

2022 Bronze Bidding Challenge – July

A smaller panel than usual, and fewer competitors – perhaps people have better things to do in the summer months! The problems come from the European Championships in Madeira, chosen because our teams failed to find the winning answer. The panel mostly didn't either, but I have awarded top marks to the most popular answers according to tradition.

Problem 1 **Teams** **NS Vul** **Dealer West**

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠A				
♥KQ9	1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
♦8642	?			
♣AK974				

A 16-count with no obvious good way to express itself. Steve takes a cautious view.

MALE: 2♣. It looks like a choice between a 1NT rebid, which, with a singleton Ace in partners suit, does not look good for communications, or a slight underbid of 2♣.

The majority of the panel preferred to reverse into an 8-high suit:

HAMILTON: 2♦. A reverse showing 16+ and at least 5-4 shape. I'm ignoring the poor suit quality. We'll probably end up playing 3NT and get a heart lead.

One might think that an easier route to 3NT is to bid no-trump, but our reversers have a cunning plan:

FRAME (similarly **TUDOR**). **2♦.** Despite the poor quality of my second suit, I feel that my hand justifies a reverse with 16HCP and a 5-loser hand - furthermore, if partner ends up playing in a no-trump contract, this bid may inhibit an opening diamond lead!

The only fly in this ointment might be that partner, with 4-card diamond support, decides to play in diamonds. As a general rule it is not a great idea to bid weak suits on good hands.

Agreeing with the majority of the competitors:

MCKAY (also **EDMOND**): **1NT.** To get your strength across. I think 2♦ risks missing game.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♦	4	10	9
1NT	2	8	15
2♣	1	6	0
3NT	0	2	1

Partner held KQT95 765 AJ97 5. Most of the field were playing a strong NT, and I suspect many of them opened 1NT in spite of the singleton Ace. They all ended in the thin 3NT, some making, some not – except our Scottish heroes. West chose the 2♣ rebid and East took a pessimistic view to pass. 3NT was a better spot than 2♣!

Problem 2 **Teams:** **EW Vul** **Dealer South**

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠T97				Pass
♥98732	Pass	1♦	Dbl	1♥
♦73	Pass	2♥	Dbl	Pass
♣QJ4	2♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
	?			

In his classic "Why You Lose at Bridge" Skid Simon explained that one losing habit was to overbid big hands and underbid small ones. This one is certainly small.

Agreeing with the Scot who gave up:

FRAME (also **MALE**, **MCKAY**) **PASS:** I'm reading partner as having a strong 4-1-2-6 shape or similar but, despite my attractive club support, I have far too many losers to contemplate any further movement.

We should look at the hand in context rather than in isolation. Partner made a takeout double, RHO came to the rescue and we passed, showing weakness. Partner doubled again and this time we were compelled to bid, so we made the weakest-sounding noise available. And now partner has changed the suit. With an 18+ HCP hand that was too strong for a simple overcall he might have bid 3♣ last time. We should expect a superstrong hand opposite.

HAMILTON: 4♣. I can't work out partner's hand here - maybe 3046 shape? They must be very strong anyway, so I'll guess it's safer to bid than pass.

TUDOR: 4♣. Partner can't expect too much from me after me passing his first double. Rather than bid 2♠ over the second double I'd have preferred to tell a fib in the minor suit and say 3♣.

I fear that partner would expect more values / longer clubs for that action: why advance to the 3-level in a potential 4-3 fit rather than play one at the 2-level? If you had 4 spades and a few values you might bid 2♠ last time; you would be more reluctant to volunteer 3♣.

We welcome Mike to the panel: he is the only one to really appreciate the worth of this hand:

BARON: 3♦. I have a heart stop! bid 3NT with a diamond stop. The Vulnerable game bonus is too tempting - With my club fill-ins and partner's big hand we could have six club tricks plus ♠AK and ♦A - 9 tricks in 3NT if my heart holding restricts their heart winners to 4.

3NT does indeed seem likely to make even if partner has a heart void – opponents appear to have a 4-4 fit. But I fear that a partner unfamiliar with Mike's style might interpret 3♦ differently – how would you bid with xxxx xxxx xxxx x? With the actual hand how about a simple 3NT – bid what you think you can make.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
4♣	3	10	7
5♣	0	9	1
3♦	1	8	0
Pass	3	6	16
3♠	0	2	1

Partner held AKQ void A842 AKT872. On reflection, I think 5♣ is a better bid than the cowardly pass I found at the table, and I really like Mike's suggestion that 3NT might be the spot!

Problem 3 Teams: All Vul Dealer North

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠Q54	-	1♦	2♦*	Pass
♥52	?			
♦J765				
♣A532				

*Michaels Cuebid = 55+ in the Majors

The panel and competitors are almost entirely in 'What else?' mode, typified by

EDMOND: 2♠. (Have I missed something?)

The convener reserves the right to air her personal ideas from time to time...so here goes.

If partner had overcalled 1♠ I would agree with a raise to 2♠. But partner did not overcall 1♠, they showed a 5=5 2-suiter with lots of playing potential. And the cuebid is forcing – you cannot show weakness by passing. What would you bid with xx x xxxxx xxxxx? Or xxx xx KQxxx xxx?

This hand is much better: three trump to an honour, a doubleton in the second suit and an Ace to cover one of partner's minor suit losers. Give partner AKTxx KQJxx x xx – should they find another bid when you might have nothing useful, and the 3-level could be too high?

One panellist is in my camp, though I am not quite sure I understand

MALE: 3♦. this is a weak bid, but it lets partner know we have a fit. Not good enough to play Michaels v Michaels.

I have always played the cuebid of their suit as the strong response, forcing to game and with some slam interest. If you play Michaels cuebids, or any other form of 2-suited overcall, it might be worth some serious partnership discussion.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♠	6	10	24
3♠	0	9	1
3♦	1	8	

Partner actually holds an uninspiring AJ543 AQ974 K9 3 and would probably pass 3♠. A trump lead beat the game, but 4♠ made a few times

Problem 4 Teams: NS Vul Dealer West

♠Q6	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥T6	Pass	1♥	Pass	Pass
♦KQ86	?			
♣KT865				

This problem attracted a greater number of answers than any other from the competitors, but not from the panel.

TUDOR: PASS. Call me a wimp, but sometimes you compete with hands like this and then, all of a sudden, opponents are in a making game!

Indeed, one might ask: where are the spades? Partner must have a few values but could not overcall. Mike explains the dangers of doubling.

BARON: PASS. (No double as that would imply spades.) In pairs I would bid 2♣ but in teams allowing opponents to find a vulnerable game is too much of a risk.

Most of us would rather bid than pass, but before re-opening in a situation like this you should ask yourself: what can I gain? Here you might buy the contract in a minor suit part score.

You should also ask: what can I lose? If South is strong and can double your re-opening bid you may help opponents find a better spot, possibly even a game, in spades.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
Pass	7	10	8
2♣	0	7	12
2NT*	0	6	2
Dbl	0	5	3
2♦	0	2	1

Partner had passed with J9 J53 AT54 AQ93 so this was in fact a good time to re-open with 2♣. Opponents can make 3 of either major but not 4, so re-opening does not cost and some partnerships were allowed to win the contract in 3♣.

Competitors Top Scores

A much smaller entry than usual this month – I hope more of you will give the next set a go.

2* Master	Charles Fogelman	GBC	33
1* Master	David King	Berwick	34
	Alasdair Adam		31
	Robin MacPherson	New Melville	31
Master	Neil Bulleid	Buchanan	34
	Marilyn McDonagh	Carlton	30
District Master	May Armour	Kyle	36
	Ken Brown	Pentland	35
	Quentin Stephens	Aberdeen	34
	David Hartley	St Andrew	31
Local Master	Gavin Easton	Longniddry	36
	Liz Forbes	Oban	35
	Keith Smith	New Melville	35
	Peter Beckett	New Melville	33
	John Ramsay	Carlton	32
	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	31
	Douglas Woodburn	Doon	31
Club Master	Jacky Lindsay	New Melville	40
	Fiona McCourt	Bearsden Improvers	36
	Helen Adamson	Kirkcaldy	33
	Debbie Bland	Bearsden Improvers	32
Novice	Evelyn Watson	Stepping-Stone	37