

Scottish Bridge News

Editorial

This issue is devoted mainly to coverage of the 2020 European Championships that were finally played in June 2022 in Madeira. Scotland's teams did not star: our Open team – Alex Adamson & Derek Sanders; Archie Bouverie & Finlay Marshall; Steve Levinson & Barnet Shenkin – finished 29th of 30 teams; our Seniors – Mike Ash & Bob Ferrari; Roy Bennett & Harry Smith; Sandy Duncan & Bob McPaul – were 13th of 19 teams; and our Mixed Team – Gints Freimanis & Liz McGowan; Stephen Peterkin & Sam Punch; George Plant & Gosya Rozman – were 16th of 22 teams.

Scotland surely has the talent to do better than this. Experience of such events should help partnerships improve, but it would be foolish to rely on a small group of experienced players without looking to the future and giving

new partnerships a chance. The SBU has set up a Working Group to look at selection policy and plans some sort of training schedule to prepare our players for the rigours of European and World events – all of our players agree that they are very tiring. If you have any strong opinions about the future of Scottish teams please contact us.

We are grateful to the players for sharing some of their experiences, and to Iain Sime, watching from afar.

Our Player Profile features Finlay Marshall, one of the few remaining players who has been around longer than your editor...

Barnet Shenkin reports on an event at the ACBL nationals, sponsored by Steve Levinson in memory of two of Scotland's greatest players, and we have some input from across the Irish Sea.

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Madeira Moments

Open Deception

Barnet Shenkin

The 55th European Championships were held on the island of Madeira, featuring Open, Women's, Senior and Mixed teams; and Women's and Senior Pairs.

Since inception England / Great Britain have won the third most total Championships – only headed by France with most and then Italy. The English Teams performed below expectation with none of their teams finishing in the top 8 positions which would guarantee them a spot in the next World Championships. The Scottish teams, with more moderate aspirations, narrowly avoided the wooden spoon in the Open series for the second consecutive tournament.

In the second match Scotland faced the renowned Italians playing with two multiple world champions, Versace and Duboin.

Steve Levinson, playing in his first major event for Scotland, had not come to the tourney as cannon-fodder for the Italians and took a not unreasonable chance. Versace doubled 7NT, hoping his partner would find a heart lead – the first suit bid by dummy(!). When Duboin led a diamond declarer won, checked for a singleton ♠J and cashed a second club all following. That was 2490 to Scotland. We were -1470 in the other room, so Scotland won 14 imps and ran out winners 51 to 31 – the highlight of their event.

Scotland faced the World Champions, Switzerland, in Round 22:

Board 18	♠AKQJ6 ♥QT8 ♦AKJ ♣T4	NS Vul Dealer E									
♠973 ♥743 ♦T7532 ♣97	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠842 ♥A965 ♦864 ♣J53
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠T5 ♥KJ2 ♦Q9 ♣AKQ862										

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	7NT	Dbl	End

Board 14	♠532 ♥Q6 ♦K653 ♣QJT7	None Vul Dealer E									
♠AK6 ♥AJ982 ♦J97 ♣92	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠J974 ♥T543 ♦Q82 ♣64
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠QT8 ♥K7 ♦AT4 ♣AK853										

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1♣
1♥	Dbl*	3♥	3NT
End			

*Dbl denies 4+ spades

I led the ♠A and partner encouraged (perhaps dubiously) with the ♠4. Current World Champion Sjoert Brink dropped the ♠T from hand. Concerned about minor suit winners I continued with the ♠A, trying to drop ♠QT doubleton, and the contract was home. Nice play by declarer.

England defended the same contract and the English West also led the ♠A,

partner encouraging. Here declarer played the ♠8 from hand. The English West made a thoughtful switch to the ♥A allowing partner to contribute to the defence. East discouraged hearts and now the ♠K set up declarer's ninth winner. Given his encouragement to the first trick East should encourage the heart continuation to tell partner that his original encouragement was with the minimum possible. In both cases teammates had made a part score so there was a 6-imp adverse swing.

Here was an interesting board from Scotland v Bulgaria (Round 24).

Board 13		♠AKQ32	All Vul
		♥752	Dir N
		♦T732	
		♣5	
♠86		♠JT9	
♥A		♥T986	
♦95		♦A64	
♣KQ986432		♣AT7	
		♠754	
		♥KQJ43	
		♦KQJ8	
		♣J	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	1♠	Pass	2♣*
4♣	Dbl**	5♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl	End	

**Dbl = takeout

*2♣ was explained as a game force which could contain a 5-card suit but not a 6-card suit. North led two top spades and switched to a diamond. I took the ♦A. It seemed likely that the only possible way to make the contract was to swindle South hoping he had 5 hearts to the KQJ but not the ♥7. The ♥T was called from table and South obligingly covered with the ♥J. Now declarer has three trump entries to dummy to lead

the ♥9 and ♥8, ruff away the ♥K and ♥Q and enjoy his lowly ♥6, pitching the losing diamond. Making 5♣x for 950 was worth 13 imps when 5♣ went down 1 in the other room.

Two Slams

Alex Adamson

For the first half of the tournament the Open Team were, like Madeira, all at sea. We won only one of the first fifteen matches, against Italy, which hung on the choice of opening lead against 7NT (*see [Barnet's contribution](#)*), and an inspired attacking lead against 4♠ from Archie Bouverie.

However, whatever else, we were not lacking in determination. In the second half we won seven and lost seven and, while it might not be much, it allowed us to avoid finishing last.

We played the eventual winners, the Netherlands, in round 6. This was one of our better matches during the opening days. I was North on this hand:

Board 23		♠AK6532	All Vul
		♥-	Dealer S
		♦AKJ975	
		♣6	
♠97		♠J4	
♥AQ98		♥K764	
♦64		♦83	
♣K5432		♣AQ987	
		♠QT8	
		♥JT532	
		♦QT2	
		♣JT	

After two passes, I opened 1♠, raised to 2♠ by Derek. How to proceed? I decided to start with one of the strongest long suit game-tries you will ever see: 3♦. Our agreements are that if you are

accepting on this sort of sequence then you cuebid an Ace on the way. Had Derek bid 4♣ I could use Roman Keycard to find out about the ♠Q, then perhaps bid the Grand slam, but on this hand he rebid 3♠.

After some thought, I jumped to 6♠ – there were so many hands where slam would be good. Dummy was a pleasure to see, and on the non-club lead I quickly claimed 13 tricks. This 21-count slam was bid and made at 25 of the 30 tables. (*The Open Teams played for 4 days before the others joined in*).

At the other table North opened a strong 1♣ and after many relays they also bid to 6♠, this time by South. Sadly, their defensive values convinced the Scottish pair to double, the club lead was not found and an overtrick was scored. We lost 9 IMPs on the board and lost the match by 8.

This hand came from Round 29 – our last match – against Spain.

Bd 26	♠–	All Vul
	♥652	Dealer E
	♦983	
	♣KQ98762	
♠KJ84		♠AT53
♥AT4		♥Q3
♦J6		♦AKQT42
♣J543		♣A
	♠Q9762	
	♥KJ987	
	♦75	
	♣T	

Derek opened the East hand 1♦ and South overcalled 2♦ showing at least 55 in the majors. My hand was suitable for a double, which we play as invitational values with no good bid to make. North's unexpected 3♣ bid helped Derek in that is suggested that my values were not in that suit.

He bid 3♠, which shows a spade stop, looking for a heart stop. South passed and I obliged with 3NT. With a good picture of my hand, Derek jumped to 6♦. On the way out, North doubled that.

What should South lead? Should he know to lead a spade? He should probably have tried one of his suits but instead he was lured into leading his singleton club – the suit his partner had bid at the 3-level. The distribution was an open book for declarer and, thanks to dummy's ♠8, he was able to pick up the spade suit for four tricks along with his six diamonds and two side Aces.

Even without the fourth spade trick, he would have been able to throw South in lead away from his ♥K.

Slam was bid and made at 12 of the 58 tables. 6♦x was not the best score – hats off to the two pairs who made 6♠x!

There was no way that either of us was taking out to 6♠, but might one of them have tried 6NT? That is unstoppable, as it happens. In any case, the +1540 netted +11 IMPs in a match won by 3 IMPs.

Results and scorecards for all the matches can be found on the Eurobridge site:

[55th European Team Championships \(eurobridge.org\)](https://eurobridge.org)

Unfortunately, as Iain Sime points out, there are no play records except for the matches that featured on BBO (Scotland did not make it on to VuGraph!)

If you want to see what happened on a particular hand you can check the VuGraph archive on BBO: enter 2022-06 in the search box

A Senior View

Bob McPaul

Madeira was superb. Good playing conditions, delicious food at reasonable prices, good company, and a rooftop bar where we would have a small nightcap before an early night if we were playing in the first match the next day. The views over the ocean in the moonlight and our half of the island were breath-taking. Certainly a place to keep in mind when planning your next holiday/s.

Now to the bridge. Sandy and I were happy with our game for the first four days, then we tired quite rapidly. I initially thought that 16/32 boards per day for 7 days would pose no problems, but I was sadly over-confident. Here's a hand, preceded by a story, which shows me in a good light. (I would hardly show you one of my bad boards!)

In round 2 v Ireland, a match we won by 19 imps, I opened 4♥ in fourth seat with:

Board 31

♠	AT
♥	AKQT632
♦	—
♣	9872

Opposite a passed partner I didn't fancy our chances of slam. I also didn't want to open 1♥ which may have allowed them to find their good Diamond save (if it existed).

This went 1 off but gained a couple of imps when the Irish declarer went 2 off in the same contract.

Nothing was said at the time, but, over coffees later, Sandy suggested that I was just a tad good for a 4♥ opener. Now Sandy may not believe this, but I do listen to what he says. He's seen it all and done it all and owns all the T-shirts.

A few days later, against the Swiss (who finished bottom), in a match we lost by 4 imps (a galling feature of the team's performance was the inability to win big against the so-called weaker teams), I opened 4♠ (non vul against vul) taking Sandy's sage advice fully into account:

Board 28

♠	AKQJ642
♥	4
♦	8
♣	9762

Sandy didn't believe I'd taken his advice on board and drove to slam

The full deal (*rotated for convenience*):

	♠	T853	
	♥	J3	
	♦	AK74	
	♣	AQ3	
♠ 9			♠ 7
♥ K9852			♥ AQT76
♦ JT63			♦ Q952
♣ J85			♣ KT4
	♠	AKQJ642	
	♥	4	
	♦	8	
	♣	9762	

A heart lead would have meant no story, but luckily West opted to lead a trump. With trumps pulled I now cashed 2 diamonds to pitch a heart. It looks like I only need the club finesse for the contract. There is a small extra chance: if East has the ♣K and not the ♣J he may feel under pressure if the first club play is small from ♣AQ3. Even if it loses to the ♣T or ♣J, I still have the finesse for the contract. East stared at the ♣3 for a long time and eventually succumbed to the imagined pressure and played the King. 12 tricks and +980. No-one in all 4 competitions made 12 tricks, but as no-one else was in slam, it didn't matter.

German Swings

Roy Bennett and Harry Smith

We played Germany in Round 17.

Roy was aggrieved when his usual luck deserted him on this board:

Board 27	♠ T54 ♥ AQ974 ♦ 42 ♣ A82	None Vul Dealer S
♠ 762 ♥ JT5 ♦ KQ95 ♣ 973		♠ A83 ♥ K62 ♦ 763 ♣ QT64
	♠ KQJ9 ♥ 83 ♦ AJT8 ♣ KJ5	

This was everybody's 3NT, and everybody made it when West led a diamond. The German West led a club. Roy won and dislodged the ♠A. East returned a club. With 8 cashing tricks Roy looked to diamonds for the ninth, winning the ♣A and losing a diamond finesse. He won the third club, cashed spades and crossed to the ♥A for a second diamond finesse. Two down when the 75% shot failed.

By a weird coincidence Sam Punch also received a club lead. in the Mixed Teams. But when her East won the ♠A he switched to a diamond, giving the game away. She went after hearts, running the ♥8 for the extra chance, and made her game with ease.

Harry took revenge on Board 29.
(See top of next column)

In the other room Mike Ash bought the contract in 4♠, losing just 3 Aces and scoring 620. Harry does not like to defend, so when 4♠ came back to him he sacrificed in 5♦.

Board 29	♠ A ♥ A2 ♦ AJT8542 ♣ 643	All Vul Dealer N
♠ 65 ♥ KQ73 ♦ 9 ♣ KQT852		♠ KQT98732 ♥ J ♦ 76 ♣ AJ
	♠ J4 ♥ T98654 ♦ KQ3 ♣ 97	

East led his heart. Harry won and returned a heart. West switched to a spade. Harry crossed twice to top diamonds to ruff hearts high, then entered dummy with the ♦3 (yes, he had carefully preserved his ♦2) to discard two clubs on the long hearts.

The double vulnerable game swing was worth 15 imps; Scotland won by 2 imps.

This curiosity arose in round 16 v Switzerland,

Board 23	♠ K95 ♥ AK3 ♦ QT532 ♣ J3	All Vul Dealer S
♠ QJ843 ♥ T85 ♦ 6 ♣ 9654		♠ AT72 ♥ QJ92 ♦ 7 ♣ QT87
	♠ 6 ♥ 764 ♦ AKJ984 ♣ AK2	

6♦ was a popular contract that failed when ♠K did not provide a discard for the heart loser. Against Roy West led the ♠Q and continued with a *low* spade; East was fooled into rising with the Ace. No swing! Our West *led* a low spade....

Mixing It

Gosya Rozman

My favourite board was against Croatia in the penultimate match.

Board 19	♠ Q9852 ♥ AT8 ♦ J3 ♣ 972	All Vul Dealer S				
♠ K63 ♥ K95432 ♦ 42 ♣ 85	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>S</td></tr></table>	N	E	W	S	♠ A ♥ J6 ♦ T965 ♣ AKQT63
N	E					
W	S					
	♠ JT74 ♥ Q7 ♦ AKQ87 ♣ J4					

As South, I opened 1♦, West bid 1♥, George 1♠ and Marina Pilipovic paused. After some time she bid 3NT.

I doubled, because if she has any doubts I want her to change her mind. She must have a spade stopper, a long running club suit and most likely ♦Jxxx or ♦Txxx. Luckily she did change her mind and removed to 4♣-3. I didn't find the double of that one.

3NT was a very pretty bid, and I knew we were in trouble. I will never lead a small diamond or a heart, most likely I will lead the ♦K. Only 5 people played 3NT in the Open Teams, all made it; it was bid and made only once in the Mixed; and once in the Seniors (sadly by England against Scotland!) Most EW pairs defended spade contracts by NS.

I cherish both her bid and my double. (To be honest if she had bid 3NT in tempo I would never think of doubling.)

I had so much fun on this event, and such good experience!

Squeezed at Trick 2?

The Mixed Team met Netherlands in Round 14.

Board 30	♠ J4 ♥ JT75 ♦ K86543 ♣ T	None Vul Dealer E				
♠ K6 ♥ 93 ♦ QJT72 ♣ AQJ9	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td>S</td></tr></table>	N	E	W	S	♠ A873 ♥ K42 ♦ A9 ♣ 7654
N	E					
W	S					
	♠ QT952 ♥ AQ86 ♦ — ♣ K832					

Once East opened her 2½ Quick Trick hand it was inevitable that she would reach 3NT. South led the ♠T.

Declarer did not want North on lead in case he found the heart switch, so she won in dummy and tried a diamond to the 9. What should South discard?

A club? Declarer takes a club finesse, returns to the ♦A, cashes four clubs, then endplays South in spades to lead away from the ♥A.

A heart? Now declarer can afford to concede a diamond to North. Even if he finds the heart switch she will duck twice, and there are only 3 heart tricks.

The killing discard is a spade. Declarer will take a club finesse and return to the ♦A, and another spade goes. East can establish a long spade but lacks the entries to cash it. And if North wins a diamond trick the heart switch should be obvious.

A tough defence to find, and most declarers in 3NT made their contract – though many were favoured with a heart lead.

Türkiye on French Toast

Iain Sime

I was fascinated by this hand from the recent European Championships in Madeira. Before reading further, decide how you might tackle 6NT on these cards as West. North leads the $\heartsuit T$.

\spadesuit A9 \heartsuit A42 \diamondsuit AKJ74 \clubsuit AQJ	N W E S	\spadesuit JT543 \heartsuit Q965 \diamondsuit Q8 \clubsuit K4
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You might want to ask “what are we doing in 6NT with only 31 points?”

Probably you have upgraded your 23-count. That is understandable with all the Aces and a good 5-card suit. Partner, however, has about as bad an 8-count as one might imagine. It seems that he has a great deal of faith in your declarer play. Can you justify that? Counting winners (usually a good idea in No Trump contracts) gives us a paltry ten tricks. Where can we find two more?

The $\heartsuit Q$ looks an obvious choice for one more, but appearances can be deceptive. Hearts will rarely yield three tricks with KJT873 all missing. When we lose a trick to the $\heartsuit K$ there is no scope to lose another. Is there anything better?

Let's look at the whole hand (*top of next column*) and solve it double dummy.

Lionel Sebbane (France) found the superior line of winning on dummy and playing a spade towards the $\spadesuit 9$. This can succeed when South has a singleton spade honour, $\spadesuit Kx$, $\spadesuit Qx$ or $\spadesuit KQx$. It may also succeed against South's $\spadesuit KQxx(x)$ if North has the $\heartsuit K$.

Contract 6NT, lead $\heartsuit T$	
\spadesuit A9 \heartsuit A42 \diamondsuit AKJ74 \clubsuit AQJ	\spadesuit Q872 \heartsuit T3 \diamondsuit T952 \clubsuit 762
\spadesuit K6 \heartsuit KJ87 \diamondsuit 63 \clubsuit T9853	\spadesuit JT543 \heartsuit Q965 \diamondsuit Q8 \clubsuit K4

We are up to about 30% odds. That must be better than starting on hearts.

When the $\spadesuit 9$ fetches the Queen, dummy has more than enough spade winners for 6NT. But.....

..... North (Umur of Türkiye) fiendishly ducked his Queen! Now the Ace felled the King, but the dearth of entries meant spades couldn't be established. The same thing happens if South plays the $\spadesuit K$ at trick two, and North ducks the nine.

Two spade tricks has brought our total winners to eleven. One more required.

I must confess that I would probably have gone wrong if South had inserted the King from Kx or KQxx. I would have assumed KQx and overtaken the nine of spades to drive out the missing honour. But Sebbane didn't have that option when the nine won at trick two. He probably did know the spade position when the Ace felled the King. It is unlikely that Umur ducked the nine smoothly.

Sebbane cashed his diamonds to reach this ending:

	♠ Q ♥ T3 ♦ - ♣ 762	
♠ - ♥ A42 ♦ - ♣ AQJ	N W E S	♠ J ♥ Q96 ♦ ♣ K4
	♠ - ♥ KJ8 ♦ - ♣ T98	

Next came three rounds of clubs, pitching the ♠J. Now, finally, a small heart, covering North's card and endplaying South.

Very well played!

28 out of 90 pairs overbid to 6NT. Three received a spade lead, resulting in an easy make. A heart lead was found at two tables, sinking 6NT immediately. Only five declarers out of 23 made 6NT on a minor suit lead. I wonder how many had to fight as hard as Sebbane. How many went down if the ♠9 was ducked? How many Easts inserted the King?

We will never know as we unfortunately receive complete results only from a few tables. Software that detects bids and cards played was piloted about ten years ago and has appeared intermittently since. But not at the 2022 European or World Championships.

Round 14 Board 19

Thinking it Through

(An attempt to simulate real-life at the bridge table. Try to answer the questions before reading on below the thick black lines.)

You are West, representing your country in a European Championship, where nothing will be easy. You pick up this rather nice hand at Game All:

♠ AQ98
♥ AQ72
♦ AKJT7
♣ -

You are in fourth seat, so it is no surprise when third hand opens in front of you: his 2♠ shows a weak hand with 5 spades and an unspecified minor.

What is your call?

With such a strong hand the only real option is double. Partner may bid clubs, but you can convert to diamonds.

LHO raises to 3♠, passed back to you, so you double again. Now partner surprises you by responding 4NT. This shows both minors and some values so you can hardly do less than bid 6♦.

The auction has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	Pass	Pass	2♠
Dbf	3♠	Pass	Pass
Dbf	Pass	4NT	Pass
6♦	End		

North leads the ♦9 and you see dummy

♠ AQ98 ♥ AQ72 ♦ AKJT7 ♣ -	N W E S	♠ 3 ♥ T84 ♦ Q854 ♣ KQT53
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What do you make of the auction and the opening lead?

South's minor is clearly clubs.
 Your vulnerable opponents have bid to the 3-level with a combined 13 HCP and just 3 controls: ♣A, ♠K, ♥K. You are inclined to place the ♣A in the South hand and the ♥K in North.

North's trump lead suggests he is trying to stop a complete crossruff – or is he just going passive? ♦9 is the highest outstanding trump, he would probably not lead that from ♦9xx so he likely has a singleton or doubleton trump.

What is your plan?

You have 5 trump tricks and 2 Aces in your hand. You can ruff 3 spades in dummy, and the ruffing club finesse should bring an 11th trick.

Where is the 12th trick?

The spade finesse does not add a trick unless you can discard a heart and later ruff a heart in dummy – but the defenders will play a second trump if you give up the lead so that should not work.

You might establish a long club – but cannot both make 3 ruffs and reach dummy to cash it.

Which leaves the heart finesse – or some sort of endplay in hearts?

Where will you win trick 1?

For the endplay to work you must remove North's safe exit cards, so you win ♦Q in dummy, (unblocking the ♦T in case you need a second entry in ♦8.)

The ♣K is covered by the Ace and you ruff high. Now ♠A and a spade ruff, cash ♣Q and ruff a club, everybody following. When you ruff your third spade North produces the King, establishing your Queen as a winner.

You have reached this position with the lead in dummy

♠ Q ♥ AQ7 ♦ A7 ♣ –	N W E S	♠ – ♥ T84 ♦ 8 ♣ T5
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What are the remaining N/S cards?

If South was originally 5=2=2=4 you should ruff another club high, draw trump with the ♦8 and lead a heart, just covering whatever South plays.

If he was 5=1=3=4 you are going down unless his singleton heart is an honour.

If he was 5=1=2=5 or 5=0=3=5 you can draw trump and exit with the ♥Q to endplay North.

Given the vulnerability and the quality of his spades, it seems most likely that South is 5-5 in the black suits.

The full deal:

	♠ K64 ♥ KJ953 ♦ 96 ♣ 942	All Vul Dir N
♠ AQ98 ♥ AQ72 ♦ AKJT7 ♣ –	N W E S	♠ 3 ♥ T84 ♦ Q854 ♣ KQT53
	♠ JT752 ♥ 6 ♦ 32 ♣ AJ876	

This deal comes from the Open Teams, match 9, before the other teams started play. 15 of the 30 pairs bid to 6♦, but only 4 made it. Most would not have got much help from the auction.

Player Profile:

Finlay Marshall

Although born in Edinburgh, my initial schooling was in Persia, where my father, a Basil Spence apprentice, indeed possibly his first, was working for the Anglo Iranian Oil Company, the forerunner to BP. But that was up to 1951, prior to the revolution. The rest of my education was Edinburgh-based, firstly at School then University.

I started playing bridge during my first term at University but, having realised I didn't know anything about the game, took the opportunity provided by the Christmas vacation to read a couple of books, one on bidding, and the other on the play of the hand. I don't know if "Watson on Play" is still in print, but it seemed a good instructional book at the time.

The more esoteric books on play, such as Reese's Expert Game were considered "interesting" though, not perhaps too practical, certainly not for a beginner. Hand print-outs, with the Deep Finesse analysis have greatly encouraged players to discover the possibilities previously only available in books such as Clyde Love's Bridge Squeezes Complete, the first edition of which I would recommend to all aspiring tournament players. His writing style, in that first edition flows "as smooth as the smoothest malt" (a quote on a plaque on the 9th hole at Murrayfield Golf Course) and can only be compared with the playing style of Galloway Shearer, which it was my good fortune to have been able to kibitz in the 1960s. Truly an education, and since I was not playing against him, all the better for being without cost –unlike the experience of his opponents.

On bridge administration, it does seem to me to be much better run than it used to be. We still largely rely on voluntary work. We have to balance what we experience with the cost we pay, with other NBOs who employ paid staff, and have to charge accordingly. I think we do well.

In my foreword to the 1981-82 SBU yearbook, I commented that the rules of bridge should be subordinate to the rules of life. Only a few years ago now, I was playing an Athol Cup tie (The Athol Cup is an Eastern District teams of 4 event in which all members of the team play with each other, so "anything can happen"). At the two-thirds distance we were heavily down, but made up the 50+ imp deficit over the last 10 boards. The captain of the opposing team came up to us with a warm smile and congratulated us most graciously. It isn't true to say "Show me a good loser, and I will show you a loser": I really felt that there had been at least 5 winners that day. Who knows, maybe next time it will be your turn to be congratulated? I would commend her approach to all – why not add to the winners' experience? Her generosity of spirit that day remains my abiding memory of her - thank you Deirdre.

I do have other interests: I used to be a bit of a ballroom dancer (with medals to prove it) and June, my wife, a Highland Dancer, so we compromised with Scottish Country Dancing, which we have both enjoyed for many years. I was never a Highland dancer but I was prepared to play the bagpipes for Highland dancers, and had many trips abroad doing that. To date, I am the only Past President of the Scottish Bridge Union who has represented Scotland in International bridge events,

I told him I might still be thinking about it, (still thinking to-day!) but it did bring home to me just how many opportunities there are for defenders to make life difficult for declarers, opportunities that are missed even at International level.

My second hand was played in a league match just before the first lockdown. At the end of the hand I turned to my RHO and we exchanged looks. I said to him that when the time comes for me to write a book entitled "Hands I have played" that that hand would certainly feature. So, here it is.

Board 14	♠ 742	None Vul,
	♥ 9643	Dir E
	♦ A9543	
	♣ 6	
♠ 96		♠ KQJT85
♥ J752		♥ T
♦ J82		♦ KQ76
♣ KQ52		♣ 74
		♠ A3
		♥ AKQ8
		♦ T
		♣ AJT983

Sitting South, I opened 1♣ and partner responded 1♦. East came in with 1♠ and I reversed into hearts. We reached 4♥ and West led the ♠9.

I held off the first spade, won the second spade, and started playing clubs, the Ace, and then the 8, but instead of ruffing, which seemed sensible to my partner, I discarded dummy's third spade. I was a bit surprised to find my ♣8 had won the trick.

I then felt it was time for trumps, but the ♥A brought the Ten from East. This seemed to be good news as if he had a second trump it would be the ♥J which

would mean I was not in danger of a spade through as dummy's ♥9 would be available to overruff any trump that West might ruff with. I played another club, which was covered, and ruffed in dummy. Another round of trumps identified that the trumps were, indeed, 4-1.

I played another club which again contrary to dummy's expectations, I did not ruff, but discarded a diamond, leaving West on lead.

He played a diamond to the Ace, but I could return to hand by playing dummy's last trump. My hand was high now except for the trump still held by West, and I could play winning clubs till he ruffed.

This was played with pre-dealt boards, so I was keen to see what Deep Finesse had to say. Blow me! Eleven tricks was his verdict. After I had won that second club trick, a crossruff does indeed bring home 11 tricks, with the ♥9 making en passant.

Still 4♥ making was a great score, beating those who had run into 5♣ on being doubled, where the doubler was on much surer ground.

Finlay was President of the SBU in season 1981-82. He is just back from Madeira where he played in our Open Team with Archie Bouverie. He previously represented Scotland as a Senior with Bill Innes (Malmo 2004) and Harry Smith (Pau 2008).

Scotland at the ACBL Summer Nationals

On Saturday 16 July Steve Levinson sponsored two tournaments, the Top-Flight and Gold Rush Pairs, at the American Summer Nationals in honour of two of Scotland's late great players: Victor Goldberg and Gerald Haase. The results and an article by Barnet Shenkin appeared in the Sunday Bulletin.

My great friend Victor Silverstone, who passed away last November, helped to revolutionise Scottish bridge. Since the inception of the Camrose Trophy in 1937 until 1964, Scotland had won it only once. Over the next 10 years, Victor, in partnership with Willie Coyle, helped Scotland to five wins and two ties for first. His team brought the Gold Cup to Scotland for the first time ever in 1969. He was a mentor to me throughout my bridge career starting in 1965 and always offered great advice on both bridge problems and perhaps, more importantly, how to be a good partner. He was the best, with never a critical word heard at the table.

Victor and Willie were invited to the world's leading invitational event, the Sunday Times Pairs, held in London, six years in succession. This was a lavish event with the best players in the world all dressed in tuxedos and bow ties. Here is a hand he defended against the maestro Giorgio Belladonna:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Silverstone</i>		<i>Coyle</i>	<i>Belladonna</i>
-	1♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	1NT
Dbl	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	Pass	3♥
End			

⁽¹⁾Canape

	♠ AT63	EW Vul,
	♥ Q42	Dir N
	♦ -	
	♣ KQ9873	
♠ KQ874		♠ J5
♥ A3		♥ T86
♦ KJ2		♦ AT954
♣ AJ2		♣ 654
	♠ 92	
	♥ KJ975	
	♦ Q8763	
	♣ T	

Belladonna took a chance with his 3♥ call. Victor led a diamond, ruffed in dummy. The ♣K went to Silverstone's ace. What now? The ♠K would allow declarer to take nine tricks on a crossruff. If you try to stop that with ♥A and a heart, declarer can establish clubs. Victor took a leaf out of his friend Hugh Kelsey's book "Killing Defence" by returning the ♥3! Belladonna won in hand to ruff a diamond in dummy. The ♣Q allowed declarer to pitch a spade, and a club was ruffed in the closed hand. Belladonna now exited a diamond to Victor's blank King. Victor played the ♠K to the ace and declarer tried a club winner, but East ruffed this. Belladonna still had a trump and two diamonds to lose for down one.

Although a very successful international player, Gerald Haase was close to the opposite of Victor Silverstone. His fiery temperament tended to destabilize everyone at the table. Often this would work to his advantage.

In 1982, he was the captain of my team when we reached the semifinal of the Gold Cup, Britain's premier tournament. Although starting as favourites, our team trailed by 52 IMPs after 56 of the 64 boards.

Rather than quit, Gerald addressed his team: “You have all played so horribly, and we are only 52 down. We must be in with a chance.” And so we went in to battle.

The first hand out the box, Gerald was the dealer with both sides vulnerable holding:

♠9 ♥AQJ8652 ♦K5 ♣J9.

He decided to do something different from the other table and opened 1♦! His partner, George Cuthbertson, bid 2♣, and the auction proceeded like this

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Gerald</i>		<i>George</i>
-	1♦	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♥	Pass	6♥
End			

Here was the layout:

	♠9	EW Vul,
	♥AQJ8652	Dir N
	♦K5	
	♣J9	
♠AQT32		♠J5
♥4		♥T86
♦J963		♦AT954
♣832		♣654
	♠KJ875	
	♥KT	
	♦T	
	♣AKT75	

East had good diamonds, so led a trump. But Gerald had seven heart winners and five club winners after a winning finesse. Slam made and 13 IMPs picked up when our opposition stopped in 4♥. Game on! Did we recoup the IMPs?

If you like the story you can read more in my forthcoming book, which will come out later this year from Masterpoint Press.

Obituary

Martin Stephens

As the result of an accident, a young life was tragically cut short on 3rd June.

Marty was a charismatic young man, whose energy and joie de vivre endeared him to many in all spheres of life. Professionally, he was appointed partner in KPMG UK’s Corporate Services in December 2021.

Until recently he played in Edinburgh, often at Colinton Castle Bridge Club with his dad, but the family moved to York in April of this year.

He was keen to support bridge whenever he could. He was a passionate and persuasive lobbyist, notably for SBU involvement in teaching young people and retaining them during the early stages of their professional and family life.

In December 2019 he persuaded the SBU to run “a final farewell” Peebles Congress. Convened by Julie Choudhury, but totally dependent on Marty’s networking and friendships, this was a fantastic affair which quickly sold out and attracted many high calibre players and ex-Presidents. [This link](#) conveys much of the spirit and quality of the event. In March this year he worked his magic again to bring his English bridge player pals to another Peebles Congress. Once again there was a gala dinner, and a speedball event, and once again it was very special.

A character at the table, always upgrading 14 points to a strong no trump or forgetting Michaels, he always had a smile and a kind word.

He will be sorely missed, not only for his contributions to the SBU, but as a well-loved friend to many.

N Ireland Connections

Edward Rosenfield

Dear friends at SBU,

I write to make you aware of some inaccuracies on page 89 of your excellent Official History 1933-2008.

It concerns the caption on the photo of the Camrose teams in the match against Northern Ireland in Belfast in 1950. The Scottish team listed on the *bridgewebs* website is :

Archie Winetrobe & Sammy Stein

Sol Barnett & Hymie Barnett

Louis Rose & Harry Cohen

NPC Johnny Walker

All of them listed in the photograph.

The NI team on *bridgewebs* is:

Hanna & Maurice Gabbey

Barney Vard & Eric Goldblatt

Nancy Atkinson & Matthew McLernon

NPC Ted O'Boyle

The names of Vard and Goldblatt have been mis-spelled. Nancy Atkinson & Matthew McLernon are mistakenly captioned as Larry Bradley or Unknown for McLernon, and Norah Bradley for Nancy Atkinson. If it is customary for NPCs to sit in the front rows, it is perhaps likely that the person captioned as Unknown is Ted O'Boyle.

My interest is keen because Barney Vard was my grandfather, of whom I am very proud.

Barney Vard

25th December 1903- 16th July 1973

My grandfather represented Northern Ireland in Camrose matches through the 1940s until the early 60s. His regular partner was Eric Goldblatt, but he also partnered Alan McKinnon, Tom Shanks, Davy Cohen, Maurice Gabbey and George Hanna.

Barney regularly encountered famous players as opponents in Camrose

matches, and many of them became his bridge pals. These players were interesting and colourful characters and they all respected each other highly.

In 1948 Barney and Eric teamed up with Davy Cohen, Louis Herbert, J Samuels and C Gordon to represent Northern Ireland in the Daily Graphic Contest, a huge national teams event, open to all, held at Caxton Hall, Westminster. 746 teams entered, with 32 area finalists playing for the Sunday Times Trophy. Their team finished 4th. My grandmother told me that he had enjoyed it very much and was especially fond of the little area finalists cup he won. I have that cup today.

Perhaps his biggest competitive match was when he represented All-Ireland in the first ever European Championship in Oslo in 1958. That was where he first encountered the Italian team: Forquet, Belladonna, Siniscalco, D'Alerio, Avarelli & Chiaradia. My grandmother told me that he had said afterwards that it seemed that they all just knew where every card lay in both bidding and play. Knowing him as I do, I imagine that he would have been a stabilizing influence on all his team-mates, and a courteous, ethical and dryly-but-kindly humorous opponent and partner.

Rex Anderson, the most capped Camrose player ever, has also been in touch:

My book celebrating the lack of success of Northern Ireland teams in Camrose Trophy matches played from 1937 to 2021 entitled 'A Worm's Eye View' is now available as an e-book or softback on Amazon.

All royalties are paid to the Northern Ireland Bridge Union.

Play Challenge

Jim Patrick

1 NS Vul Dealer East

♠AKT843
♥AT3
♦J9
♣73

♠3
♥KQ852
♦AT84
♣Q65

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
End	4♥	End	

Contract: 4♥ Lead: ♣J

East wins the ♣A and returns the ♣8 to the Queen and King. West plays the ♠9, won in dummy to run the ♦J to the Queen. West returns the ♠5. How do you play?

2 EW Vul Dealer North

♠AJ
♥AJ8654
♦K7
♣A85

♠QT543
♥3
♦AQJT6
♣T3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
End			

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♣Q

You duck the first two club tricks and win the third. It looks as though East started with three clubs.

How do you play?

3 All Vul Dealer South

♠64
♥KJ7
♦T876
♣K753

♠KT5
♥-
♦AKQJ954
♣J92

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1♦
Dbl	2♦	Dbl	5♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	End

Contract: 5♦X Lead: ♠2

East wins the ♠A and returns the ♠3. What will you play at Trick 3?

4 None Vul Dealer North

♠AJ5
♥KQT94
♦A7
♣K94

♠KT8642
♥A3
♦J642
♣A

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	1♥	2NT	3♠
Pass	4♦	Dbl	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♠
End			

Contract: ♠ Lead: ♦5

If you could find the Lady this would be an easy contract. How do you play?

Play Challenge Solutions

Jim Patrick

1 NS Vul Dealer East

	♠AKT843	
	♥AT3	
	♦J9	
	♣73	
♠95		♠QJ72
♥J4		♥976
♦Q62		♦K753
♣KJT942		♣A8
	♠3	
	♥KQ852	
	♦AT84	
	♣Q65	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
End	4♥	End	

Contract: 4♥ Lead: ♣J

The defenders cash two top clubs, and West switches to a spade. You win the ♠A and run the ♦J to West's Queen. He returns another spade. What will you discard on the ♠K?

It looks right to discard a diamond, take another diamond finesse and ruff a club, the *shorter* suit in dummy for your tenth trick.

But it isn't. If you play a diamond to the Ten and it holds, either East has still got the ♦K and it is safe to ruff a diamond or he plays the King on the second round and all of your diamonds are good. Discard a club.

2 EW Vul Dealer North

	♠AJ	
	♥AJ8654	
	♦K7	
	♣A85	
♠96		♠K872
♥KT2		♥Q97
♦642		♦983
♣QJ974		♣K62
	♠QT543	
	♥3	
	♦AQJT5	
	♣T3	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
End			

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♣Q

The defenders play 3 rounds of clubs and you win the third. It looks as if East has just 3 clubs.

The problem with crossing to hand with a diamond to take the spade finesse is that, if it loses, the defence can cut you off from your spade tricks by returning a diamond. Should you then unblock the spades by playing Ace and Jack? No, since West could have the ♠K.

The heart pips are powerful enough to exert a lot of pressure in the end game. Should you forego the spade finesse and play 5 rounds of diamonds coming down to ♠AJ and ♥AJ8 before playing a heart?

No. The important card is the ♠T. Play a diamond to the Queen and take the spade finesse. If it wins, you have 9 tricks. If it loses and East returns a diamond, overtake the ♦K and cash your diamonds, discarding the ♠A. You still have at least 2 spade tricks in hand to go with 5 diamonds and 2 Aces.

3 All Vul Dealer South

	♠64	
	♥KJ7	
	♦T876	
	♣K753	
♠Q872		♠AJ93
♥AQ T42		♥98654
♦—		♦32
♣AT84		♣Q6
	♠KT5	
	♥—	
	♦AKQJ954	
	♣J92	

4 None Vul Dealer North

	♠AJ5	
	♥KQT94	
	♦A7	
	♣K94	
♠J864		♠5
♥AKQ6		♥J5
♦964		♦KQT82
♣73		♣AT965
	♠KT8642	
	♥A3	
	♦J642	
	♣A	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1♦
Dbl	2♦	Dbl	5♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	End

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	1♥	2NT	3♠
Pass	4♦	Dbl	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♠
End			

Contract: 5♦X Lead: ♠2

Contract: 6♣ Lead: ♦5

East wins the ♠A and returns the ♠3.

The best play at trick 3 is a small club. Technically you want to eliminate the majors and draw trumps, the idea being to play a club to the King and duck a club when West has ♣Ax, or, as here, East has ♣Qx. The defence is then endplayed. If you eliminate before the club play, East might wake up and unblock the ♣Q. The earlier the critical play – a club to the King – is made the better.

This problem illustrates one of the dangers of using bids which betray the shape of your hand. When the opponents win the declaration it is easier to play the hand.

There is an even more important reason for playing the club early. West must be looking at 2 Aces. He does not want you to slip through a singleton club. He does not know that his partner has made a fatuous responsive double with at least five hearts and will probably try to cash the ♥A.

If you play West for the ♠Q by cashing the ♠K and finessing the Jack and that loses, you are off. If you cash ♠AK and West proves to have a trump trick, you still have still a good chance.

Even if he does work out his partner's distribution and does not try to cash the ♥A, you should have him in a heart-club squeeze if he has the ♣Q or 4 clubs.

If East is 1=2=5=5 you can take four heart tricks and play a 5th, discarding your last diamond, before West can ruff. If East has the ♥J cash the hearts from the top. If West, has it, play ♥A and a heart to the Ten. How do you know who has the Jack? You don't, but, since West has four hearts and East only two, West is twice as likely to have it.

At worst, he will exit a club and you will have to guess.

July 2022 Peebles Hydro Bidding Challenge

Harry Smith

Firstly, a warm welcome to guest panellists, recent winners, Robert Clow and Bill Ross. We have a panel of 22 on this occasion, and a wide variety of answers. Indeed, two problems attracted 6 different answers each, and problem 7 pulled in 7 different answers, a record for problems I have set over the years as moderator. While much of bidding is about following your system and making the appropriate call which best describes your hand, skill shows through when judgement is required. What this and similar articles show are the wide differences of opinion that can exist even amongst expert players.

Problem 1 Teams All Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠T96	P	P	1♠*	2♥
♥T86432	?			
♦-				
♣AK98				

1♠* = 5-card M

We have support for partner, a useful void, an AK, and no wasted values in the suit where we expect partner to have shortage. We also have a nasty shock for East should he end up declaring. Two different messages we want to get across; which do we go for? The panel opts for the former but in four different ways. With no doubt as to where they want to be:

ASH (similarly **BENNETT**): 4♣. By no means ideal but I do not think that this hand is quite good enough (only 3 trumps) for a 'fit jump' bid of 4♣. A slam might well make but with East's high cards sitting over partner I will be conservative for a change.

Only one other mentioned the possibility of the fit jump. However, the other Mike came up with an interesting variation on this:

MCGINLEY (similarly **PIPER**): 3♣. A Non-Jump Fit bid. You are a passed hand so shouldn't be doing this with 6 clubs and a misfit for spades.

Most of the panel chose a different route giving various reasons:

PATERSON: 3♥. First duty is to support partner. Also, opponents may have a big diamond fit which they will not now find.

FREIMANIS: (similarly **MCGOWAN**, **ADAMSON**, **WILKINSON**) 3♥. selling this hand as a "better than minimum" raise with 3-card support, and distributional values compensating for lack of high cards.

Robert seems not too sure about it:

CLOW: 3♥. I don't like this but 2♠ seems wimpy and 3♠ lies about the length. I'd like to double then bid 3♠, invitational, but this may cloud the issue, as partner is likely to have diamond length.

Some see more potential in this hand:

GORDON: 3♥. Important to tell partner you have values for two reasons. He might be big and, apart from trumps, you are slam suitable.

SIME: 3♥. I am fearful that, if partner has a minimum opener, he will pass 2♥ because I am a passed hand. 4♠ should play well opposite a minimum - top clubs and crossruff. Since slam is possible, I start with a UCB.

DRAGIC: 3♥. An immediate 4♣ works if it is necessary to prevent South from bidding diamonds (an unlikely scenario considering his pass). But partner holding AKQxxx - Axxx Qxx will not move over a jump to 4♠.

SHIELDS: 3♥. There is excellent slam potential on this hand but I do not want to splinter in diamonds as LHO might double that to show diamonds. With so few hearts, LHO, a passed hand, won't be able to say anything over 3♥ and we'll find out something about partner's level of interest.

Anne takes a much more pessimistic view of the hand:

SYMONS: 2♠. An underbid, but alternatives are unappealing.

Slightly more upbeat:

WHYTE: 2♠. I think we have good chances of game and do not think we have much chance of extracting a sizeable penalty. Too much risk that even if there is a penalty it will not recompense for a missed vulnerable game. If I pass now, how can I convince my partner that I have good support for spades except by overbidding? I make a slight underbid now and can chip in with 3♠ later, if needed, without my partner over-valuing my hand.

And Brian, while making the same bid, does so tactically:

SHORT: 2♠. Some will pass and pass partner's double. I strongly disagree with this. East might occasionally make 2♥ and if 1 off, +200 may be seriously inadequate. We could be making anything up to a slam. Look at partner having AKQxxx, void, Axxx, Qxx: 6♠ is very likely. If 2♠ is passed out, we will score about +140 instead of +200. We'll know from any further bidding what's going on. We may even get to double hearts at a higher level.

Finally, let's hear the minority view going for a penalty:

MURDOCH: PASS. If opener reopens with a double, I will pass. If he bids 2♠ or 3♦

I will bid game and if he passes, we probably have more trumps than them.

ROSS: (similarly PEDEN, MCKAY) PASS. Hope partner can find a double.

VALENTINE: PASS. I want to defend 2♥x: with both partner and LHO short in hearts, there's a good chance this might happen; if partner has diamonds and spades it could be a telephone number. If partner reopens with anything other than double, we will likely end in 4♠.

I think the arguments in favour of taking supportive action are overwhelming. Game could be on opposite a 9-count (AKQxxx and nothing else in partner's hand), and an undoubled 2♥ will be poor compensation. A bit more, such as the hand suggested by both Brian and Miro and slam is good. An initial pass will never get you there.

Problem 1	Votes	Marks
3♥	10	10
3♣	2	6
2♠	3	5
4♠	2	4
PASS	5	4
3♠	0	4

Problem 2 Teams N/S Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠5	-	P	1♠	P
♥AQ5	2♦	P	3♣	P
♦KT864	?			
♣AQ85				

We have a very clear majority for an exploratory cue bid of 4♣. Let's hear the reasoning. Bill and Roy express the feeling of most:

ROSS: 4♣. Slam can't be far away.

BENNETT: 4♣. There is no reason to give up on slam here.

But what does 4♣ mean? On the same wavelength:

DRAGIC: 4♣. Cue agreeing spades. The jump to 3♠ shows a strong suit and fits in unbid suits are no longer possible. With this hand I have to explore slam.

FREIMANIS: 4♣. A control bid with spades set as trump. Would prefer to have a doubleton support but feels like the hand has too many useful cards not to make a move towards slam.

And similar but nuanced leaving other options open:

MCGOWAN: 4♣. My 2-over-one was not game-forcing, but partner's jump rebid is. His suit should be good enough to play for one loser even opposite a singleton, but I cannot take charge. It is possible that 6♦ is a better slam.

GORDON: 4♣. This could mean 2 things – natural or a cue. The default is natural. Partner will have the courtesy to bid 5♦ with AQx or AJx.

And then we have to consider how we will proceed:

ADAMSON: 4♣. It is better for partner to do the asking: he knows the quality of his suit and can find out about my controls.

WHYTE: 4♣. Non-serious slam-try. If my partner bids 4♦ I can bid 4♥, and if he bids 4♥ I can bid 4♠. Both these sequences leave him to decide whether he is good enough to continue. If he does not have good cards in diamonds, there is unlikely to be a decent slam.

ASH: 4♣. I suspect I will finish up bidding 4NT and then 6NT if opener has 2 keycards and ♠Q, but I might as well check if we have a club or diamond fit.

Some are cautious:

CLOW: 4♣. Cooperating. We can always play in 4♣ if he's minimum.

WILKINSON: 4♣. Forcing, a normal development; too strong for 3NT but will pass a 4♣ sign off from partner.

Others see real power in this hand:

SIME: 4♣. I thought about 3NT to protect my hand from the lead. Then I realised how good slam might be. Whatever partner holds outside spades will fill my gaps.

VALENTINE: 4♣. Presumably a cue, but if partner thinks it's natural that's fine too. I have far too good a hand for a simple 4♣ and 3NT isn't on my radar.

Iain and Ronan mention 3NT as an option and dismiss it out of hand. However, it was the choice of a few panellists. Can they convince us?

SYMONS: 3NT. Another underbid but see problem 4. In my book, the 3♠ rebid is limited to 15-16. Wish I was playing 2-over-1.

While personally a fan of Acol this is a good hand for 2-over-1 where the 3♣ rebid would set the suit, unequivocally strong.

PATERSON: 3NT. Since 4NT would be asking and 4♣ a cue bid, there is nothing else. Of course, partner would bid 4♦ with a suitable hand, or even 4♣ with say ♣Kxxx in a 6-1-2-4 shape, and a slam could still be bid.

The other 3NT bidders didn't elaborate. Anne agrees it is an underbid, and Jack is, I think, being optimistic that partner might go on after a clear sign-off. The one benefit of bidding NT now is to rightside the contract, and 2 others do so, but showing very different strengths:

MURDOCH: 4NT. If 3NT would be natural then so is 4NT.

That at least starts to show the power of the hand.

SHORT: 6NT. A bit of a stretch, but only a NT bid shows my hand type. Better than a spade slam as we may have an extra spade loser. If spades run, that will be good for 6NT. I want to bid 4NT (natural and invitational for me) but my partner will not understand this.

John would! I think his point that when 3NT is natural with no suit agreement, then so is 4NT, is valid. The Panel came up with 2 other routes forward:

McGINLEY: 4♥. Cue and slam try on the way to 4♠. The seemingly attractive alternative of 4♣ to say the same thing might be read as natural with 6/6 or 6/5 minors?

True but whatever partner takes it as, you would still be in control – See comments from Liz and Irving. I'm not clear what 4♥ says about your minor holdings. Finally a thoughtful contribution from Patrick:

SHIELDS: 5♠. There is slam potential but it will all depend on the strength of partner's spades. KQJTxx is fine but AKQ9xx is not. The 5♠ bid shows slam interest and equal controls in all the unbid suits. Partner should correctly identify that the worry is about trumps (RKC would not resolve this for me).

I have assessed the minority views on the merits of the arguments made and have marked down the serious underbid of 3NT

Problem 2	Votes	Marks
4♣	14	10
5♠	1	7
4NT	1	6
6NT	1	5
4H	1	3
3NT	4	2

Problem 3 Teams All Vul

♠KT5 ♥6 ♦KJ4 ♣AKQ965	S	W	N	E
	-	-	1♦	4♥
	?			

This is a truly difficult problem, but similar to situations we all face regularly at the table. The opposition have had the temerity to interfere in a sequence where we definitely have game values and want a serious investigation of slam possibilities. Let's start with what I did at the table:

SHORT: DBL. This is NOT a penalty double based on trumps; it shows “transferable values”. They may help to defeat 4♥ but will also be useful for any contract we play. I am thus committing to the 5-level so must be good. If partner bids 4♠ I will try 5♣ which should indicate some tolerance for diamonds.

That is exactly what happened; after my 5♣ he bid 5♦, and now I had an even greater problem.

PATERSON: DBL. If the clubs were KQJTxx I would bid 5♣.

I agree, but that is a significantly worse hand. Some did just that, though sadly in two cases without much explanation:

CLOW: 5♠. It would help to know who East is. We are a bit stuck so I will show a good hand. Partner can convert to diamonds, but slam is unlikely to be bid unless partner also has a heart control or some length.

GORDON: 5♠. With a regular partner, this situation should be covered – my preference being 5♥ shows spades and a minor; 5NT shows both minors. You need to stay fixed without such agreements. I play 4NT over 4♥ as natural and X as cards. Great problem.

Very interesting suggestions from Irving for partnership discussion. However, without that, what will 5♣ achieve? The most partner can have is AQ in each of the pointed suits, and if he does, slam will be very good indeed. But why with that would he go on over 5♣? With slam on opposite such a minimum holding a number of panellists decided to make the decision for partner but in different ways. Firstly those who think they play the hands better than partner:

ASH: 6♣. A reasonable shot and I can't see a way to find the safest slam. If I bid it quickly and confidently they may bid 6♥ – and then I will 'take the money'.

WILKINSON: 6♣. A guess, I suppose, but reasonable to infer that partner may have values outside the heart suit.

Miro makes the point about how little we need from partner:

DRAGIC: 6♣. 12 tricks are more likely than 11. Can't see partner's opening bid without 2 Aces in the context of the 4♥ overcall. Would 5NT offer a choice of contracts between diamonds and clubs when no one has bid clubs? It should but I would not test partner at the table.

MCGINLEY: 6♣. opposite an unfamiliar partner, as alternatives of double, 4NT, 5NT might be misunderstood.

While some panellists decide to play in the known fit:

SYMONS: 6♦. Couldn't make up my mind between 6♣ and 6♦. Neither may make, but the pre-empt has forced me to guess.

The advantage of 6♦ is that any force will be taken in the short trump hand and your clubs will be available for outside tricks without being dependent on the suit splitting kindly.

Only one panellist forced to slam and brought partner into the discussion

VALENTINE: 5NT. Pick a slam. My first thought was double, but I think slam rates to be cold here given that if partner holds the ♦AQ and the ♠A, that is probably enough with my club suit as well. Since I can see no sensible way to establish if the Grand is on, I'll make sure that we are in at least small slam and offer partner choice of strain.

Now we come to the majority view, but with different shades of opinion as to what it means. A few are clear it is RKC:

ROSS: 4NT. If partner shows 2 aces and the ♦Q, I will bid 6♦, if he doesn't show the ♦Q, I will bid 6♣.

You will need to find ♦Q in either contract.

ADAMSON: 4NT. RKC in my opinion.

And Liz wishes she agreed:

MCGOWAN: 4NT. Not RKC in competition when it is not a jump (which is rather a pity here – hard to construct a hand for partner that has two Aces and no play for slam). Shows diamond support with longer clubs. Ideally, I should have another diamond. I suspect partner will bid 5♦ leaving me with a guess – I shall guess to bid slam, though the fact that this is set as a problem suggests that may be the wrong thing to do!

Liz has made her next step clear as have Patrick and Bill:

SHIELDS: 4NT. I tend to trust vulnerable opponents' pre-empts (I have been bitten a few times from that) so partner won't have too many wasted values, and I am keen to go on. As always in cramped auctions, 4NT is two places to play and bypassing spades means the minors and diamond support, so it has to be a 3x♦/6x♣ hand. Once partner chooses the minor I will raise to slam.

WHYTE: 4NT. High-level pre-empts are effective, as they tend either to cow the opposition or encourage them to overbid. In this case, I may allow myself to be encouraged to overbid.

Roy, Iain and Gints aren't sure what it means, so they bid it as a transfer – transferring the blame!

BENNETT: 4NT. Awkward, not keen on anything really. Double is poor as it implies Spades. I think fall back on 4NT and let him work it out.

SIME: 4NT. Whichever we have agreed – either RKC, or clubs with secondary diamonds.

FREIMANIS: 4NT. likely gets interpreted as either Keycard in diamonds or two places to play (clubs / diamonds). I am expecting partner to have 2 keycards and I will make inference based on what partner bids next. If it is 5♣ / 5♦, I will assume partner took the bid as two places to play and raise to 6. If 5♥ / 5♠ I will assume that the bid was interpreted as keycard and bid slam.

Those who know what 4NT means are going to get to the slam, so why not show the extra values now with Ronan's suggestion of 5NT? Definitely the best thought out answer and marked up accordingly.

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

Problem 4 Teams E/W Vul

♠QJT9732	S	W	N	E
♥7	1♠	P	2♦	P
♦A3	?			
♣AK8				

A simpler problem, which the panel took as just a question of how many spades to bid? 2♠ wasn't suggested so it's between 3♠ and 4♠. The first question is whether 3♠ is forcing:

SHORT: 4♠. 3♠ will miss game too often when partner has no spade support, which we don't really need. 2 spades and 1 heart are our 3 most likely losers.

ASH: 3♠. If partner passes this, we almost certainly will not be making game. If partner has values then it will be easier to progress than if I rebid 4♠ – which I might do on another day.

Brian and Mike are not treating 3♠ as forcing. Both are well-known advocates of 2-over-1, so possibly less familiar with Acol style these days. The rest of the panel either explicitly stated it was forcing or that was implicit in their comments.

FREIMANIS (also MURDOCH, SHIELDS): 3♠. Forcing to game with a long suit.

BENNETT: 3♠. Forcing here so that is the bid, no second choice.

SIME: 3♠. Only because 2♠ is not forcing.

Then there is the question of which is stronger:

GORDON: 3♠. You are max + for 3♠, but 4♠ crowds the bidding.

MCGINLEY (similarly ADAMSON): 3♠. A tad under-strength but you only have a 5-loser hand, and partner will treat ♠K(x) as 'gold'.

McKAY: 4♠. A bit unilateral but I think it expresses my hand best.

CLOW: 3♠. I have a good suit and only 5 losers. Partner only needs a Spade honour, ♦K and ♥A for a decent slam.

I would certainly take the view that 3♠ is stronger, and this seems to be the majority view of the panel. Tony and Jack made an argument for 4♠ being the best start if we were to go forward:

WILKINSON: 4♠. The bid that will allow partner to value a top spade when looking for a slam.

PATERSON: 4♠. This says the hand belongs in spades. With ♥A and ♠A/K partner can go on. 4♥ would work as a self-splinter, but probably it should be exclusion RKCB in diamonds.

In my view, 4♠ might make him think he doesn't need a top honour in his hand to go for slam. One panellist didn't think 3♠ settled the playing denomination:

DRAGIC: 3♠. This sets the suit unless partner bids 4♦ in which case I would cooperate.

Although in the minority, I feel Ronan, Bill and Liz have made the best case:

VALENTINE: 4♠. Too good for a 4♠ opener, too strong for a 2♠ rebid, too weak for a 3♠ rebid (if it sets the suit with some slam ambition) but a hand that wants to play in game opposite a 2/1 response. That leaves 4♠.

WHYTE: 4♠. Is there any other option? This hand illustrates the dictum, "the faster you go to game the less strong you are". I want to be in 4♠, I may not make it, but that is where I want to be.

McGOWAN: 4♠. This suit is not good enough for a GF 3♠ in my book, and 2♠ is unfortunately not forcing in my methods. I have tremendous controls,

and may miss slam, but at least I am in the right spot when partner has a singleton spade.

Problem 4	Votes	Marks
3♠	13	10
4♠	9	9
3♣	0	3
2♠	0	2
5♠	0	1

Problem 5 Teams All Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠QT8	-	P	P	1♦
♥KJ85	Dbl	1♥	P	2♦
♦A4	P	P	Dbl	P
♣AT86	?			

What does double mean? Partner is a passed hand who couldn't find a bid over 1♥, despite your take-out double.

CLOW: 2♠. Partner shouldn't have 4 hearts so presumably he has 4 or 5 Spades and some clubs.

But why didn't he bid 1♠ last time?

SHIELDS: 3♣. It would be nice to know what it would have meant if partner had doubled on the previous round. With half my partners it is takeout, and with half it is that suit, and I have to record which on the CC or I'd never remember! Traditionally 1♦ - X - 1♥ - X would show hearts, and a penalty double of 2♦ (declarer has shown 6+ here) is too unlikely, so partner will be making a takeout double and for sure has not got five spades, so I shall assume 4+ clubs.

But with enough values to double now, surely he had enough to bid 2♣ last time?

SHORT: 2♥. Natural and to play. Partner has not got 4 spades (he would bid 1♠ over 1♥) and almost certainly has 4 hearts for this unusual action. This

sequence will seldom occur in club bridge!

ROSS: 2♥. Partner must have hearts.

Why didn't he double 1♥ which would have shown hearts?

WILKINSON: 2♠. Perhaps I would bid 3♥ if I was my LHO and will raise 3♥ to 4.

Suspecting a psyche, but why didn't partner double 1♥ to expose that?

WHYTE: 2♥. Partner has some values, wants to compete, but does not have a 4-card spade suit or he would bid 1♠ immediately over 1♥. He might have clubs, but not 5, since again he would bid 2♣ when it was cheapest to do so. Thus, he either has diamonds or hearts. He would pass 2♦ with diamonds, a penalty double is just not good bridge, ergo he has hearts. I bid 2♥ rather than three, as partner can raise if he envisages a game (unlikely). I don't care whether the 1♥ bid was a psyche or not, we have at least a 4-4 fit.

Well-reasoned, but still doesn't explain why partner didn't double 1♥.

Can the clear majority understand what is going on?

FREIMANIS: PASS. Expecting Dbl to be for penalties due to lack of bidding the first time around.

MURDOCH: PASS. The 1♥ response pre-empted nothing except a hand that was going to pass out 1♦ doubled

ASH: PASS. I believe that this shows a hand that was going to pass 1♦ doubled. If I am totally wrong at least they will not be making game and it is not easy to see what other spot will bring us a plus score.

SIME: PASS. I assume that I am still playing with the same partner who passed 1♥.

VALENTINE: PASS. Partner wants to penalise 2♦ – they could bid either of the unbid suits if they wanted to compete. I do not have a hand that justifies pulling the double.

DRAGIC: PASS. Over 1♥ partner could have bid a suit, NT or doubled. His pass indicates no holding in any of these suits. A trump stack is unlikely, but I expect 3334 balanced 10+ and I'll be happy to defend 2♦ doubled.

ADAMSON: (similarly SYMONS). PASS. Partner has long diamonds. He has not suddenly found that he is 44 in the black suits.

MCGINLEY: PASS. Partner's double is penalty. He doesn't have 4 hearts and failed to bid 1♠/2♣ over their 1♥.

MCGOWAN: PASS. I have never seen this auction; hope I never will! Most low-level doubles are takeout, but if partner was too weak to bid last time he cannot change his mind now and put me on the spot. Hard to imagine a suitable diamond holding for his actions, but if the score is -380 or -580 we can both look for a different partner.

PATERSON: PASS. Partner would seem to have some eight points but has no major (no 1♠ or X at first turn) and does not have a decent club suit, so this must suggest penalties. There is no assured fit to run to, so I pass. It will probably go off, but -180 would not be a disaster.

GORDON: PASS. Can't be anything but penalties. Can it be 6 or 7 HCP, competing? No! If partner has not enough to bid over 1♥ (partner has fewer than 4 hearts), it's unsound to decide to compete later.

BENNETT: PASS. The double cannot be takeout or he would have doubled 1♥, so bite the bullet and pass.

I strongly agree with pass. The North hand will not be made public to protect the guilty and to avoid the editor having to remove obscenities from this article.

Problem 5	Votes	Marks
Pass	14	10
2♥	4	4
2NT	0	3
3♣	3	2
2♠	1	2

Problem 6 Teams E/W Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠T5	P	P	1♣	P
♥J952	P	Dbf	1♠	P
♦T7652	2♣	P	2♥	P
♣64	?			

What is going on? Your partner appears to have suggested 3 suits. What does he have? Where should you go? We'll start with those who are most ambitious. One believes all partner's bids:

Freimanis: 4♥. The hand does not have much, but it does have a fit with some ruffing potential as it looks like partner is void in diamonds. Partner was not forced to make a further bid after 2♣, so must have quite a hand for it.

And one interprets his hand differently:

BENNETT: 3♠. Don't know what he is playing at— bidding out shape? If so, then Pass is right, but that sounds strange, so I'll play him for 5-2-1-5 and bid 3♠.

Then we have 3 panellists moving forward in the hope that we have found the denomination:

McGOWAN: 3♥. Another auction I hope not to see again. I would not have seen it this time because I would pass 1♠, expecting at least a 5-card suit. Partner

must have a big hand, yet he did not bid 1NT, nor did he redouble, as I would expect with 5 good clubs. Can he really be 4405? Something like AKQx AKxx – Axxxx? I suppose North might re-open with Jxxx Qxx AKxx Kx... I don't think I should pass, so I make the bid that best describes my hand, while signing up a new partner with the other hand.

CLOW: 3♥. Partner must have a very good hand maybe something like KQxx KQxx – AKxxx:

SYMONS: 3♥. Can partner be 4405? Or is 2♥ a probe for NT? I should probably pass, but she obviously has a big hand.

Irving makes the same move forward but sees other possibilities:

GORDON: 3♥. Partner has either a 4405, 4315 or 5305. 2♥ is a fragment in the latter 2 cases. To bid 3 times opposite a passing partner, he must have a giant - as good as the equivalent of AK, AK, AK, but could have more. Your 2 Jacks are working, so I would keep the bidding open at teams. With 5305, partner, if not passing, should bid 3♠ rather than 4♥. I would pass 3♠. Another good problem.

Then we have several panellists who also see the heart bid in a similar way to Irving but are less ambitious, and take partner back to his original denomination:

MURDOCH: 3♣. Only North knows what his bidding means but it is probably different from what I think, that it shows 4-3-0-6 and 19+ though I can't reconcile this with failure to redouble.

SHORT: 3♣. 2♥ can't be natural. Partner would bid 1♥ over the double with 4405.

ADAMSON: 3♣. Sounds like partner has a very strong 4315 or similar. I have nothing for him.

DRAGIC: 3♣. I don't think partner was looking for a better fit with the 2♥ bid. I have no diamond stop and no unexpected club support, so 3♣ will be plenty.

These 4 choices account for half the panel. The other half all pass. Why? Some, like Liz and Roy, wouldn't have been faced with this problem:

WILKINSON: (also ROSS) PASS. The bid I would have made last time too.

WHYTE: PASS. Opponents are rather quiet. Sounds like my partner has a shapely hand in the 19+ area and does not want to play in NT. He could well have 4-4-0-5 or more likely 4-4-1-4. Could he have sufficient for game opposite my miserly hand? Almost certainly not, and I think I have to be stronger to say 3♥.

PATERSON: PASS. Partner could have 4 hearts, because it is more flexible to bid the spades first. So we could have a playable heart game. But he could be 4-3-1-5, in which case we are high enough already. Pass is the percentage choice. But with ♥A rather than ♥J I would raise.

McGINLEY: PASS. Taking partner as 4-4-0-5 shape but not as good as say AKxx AKxx Void AQTxx when he might have made a 'power XX' on the second round.

SHIELDS: PASS. Partner should have 3-4 hearts for this bid, and a good hand, but I still cannot find enough justification for a raise, and no other denomination appeals, unless possibly clubs if partner had 4-3-0-6 but how can I tell?

VALENTINE: PASS. Partner seems to have a strong 4-3-1-5 hand. With no obvious fit, pass looks clear.

SIME: PASS. If East is paying attention, a trump lead is coming wherever we

land. Our best spot must be 2♥, where my hand may contribute a couple of tricks.

ASH: PASS. I think partner is 4-3-0-6 with a good hand. 3♣ is probably the best part score and I will certainly bid this if they double 2♥. However, they haven't taken any further action yet and 2♥ could do quite well with some top cards from partner and diamond ruffs in his hand.

The panel mainly interpreted partner's auction correctly. He had KQJ6 / AK4 / 4 / AKQ53. With this hand, or any of the slight variants on it that the panel has suggested game in any denomination is a long way off, and the main aim must be to get a positive score.

Problem 6	Votes	Marks
Pass	11	10
3♣	5	6
3♥	4	3
2NT	0	3
4♥	1	2
3♠	1	2

Problem 7 Pairs None Vul

♠A97 ♥AKQ743 ♦AQ ♣54	S	W	N	E
	-	P	P	P
	1♥	P	1♠	P
	?			

A record-breaking problem – 7 different answers from the panel and no answer has as much as 30% of the panel supporting it. It is a type of problem that frequently appears in Bidding Challenges where the hand has no second suit and is too good for a rebid of 3 of the opening Major. No panellist made the 3♥ underbid.

WHYTE: 2♣. I am going to take a probably lonely path by obfuscating and hoping my partner or the opposition will

keep the bidding open for me to bid again. 3♥ just does not seem the right bid in Acoll terms.

The normal answer is to bid a 3-card minor, so let's hear from those panellists who were willing to do this even on a 2-card minor. Bidding the suit that at least has values in it, we have 6 panellists:

ASH: 3♦. An old favourite of bidding competitions! There is no right answer but this at least forces to game and gives us the option of playing in spades if partner rebids those. I expect partner to be aware that 3♦ is possibly a 3-card suit so I do not expect a leap to 5♦.

BENNETT: 3♦. Must find a forcing bid if possible. 3♦ takes care of that. If he bids 3♥, 3♠ or 3NT we're fine.

SIME: 3♦. Not a good description but avoids disasters such as 3NT off the club suit. We also keep both major suit slams in the picture.

SHIELDS: 3♦. I could bid 3NT to show a hand which might make 3NT with long hearts, but the club weakness and the strong possibility of wanting to play in spades stops me doing that. There are dangers in 3♦ that partner might insist on diamonds, but I will keep insisting on hearts and hope for the best.

Ronan makes a case for the weaker minor:

VALENTINE: 3♣. I don't want to bid 3♥ for fear it isn't forcing. So I will make my cheapest known GF call. Might get a bit ugly, but with any luck partner will bid 3♥/3♠ and I can breathe a sigh of relief.

There is another argument for 3♣. If you end up playing from your side in hearts or NT you might deter the club lead.

We have 3 different levels of NT suggested. Possibly overcooking at this stage:

ROSS: 4NT. if partner shows the ♣A I shall bid 6♥; if not I sign off in 5♥.

You have a great hand but I think you need a bit more information from partner before launching into this. And then those undercooking:

SYMONS: 2NT. A bit good for this, but I'd like to find out if partner has 5+ spades. Over 3NT I'll go back to 4♥. Hope it doesn't go all pass!

MCGOWAN: 2NT. Wish I was playing Acoll 2s! Too strong for a NF jump rebid, inventing a diamond suit seems silly. I have the values for 3NT but that normally shows a shortage in partner's suit, so we will not get to 4♠ when that is the right spot. I just hope partner can respond to 2NT – if he bids 3♠ to show a long suit in a weak hand, I shall raise him to game anyway.

MCGINLEY: 2NT. Natural and forcing unless partner has scraped up a response with 4-5hcp. This allows him to investigate 3-card spade support. If he does anything else, will retreat to 4♥.

And bidding what he thinks he can make:

FREIMANIS: 3NT. A bit stuck for a bid as other bids are either non-forcing or just guessing what partner has (5 spades / 2 hearts). Feels like 3NT should be the practical bid with lack of methods. Does not require much from partner to make.

True but it excludes any chance of playing in a 5-3 spade fit. The rest also go for what they think they can make, possibly safer, but still one trick more, and again forfeiting any chance of finding a spade fit:

SHORT: 4♥. No bid ideal. This is the practical shot. I don't want to play in a 4-3 spade fit and I'm too good for 3♥.

DRAGIC: 4♥. Well done to those who bid diamonds, land in 3NT rightsided and this turns out to be the best spot.

WILKINSON: 4♥. I see we are meant to imply we are not using Acol on this hand with our failure to open an Acol 2 bid. Don't tell me that partner can't pass 3♦ because I once did just that.

But did you still have a partner after doing so?

MURDOCH: 4♥. Would not object to 2♣ opening which we tend to be too precious about, A jump to 3NT is natural with 6 hearts.

PATERSON: 4♥. Back in the day when 2♥ was a strong opening, this showed 3-card spade support, which was useful.

CLOW: 4♥. In my book this shows an 18/19 hand usually with a spade honour. I don't like any of the alternatives, 2NT or 3♦ and raises in Spades are just a stab in the dark.

Many good and interesting arguments put forward for the various options. I think those who went for the artificial jump in a minor have the best case keeping all options open. There were 8 in that camp and 7 in the jump to game camp, so I feel justified in marking the latter down.

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

Problem 8 Teams E/W Vul

♠K9653 ♥5 ♦5 ♣AJ9742	S	W	N	E
	-	1♣	P	1♠
	P	2♦	P	3NT
	P	P	P	

What do you lead?

The only suit not selected by the panel is the unbid suit – that must be unusual! All the other 3 suits had their supporters. Let's start with those who have reached the chapter recommending fourth highest of your longest and strongest:

ROSS: (similarly **WILKINSON**) ♣7. 4th highest. Looks like there is a big misfit here.

The rest of the panel split into 2 groups. The first group goes for the suit they perceive as weakness in declarer's armoury:

MURDOCH: ♦5. This seems obvious. Are you sure this is a problem?

There's always one who says this! They often are taking a minority view.

BENNETT: ♦5. A heart is naïve and a club wrong as opener has 5 of them. I suppose a spade is possible, but I think the ♦5 is the best of a bad bunch.

VALENTINE: ♦5. Nothing is particularly appetising, and it was between this and a spade. A heart looks to be leading into declarer's holding and a club looks like being more helpful to declarer. So it is between the pointed suits. Given RHO bid 1♠ over 1♣, it is likely that they have at least 5 so despite my entry and almost decent spot cards, it's unlikely to set up many tricks for the defence. Potentially diamonds are declarer's vulnerability and I get to lead through the good holding. Unlikely to give much away and could just strike gold.

Ronan makes a good case but there is a clear majority for the other option both he and Roy referred to. Let's hear from a few why they have chosen to lead round to declarer's first bid suit:

FREIMANIS: ♠5. We need tricks and it does not look like partner has any decent hearts from his lack of bidding, so spades might be our best shot for a suit to cash against 3NT.

GORDON: ♠5. By default – no second choice. It's often right to attack declarer's first suit v 3NT.

WHYTE: ♠5. Process of elimination. My partner did not have the wherewithal to intervene with a red suit over 1♣, so I cross these two suits off the list. The clubs are at least five cards on my left in dummy, so not a club either.

ASH: ♠5. I would prefer to lead a green card! *An ecologically sound answer!* But in the absence of this option I am going to hope that partner has some help in spades. It is likely that declarer only has a 4-card suit so ideally partner will have 2 or 3 spades, get in before my ♣A is knocked out and allow me to set up the suit. All the suits are breaking badly so even if partner has only 1 spade, this may well not be too costly.

SIME: ♠5. It helps that you gave me the ♠9. It is likely that dummy is short.

MCGOWAN: ♠5. West has reversed with a less than solid club suit so surely has good diamonds. East's jump to 3NT suggests good hearts. Maybe his spades are not so great, though he probably has 5 of them.

SHIELDS: ♠5. Partner did not overcall 1♦ or 1♥ when the chance was there, and therefore cannot have a suit which justifies a lead from me. Clubs might work better for us, but dummy could go down with KQT8 opposite a void and I'd hate it when declarer put in the

Ten. The fact that declarer didn't bid Fourth Suit or 2♠ over the reverse gives me some hope that declarer's spades are not the longest.

MCGINLEY: ♠5. hoping partner has a useful fragment, say QJx or better. He is known to hold both red suits yet wasn't suitable to overcall or make a weak jump, so one explanation is that he has spade values.

DRAGIC: ♠5. No overcall from partner means red suits are well stopped. Maybe spades aren't.

SHORT: ♠5. Partner has not bid 1♥ over 1♣ and is marked with at least a few points. Opener may be something like 1345 with partner's few points in spades. Most responders will rebid spades with 5 over a reverse, so hopefully I will get in with ♣A after conceding East's (hopefully) one spade stop, to cash the setting spade.

Case proven in my opinion.

Problem 8	Votes	Marks
♠5	14	10
♦5	6	6
♣7	2	4
♥5	0	2
♣J	0	2

An extremely difficult set as evidenced by there being 38 different answers, and 6 of the problems having 4 or more suggested answers. In a set like this, Iain Sime's 100% score is quite exceptional and he is miles ahead of the rest of the field. Second, still with a commendable score of 71, is Alex Adamson. Thank you to all the panel for their helpful responses, and I hope all readers found the differences in view and the explanations for them both interesting and instructive

Panel Answers

July 2022

Problem		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Top Scoring Choice		3♥	4♣	4NT	3♠	Pass	Pass	3♦	♠5	Tot
1	Iain Sime	3♥	4♣	4NT	3♠	Pass	Pass	3♦	♠5	80
2	Alex Adamson	3♥	4♣	4NT	4♠	Pass	3♣	3NT	♠5	71
3=	Mike Ash	4♠	4♣	6♣	3♠	Pass	Pass	3♦	♠5	70
	Miro Dragic	3♥	4♣	6♣	3♠	Pass	3♣	4♥	♠5	70
5	Patrick Shields	3♥	5♠	3NT	3♠	3♣	Pass	3♦	♠5	69
6	Gints Freimanis	3♥	4♣	4NT	3♠	Pass	4♥	3NT	♠5	68
7=	Irving Gordon	3♥	4♣	5♣	3♠	Pass	3♥	3♦	♠5	67
	Ronan Valentine	Pass	4♣	5NT	4♠	Pass	Pass	3♣	♦5	67
9	Liz McGowan	3♥	4♣	4NT	4♠	Pass	3♥	2NT	♠5	66
10	Jack Paterson	3♥	3NT	Dbl	4♠	Pass	Pass	4♥	♠5	64
11	Roy Bennett	4♠	4♣	4NT	3♠	Pass	3♠	3♦	♦5	62
12	Tony Wilkinson	3♥	4♣	6♣	4♠	2♥	Pass	4♥	♣7	61
13	John Murdoch	Pass	4NT	4NT	3♠	Pass	3♣	4♥	♦5	60
14	Mike McGinley	3♣	4♥	6♣	3♠	Pass	Pass	2NT	♠5	59
15=	Douglas Piper	3♣	3NT	5♣	3♠	Pass	Pass	3♦	♦5	58
	Bill Whyte	2♠	4♣	4NT	4♠	2♥	Pass	2♣	♠5	58
17	Bob Clow	3♥	4♣	5♣	3♠	2♠	3♥	4♥	♠5	57
18	Bill Ross	Pass	4♣	4NT	3♠	2♥	Pass	4NT	♣7	54
19	Derrick Peden	Pass	4♣	6♦	4♠	3♣	3♣	3♣	♦5	53
20	Brian Short	2♠	6NT	Dbl	4♠	2♥	3♣	4♥	♠5	52
21	Anne Symons	2♠	3NT	6♦	3♠	Pass	3♥	2NT	♠5	51
22	Tim McKay	Pass	3NT	5♣	4♠	3♣	Pass	2NT	♦5	41

Competitors Top Scores

This was a tough set on which to score well, so particular congratulations to:

Douglas Mitchell (Buchanan) on a winning score of 73.

Other good scores:	Dave Hodge (Kilwinning)	69
	Bob Brown (GBC)	67
	Matthew Pumphrey (Loreburn)	67
	Dougie Kemp (Carlton)	63
	David Welsh (Stirling & Union)	63
	Russell Frame (GBC)	61
	Dave Duddell (New Melville)	60
	Ken Rae (Lerwick)	58
	Moyra Forrest (New Melville)	54
	Julia Palmer (New Melville)	54

SBNews Bidding Problems

September 2022

You are always South, presented with these pesky problems.

You are playing with an excellent first-time partner but had time to agree only a basic system:

5-card Majors, 15-17 No-trump,
2/1 forcing to game,

1♣/1♦ = 3+.

Please send your answers to the Editor:

liz.mcgowan@blueyonder.co.uk

quoting your SBU Membership number.

Closing date: 26 August 2022

Problem 1 Teams None Vul

♠654	S	W	N	E
♥T84	-	-	1♣	1♠
♦KQT2	?			
♣KQJ				

Problem 2 Teams All Vul

♠9832	S	W	N	E
♥A82	-	-	1♦	1♠
♦A82	?			
♣AJ6				

Problem 3 Teams NS Vul

♠Q9	S	W	N	E
♥AKQT9	-	-	-	1♦
♦AT	1♥	P	1♠	P
♣T963	?			

Problem 4 Teams All Vul

♠KT764	S	W	N	E
♥K542	-	-	1♣	P
♦AK87	1♠	P	4♣	-
♣-	?			

4♣ = 6 clubs, 4 spades, GF.

Problem 5 Matchpoints All Vul

♠A2	S	W	N	E
♥AKQT4	-	1♣	P	3♠
♦J96	?			
♣A94				

3♠ = weak preemptive

Problem 6 Teams EW Vul

♠T2	S	W	N	E
♥93	-	-	P	1♦
♦KQT3	P	1♥	P	2♥
♣QJT53	P	P	2♠	P
	?			

Problem 7 Teams All Vul

♠AKQJ	S	W	N	E
♥Q742	1♦	P	1♥	P
♦AQJT5	4♣	P	4♦	P
♣-	?			

4♣ = short clubs, 4+ hearts

Problem 8 Matchpoints NS Vul

♠KQ862	S	W	N	E
♥KT9	P	1♣	1♦	1NT
♦95	End			
♣JT9				

What is your lead?