

Bronze Bidding Challenge: May 2023

A set of problems from the 2023 Lady Milne, the Women's Home International.

Problem 1 **Teams:** **None Vul, Dealer East**

♠AK753	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥A9	-	-	Pass	Pass
♦J	?			
♣AK632				

This hand has great potential if partner has a few useful cards.

TUDOR: 2♣. If partner has a fit for either black suit then we want to be in Game (or slam) regardless of her point count.

We certainly do – but is this the best way to start? All will be well if opponents pass throughout, but what if they pre-empt in a red suit? Will you be able to get both your suits into the auction?

Most agree that the best way to bid a strong 2-suiter is to open one of your suits, planning to make a forcing bid in the other next time. The question then becomes: which suit to open?

FRAME: 1♠: Hoping to make a jump rebid in Spades at my next turn, if there is one!

MALE: 1♠. What a nice hand, only 4 losers. I favour opening 1♠ though. Two-suited hands need space to explore. It used to be popular to open 1♣ with equal length in the black suits. But that would make partner think I was 6/5.

We are taught to open the higher-ranking of two 5-card suits, but when I was young an exception was made for the black suits. Opening 1♠ may make it hard to get clubs into the auction later. Iain has a suggestion:

SIME: 1♠: A playable method with 5/5 in the blacks is:

- Open 1♠ with a minimum, say 11/13,
- Open 1♠ with enough to game force with 3♣ over 1NT/2 red suit, say 17+,
- Open 1♠ with 14/16, intending to bid 1♠ then 2♣.

This may work well when opponents are silent, but what if they too have distributional hands and dare to compete? Opening 1♣ gets clubs into the game and allows you to rebid in spades without raising the level.

If we open 1♠ and it comes back to us at 3 or 4 of a red suit are we brave enough to introduce clubs at the 4- or 5-level?

MCKAY: 1♠ as it is slightly pre-emptive (stopping the opponents bidding 1♥) and you are strong enough to bid clubs over any response by partner if necessary.

1♠ may keep opponents quiet - but it may also silence partner if she has a weak hand....

Problem 1	Panel	Marks	Competitors
1♠	5	10	21
1♣	2	9	10
2♣	1	6	5

Partner held T8 Q4 7532 98754 so did not take much part in the auction after a 1♠ opener. With North on lead West can make 6♣... but not 4♣.

Problem 2 **Teams:** **All Vul, Dealer North**

♠Q	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥T752	-	1♣	1♠	Pass
♦AK862	?			
♣QJ6				

This problem produced a record number of answers. The panel had 4.

EDMOND: Pass and await developments.

The only problem with this is that if North passes there are no developments. A 1-level overcall is quite wide-ranging, so, rather like responding to an opening bid, when third hand passes you should strain to keep the auction alive. 4 panellists decide to respond in no-trump – but they do not agree on how many no-trump to call.

SIME: 1NT. An underbid, but I wouldn't welcome partner's 2♣ if I bid 2♦.

MALE: 2NT. Underbid 1NT or risk 2NT? Liking that ♠Q, but only 1 club stop. But it's teams. So 2NT.

The most popular response was:

TUDOR: 2♦. With only one club stopper I prefer this to bidding NT

FRAME: 2♦. This should be forcing - I'm probably looking to play in 3NT but 4♥ is still a possibility if partner is 5-4 or even 6-4 in the Majors.

Assuming the change of suit by an unpassed hand is forcing, as it should be, this does seem to keep all options open. The only remaining question is how to proceed if partner simply rebids 2♣. There is a case for bidding 2NT now, but I think Danny is going to pass:

HAMILTON: 2♦. If partner does anything other than bid 2♣ I'll bid NT next time.

Some suggestions from the competitors might work in their own partnerships but would confuse an unfamiliar partner. For most a 2♣ cuebid promises spade support. And in competitive auctions we do not play Strong Jump Shifts: a jump in a new suit (here 3♦) is a Fit Jump, showing spades as well as diamonds.

Problem 2	Panel	Marks	Competitors
2♦	3	10	20
2NT	2	8	3
1NT	2	7	7
Pass	1	6	2
2♣	0	3	1
2♥	0	2	1
3♦	0	2	1

Partner held K9762 AQ Q753 32 and raised diamonds. 3♦ was an easy make; 3NT was not.

Problem 3 Teams: EW Vul, Dealer East

♠-	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥A9643	-	-	1♠	2♣
♦AK8532	?			
♣T7				

This was a problem as soon as partner opened 1♠. Should we try for the major suit game by distorting our distribution, or respond in our longest suit and hope for the best? The intervention has given us an extra option.

EDMOND: Dbl for the red suits.

A negative double does indeed show the red suits, but more typically has fewer cards in them. It will be quite surprising if partner does anything other than repeat her spades or bid no-trump. You could try 3♦ now – that shows 6 diamonds, but only 4 hearts so you will not find a 5=3 heart fit if one exists. 3♦ after the negative double is nonforcing and will probably end the auction. Which may well be a Good Idea.

Half the panel choose to respond in their longest suit, with some misgivings.

MCKAY: 2♦ Tricky-but I'll bid 2♦. If partner bids NT I can show my Hearts and if she bids 2♠ I'll repeat my diamonds.

MALE: 2♦ Void in partner's opening call but AAK with great distribution. Better to bid 2♥ and then tell lies about my diamond holding? No I think 2♦ forcing 1 is my call.

The others believe that their best chance of finding a making game is by bidding hearts:

TUDOR: 2♥. I might struggle to show partner I have five hearts if I don't bid them now. Plus, if I find partner has a fit for my hearts then that improves my hand greatly.

SIME: 2♥. If we have a 5/3 heart fit, this is the best way to reach it. An easy 3♦ rebid over the pessimists' 2♠, unlike 1♠-2♦-2♠-3♥ which would sound like looking for 3NT rather than 5/6 in the reds.

The overcall suggests the hand may be a bit of a misfit. You would not welcome a club lead, so perhaps better to be cautious this time around.

The same comments as on the last board apply to a few of the competitors' answers: most play the cuebid of opponents' suit as showing a good raise of partner's spades; and the jump in a new suit is Fit, promising a good suit and at least 3-card support for spades.

Problem 3	Panel	Marks	Competitors
2♦	4	10	15
2♥	3	9	8
Dbl	1	7	9
3♦	0	4	2
4♦	0	2	1
3♣	0	2	1

Partner held KQT852 K5 974 K8. Most reached 5♦ from the wrong side, losing 2 clubs and a trump. Hard to get to a red suit game played by East!

Problem 4 Teams: NS Vul, Dealer North

♠AQ643	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥J	-	Pass	1♥	Pass
♦A52	1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
♣T987	?			

The panel make 4 different suggestions. Tim passes without comment, and there are hands where this could be the winning action. But the rest of the panel prefer not to take the last decision on this deal. Partner might be patterning out with 3-card spade support...

Steve believes that the change of suit is forcing. For most 2♦ is not absolutely forcing after the one-over-one response, but since partner is not yet limited it is better to try to keep the auction going.

MALE: 3♦. Choices are: repeat my spades; raise 2♦ to 3♦; or call 2NT without a club stopper. I can't bid 3♣ as that's Fourth Suit Forcing to game in my partnerships. 3♦ it is – at least partner can ruff in the short hand. I don't think 2♦ is passable.

Raising a second suit with only three cards usually ends in a 4=3 fit, but that is not necessarily a bad thing.

EDMOND: 3♣ Fourth Suit Forcing for me, normally showing a 5-card spade suit.

FRAME: 3♣. Although my fourth suit forcing bid is a bit of a stretch, any Club honour in partner's hand will provide us with a stopper for 3NT.

Not everyone plays fourth suit forcing to game, but once you are at the three-level it is difficult to stop! If partner rebids one of the red suits you owe her another call.

TUDOR: 2NT. Bidding 3♣ (FSF) would be a bit of a stretch. 2NT is also not ideal but you can't achieve perfection with every bid!

HAMILTON: 2NT. That's almost a club stop.

Indeed! If partner has ♣xxx or Hx that should do nicely. And this bid gives partner the chance to show extra length in her suits, or delayed spade support

Problem 4	Panel	Marks	Competitors
2NT	4	10	14
3♣	2	8	10
3♦	1	7	4
Pass	1	6	3
3NT	0	4	2
2♠	0	2	3

Partner held K KQT876 KQT8 A2. 6♥ was there when the red suits broke normally, but no-one bid it.

Top Scores

A high-scoring set for the competitors, and two perfect scores. Congratulations to Margaret and Linton

2* Master	Will Iles	Stewartry	35
1* Master	Robin MacPherson	New Melville	39
	Alasdair Adam	Stirling	33
	Roy Heanes	New Melville	33
Master	David Olive	Caledonian	39
	Pam Warner	New Melville	36
	Jane Smithson	Berwick	34
	David Edelman	Maccabi	31
	David Hartley	St Andrew	31
	Alan Kirk	Bearsden Academy	31
District Master	Paul Kerr	Troon	37
	Ken Tait	Marmion	37
	Graham Vincent/Andy McKinnel	Linlithgow	37
	May Armour	Kyle	36
	Dawn & Peter Beckett	New Melville	36
	John Smithson	Berwick	34
	Ken Brown	Pentland	33
	Sheila Ritchie	Dundee	32
Local Master	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	40
	Alison Clayton/Lesley Cochrane	Aberdeen	35
	John Ramsay	Carlton	35
	Larry Watson	Buchanan	34
	Chris Mickley	Nairn	30
	Keith Smith	New Melville	30
Club Master	Linton Horsfall	Carlton	40
	Debbie Bland	Bearsden Academy	37
	Jacky Lindsay	New Melville	37
	Brian Allan	Dundee	36
	Fiona McCourt	Bearsden Academy	33
	Helen Adamson	Kirkcaldy	32
Novice	Ian Lowson	New Melville	32
	Robert MacTier	Bearsden Academy	31

Congratulations to Dawn and Peter Beckett; and to Gavin Easton on moving up a rank: they are all now District Masters,