

This allows partner to cuebid the ♦K if he has it. If he responds 4♥ or 4♠ the panel presumably signs off, missing slam opposite Axxx xxxx xx QJx. The panel rejects a 4♥ cue as too space-consuming.

MALE: 4♣. As attractive as a 4♥ force is my preference is for 4♣ to see if I can get any further information from partner. Exclusion is probably too advanced.

Steve refers to Exclusion Keycard Blackwood, normally a jump to the 5-level in a void that asks partner to show keycards, excluding the Ace of the bid suit. An accident-prone convention! Here it would probably tell you that partner has the ♠A, but not whether he has second round control in diamonds and / or third round control in clubs.

Finally, we have an offbeat suggestion:

TUDOR: 4♦. I'm going to bid 6♠ at some stage, but as my diamonds look to be a weak spot, I'll muddy the waters with a cue bid to see if I can dissuade the opponents from leading the suit!

Nothing wrong with a spot of deception! Though they may not need to lead a diamond initially to beat this slam...

	Panel	Marks	Competitors
4♣	5	10	10
6♠	1	8	4
4♦	1	7	0
4♠	1	6	8
4NT	0	5	13
4♥	0	4	3

Partner has A73 T73 K853 Q84. Slam looks pretty good with 11 tricks on top and good chances of a 12th in the minors. 6♠ was unlucky: nothing broke and there was no squeeze.

Problem 2 **Teams:** **None Vul** **Dealer East**

♠8542	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥42	-	-	1♥	Dbl
♦A4	Pass	2♣	Dbl	Pass
♣T7542	?			

The EBL consensus was that this hand is good enough to respond on the first round - seems an Ace is all you need.

Partner's double is takeout – there is no way she can have a penalty double on this auction. Your hand is maximum for its actions thus far. Your weakest call would be 2♥, selected by none of the panel.

They split equally between those who pass:

SIME: PASS. This might go badly, but at least it is not game if it makes. Much more likely is that they are in a 4=3 fit and passing will net a heavy penalty.

I confess that I find it hard to envision a heavy penalty here. My trump pips are pitiful, partner sits under the stronger opponent and I do not expect to get on lead very often to draw trump. Danny's opinion seems more realistic:

HAMILTON: PASS. Bit of a gamble this one, but both spades and hearts look to be splitting badly so I'll try defending. It's only two of a minor so not a disaster if it makes.

The other half of the panel bid their 4-card Major.

MALE: 2♠. Partner has a big hand and his double is take out. I am not passing the double for penalties. My hand is too weak.

FRAME: 2♠: My suit is truly dreadful but at least I can contribute a trick to the play with the ♦A - if partner makes another try, I'll give him a minimum raise in hearts.

My vote too. I would expect to make 2♠ most days, perhaps more easily than taking a plus score from 2♣X.

	Panel	Marks	Competitors
2♠	4	10	12
Pass	4	9	20
2♥	0	5	5
2NT	0	3	2

Partner has a big hand: KQ96 AKQ865 K52 – perhaps she should not double with a void in clubs. 4 of either Major makes easily, even with ♠AJT sitting over the East hand. 2♣ doubled was -1.

Problem 3 Teams: NS Vul Dealer North

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠A98	-	1♦	Pass	Pass
♥AQ6543	?			
♦T8				
♣AQ				

We enter an area not normally covered in a learner's course, the re-opening action.

Right-hand opponent has advertised extreme weakness. If we do not take some action we shall have to defend 1♦, which is unlikely to be much fun, (though it could be right to pass on a misfit hand).

In the re-opening position (aka protective position) your choice of bid is predicated on the knowledge that partner has some values. They say you should add a virtual King to your hand and bid accordingly – this is the Theory of the Transferrable King – effectively you borrow a King from partner's hand. (The corollary is that partner subtracts a King when responding.)

A re-opening 1NT becomes 11-14. 2NT is no longer Unusual: it shows about 19-21HCP in a balanced hand.

A simple overcall has a maximum of about 14HCP.

A jump overcall is NOT weak (what would be the point?) It shows a sound opener with a good 6-card suit.

Hands that do not fit into any of the above categories must start with a double, then rebid a new suit or no-trump as appropriate to show strength.

Most of the panel believe that this hand is too strong for even an intermediate jump overcall, and start with double

GALLACHER: DBL. With 16 points and a 6-card heart suit, I will double first and then show my hearts.

TUDOR: : DBL. Start with a Double intending to show my heart suit, and strength, on the next round.

A minority is less sanguine:

HAMILTON: 2♥, showing a good hand in the pass out seat. Not quite good enough to start with a double with Queens badly placed. If partner responds to 2♥ I can try game.

FRAME: 1♥: I have a 6-loser hand but am sitting under the opener so will bid conservatively for now - the key decision, if any, may come later in the auction.

Sounds as if they plan to bid on if partner shows signs of life – would that confuse her?

	Panel	Marks	Competitors
Dbl	5	10	18
2♥	1	8	8
1♥	2	6	13

Partner has an interesting hand: KT52 J8 2 KT9865. You can make game in hearts or clubs. The hard part is getting there.

Problem 4 Teams: EW Vul Dealer West

♠AQ63	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥AT9	1♣	P	1♦	P
♦T	?			
♣AQJT6				

This is a nice hand, but it has not been improved by partner's response. It is not a problem for those who play New Suit Forcing:

BARON: 1♠. Forcing bid - no need to jump to show extra values.

But most do not have NSF in their system. If 1♠ is not forcing do we need to bid something else to show extra strength?

MALE: 2♠. Shape-showing and value showing. Even though a 1NT rebid shows equivalent values the singleton in partner's suit makes this an unlikely candidate for a NT contract.

McKAY: 2♠. 1NT or even 2NT is a possibility given the lovely clubs but I really have an 18 count and would rather bid out my shape as it will be easier to get to the right spot.

The problem I have with the jump rebid in a new suit is that I have always played it as forcing to game. Is this hand really worth a game force?

Some try to show their strength by rebidding in NT:

HAMILTON: 2NT. I'm upgrading this. Could rebid 2♣ but with partner bidding diamonds NT seems better, and we still have Checkback Stayman to find a spade fit.

The hand is certainly strong, with some sparkling intermediates. 2NT allows partner to pass if minimum, but I might be a little concerned if she did!

GALLACHER: 1NT. I feel 1♠ is an underbid and 2♠ a slight overbid. My partner has bid 1♦ and I have cover in the other suits.

We seem to have a choice between overbidding to show our distribution or distorting our distribution to show our strength. Perhaps we should focus on getting to the right strain and save the strength-showing rebid for next time.

TUDOR: 1♠. Not strong enough for a game-forcing jump to 2♠, and 2NT distorts the shape of my hand.

SIME: 1♠. A game forcing 2♠ would be slightly more attractive if partner had responded 1♥. As it is, missing game is unlikely if 1♠ is passed out.

	Panel	Marks	Competitors
1♠	3	10	15
2♠	2	8	8
1NT	2	6	3
2NT	1	5	8
3♣	0	3	3
3NT	0	2	1
2♥	0	1	1

Partner has J985 K72 Q973 98. Not a lot, but just enough to make game in spades or NT.

Top Scores

A set with some unusual situations. Congratulations to Alan on his perfect score.

2* Master	Will Iles	Stewartry	35
	Charles Fogelman	GBC	29
1* Master	David King	Berwick	32
	Roy Heanes	New Melville	31
	Alasdair Adam	Direct	30
Master	David Edelman	Maccabi	33
	Pam Warner	New Melville	30
	Neil Bulleid	Buchanan	28
District Master	Alan Paterson	Johnstone	40
	May Armour	Kyle	38
	Ken Brown	Pentland	38
	Graham Vincent/Andy McKinnel	Linlithgow	38
	Paul Kerr	Troon	35
	John Smithson	Berwick	35
	Ken Tait	Marmion	29
	Quentin Stephens	Aberdeen	28
Local Master	Peter Beckett	New Melville	36
	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	36
	Alison Clayton/Lesley Cochrane	Aberdeen	35
	John Ramsay	Carlton	34
	Larry Watson	Buchanan	33
	Chris Mickley	Nairn	32
Club Master	Linton Horsfall	Carlton	32
	Helen Adamson	Kirkcaldy	31
	Fiona McCourt	Bearsden Academy	30
	Wilma Currie	Kilmacolm	28
Novice	Kimberley Munro	New Melville	33
	Ian Lowson	New Melville	31
	Sandra Mair	Carlton	30
	Evelyn Watson	SteppingStone	28