

February 2023 Bronze Bidding Challenge

A Mixed Bag from various sources this month.

Problem 1 **Teams** **None Vul** **Dealer West**

♠62	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥973	1♣	Pass	3♣	3♠
♦J9	?			
♣AKQ974				

Danny suggested this problem after his imaginative shot came a bit of a cropper.

HAMILTON: 4♣. At the table I had this hand and bid a double, hoping partner would read my mind and bid 3NT with a Spade stop. I thought "what's the worst that could happen?" Partner passed, I misdefended to give an overtrick and 3♠x+1 on the first board of a long teams match.

*No-one else appears to have considered a double!
John points out the flaws in a 4♣ rebid.*

MURDOCH: PASS. 4♣ may tempt North into 4♠ when he would pass 3♠.

Iain makes the case for pre-empting last time: .

SIME: PASS. The best bidders give their partner the information needed to make decisions. On this hand we could have done that by opening 3♣. Partner would have known that we had a one-suiter, about six tricks (law of 500) and little defence. With four trumps, he may have bid 5♣. Opponents probably could not have doubled 5♣ for penalty. A "comic" 3NT or 4♣ by partner would also have thwarted South's 3♠ overcall. As it is, 5♣ looks like minus 500 on a good day, dummy providing two tricks. Of course, North-South may misjudge over 5♣. But North may also misjudge to pass out 3♠; I am hoping for that – it can't cost 1100.

Some other panellists fancy a sacrifice.

TUDOR: 5♣. I'm not expecting it to make it but maybe I won't get doubled, or at least put North to an awkward guess. Partner could have the right cards for nine tricks in No-Trump, but feels a bit like wishful thinking!

MCKAY: 5♣. I have no defence to the likely 4♠.

This is true, but it is also true that 6=3=3=2 is not a good distribution for a sacrifice. How many of your outside losers will partner be able to cover? Even -300 is not much of a save against a non-vulnerable game they have not yet bid. Your best hope is that nobody doubles.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
PASS	5	10	17
5♣	2	7	11
4♣	1	5	8

Partner had K74 AJ6 K86 9743. ♦A was onside, so 5♣ is 'only' -3. Seems unlikely that North would bid on to game, though 4♣ can make double dummy

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

♠AQT9765	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥A	1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
♦J975	?			
♣4				

*8 panellists are equally divided among 4 answers!
We have a cautious pair:*

TUDOR: 2♠. If I jump to 3♠ my partner will expect more in the way of high cards, and then may get carried away! I'll cross my fingers, and toes, and hope partner bids on over 2♠.

MCKAY: 2♠. The extra spade is good but I don't think it is strong enough for 3♠

In SBU standard a 2-over-1 response is not forcing to game. If partner has something like x KQxxxx xx AJxx these panellists may be quite high enough.

The pair who cut to the chase:

MALE: 4♠. showing a one suited weak hand.

MURDOCH: 4♠. I would have opened 4♠.

It is quite easy to produce a hand opposite where 4♠ will make: give partner a spade or two and some diamond values. I think this is a practical shot aimed at a practical spot.

One pair aims higher:

SIME: 3♠. Game-forcing and asking for a cue bid if suitable.

SANDERS: 3♠. This hand is really good so happy to game force. Not a fan of a 4♠ rebid because it gives no room for partner to manoeuvre and traditionally shows a solid 7-card suit with an Ace outside!

That seems a bit too specific. I think the 4♠ rebid shows a good 7-card suit in a hand just too good to pre-empt 4♠ last time. I would feel much happier about suggesting slam if I had the ♦A instead of the singleton ♥A.

Finally, the pair who introduce their second suit:

FRAME 3♦: I'm heading for at least 4♠ here but I want to show partner my shape first to give him room to explore a possible slam if he reckons he's suitable.

3♦, a new suit at the 3-level, is game-forcing, but it would normally show a better suit than this. What form do you expect the exploration to take? Will a diamond raise, or a 3NT rebid get you any further forward?

HAMILTON: 3♦. This is what I bid at the table and I think it's OK. Couldn't decide between 2♠ and 3♠ so bid something else.

Sorry, Danny, but this is really bad advice! When you want to play in spades you have to bid spades. 2½♠ is not a legal call, so plump for the number of spades that comes closest to describing your values. Bidding something else simply postpones the problem – or gives partner an unnecessary headache.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
4♠	2	10	5
2♠	2	8	7
3♠	2	7	19
3♦	2	5	5

Partner had 3 KQJ974 A KJ953. Whatever you bid she will push on to game, or even slam, and with ♠KJxx sitting over you and hearts breaking 5-1 all games are doomed. Unlucky!

Problem 3 **Teams:** **All Vul** **Dealer West**

♠AJ ♥T4 ♦AJ972 ♣Q652	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
	2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
	?			

With no particularly good bid available at this point, which effort is the least bad?

The majority vote goes to 2♠.

SANDERS: 2♠. East's 4th suit forcing bid suggests five spades. So this action indicates a doubleton spade because with 3 card spade support you have a singleton heart and are worth a jump to 3♠!

I am not so sure about that 5th spade. East could have many reasons for bidding 4th suit, including hands too strong for an immediate raise of one of your minors. You might bid 3♠ with something like AJx x AJxxx Qxxx, but would you with xxx x AJxxx AQxx?

Your task here is to describe your distribution as best you can. You bid 3♦ with a 6th diamond; or 3♣ with a 5th club; or 2NT with a heart stopper; or 2♠ with some support. I agree with the majority here:

SIME: 2♠. How lucky we are that the smallest lie is also the cheapest.

There are two dissenters

HAMILTON: 3♣. Don't want to lie about the majors and I think partner will expect this when 5422 and no sensible bid.

I would bid 3♣ if my clubs were stronger, something more like my second example above. But one reason for partner's 4th suit bid might be a strong club raise, I do not want to excite her by rebidding this weak suit.

Frame: 3♦. I'm minimum for the auction so far and, although partner has forced to game, I want to deny any slam interest unless he has a "mountain".

It is fashionable to play 4th suit forcing to game, but not everybody plays that way. 3♦ may work well if partner rebids hearts and you can show belated spade preference. On other continuations you might feel happier if you had bid 2♠ this time.

Many competitors thought 2NT was the best option. The problem is that partner will expect a heart stopper, at least a doubleton honour, and may bid 3NT with Jxx or worse. They may not be amused if the defence can cash 5 heart tricks

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♠	6	10	14
3♦	1	6	8
3♣	1	5	2
3♠	0	4	1
2NT	0	4	11

Partner has K9742 AQ32 - A943. The breaks are fortunate, and you can make game in either black suit – if you are Deep Finesse. Most of the field failed in 4♠.

Problem 4 Teams: NS Vul Dealer East

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠KJ43	-	-	1♦	1♥
♥K9632	?			
♦5				
♣KJ9				

The question here is do you want to try to extract a penalty from vulnerable opponents, or do you want to go after your own game?

Nearly half the panel are after blood.

HAMILTON: PASS. Surely partner will reopen with a double (having short hearts)? We have the perfect hand to defend. Can probably make 3NT too, but at this vulnerability hoping for 1♥x-3. Lead a diamond vs 1♥ if we end there.

Good point about the lead: when you have 5 trump and they are not solid you should lead your shortest suit. Try to make ruffs to shorten your trump to avoid being endplayed later.

MURDOCH: PASS. I hope we have a penalty and hope we can take it. Don't know if 1♠ shows 5 with this partner so that rules out 1♠.

The SBU Standard System does include negative doubles, but I am not sure how far this has penetrated. I have upgraded the 1♠ bid that was popular among the competitors because it is in line with the majority panel thinking. They are all negative doublers.

MALE: DBL. To get my spades in. I don't think trap passing is going to get us rich.

TUDOR: DBL. I'll show my 4-card Spade suit. Passing and waiting for partner's Reopening Double usually results in playing in 1♥ undoubled!

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
DBL	5	10	8
1♠	0	9	17
PASS	3	6	1
2NT	0	5	7
3NT	0	4	1
1NT	0	2	2

Partner has QT5 T75 AK74 AQ4. 3NT is a favourite to make, and partner has the wrong distribution for a re-opening double... if he passes 1♥ will surely fail!

Top Scores

This was an odd set: nobody managed perfection, but everybody scored 25 or more.

Rather than list you all I have included only those with 30 and above. Apologies to those who scored 29.

2* Master	Charles Fogelman	GBC	34
1* Master	Roy Heanes	New Melville	32
	David King	Berwick	30
Master	Jane Smithson	Berwick	36
	Neil Bulleid	Buchanan	31
District Master	Ken Tait	Marmion	37
	Graham Vincent/Andy McKinnel	Linlithgow	37
	John Smithson	Berwick	36
	Ken Brown	Pentland	35
	Sheila Ritchie	Dundee	35
	May Armour	Kyle	32
	Paul Kerr	Troon	31
Local Master	Peter Beckett	New Melville	33
	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	32
	Keith Smith	New Melville	32
	Gavin Easton	Longniddry	31
	Angela Ford	Maccabi	30
Club Master	Angela Horsfall	Carlton	32
	Fiona McCourt	Bearsden Academy	30
Novice	Mairi Lowson	New Melville	30

Some partnerships discuss the hands and send in a joint entry.

Some partnerships send in separate entries, perhaps competing with one another?

Normally these couples disagree on at least half the answers, but for the first time the Smithsons from Berwick were in total harmony – congratulations to them both!