

2024 Bronze Bidding Challenge: March

This month we have a miscellaneous set of hands from various team matches.

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

♠AQT832	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥AT86	1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
♦3	2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
♣J7	?			

The panel all make the same bid.

Russell would not be starting from here:

FRAME: 3♠. I would have preferred 2♠ to 2♥ at my second turn but now need to let partner know that I have a 6th spade.

2♠ on the previous round shows the 6-card suit and limits the hand but it also denies a second 4-card suit.

It would be a pity to miss a 4=4 heart fit.

The only point of disagreement was whether 3♠ was forcing or not.

HAMILTON: 3♠. This is a good problem. I'm not sure if I've ever discussed if this is forcing or not.

MALE: 3♠. Showing my sixth spade. Forcing.

SIME: 3♠. Completes my picture. Partner should choose between Pass, 3NT and 4S.

Iain clearly believes 3♠ is descriptive but not forcing. I tend to agree. Partner's 2NT is only invitational and if you want to create a forcing situation here you could use fourth suit.

What we are all agreed about is that we do not want to leave partner in 2NT on an apparent misfit

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
3♠	8	10	39
4♠	0	8	3
PASS	0	4	5
3NT	0	3	4
3♦	0	2	1

Partner has 65 KJ4 KQ52 Q965 – so we are quite high enough already!

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

♠AK42	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥A2	-	Pass	Pass	1♦
♦QT86	?			
♣JT4				

The urge to bid something with a nice 14HCP is strong, but is there a good action here?

Steve lists the alternatives.

MALE: 1NT. Double is a non-starter. A thin 1NT, 1♠ or Pass seem to be the options. At teams 1NT for me.

McKAY: 1NT. Although technically I might be a point light, my diamond stop is fairly robust.

EDMOND: 1NT. - a point short but I like my two tens.

SANDERS: 1NT. Will add a point for the ♦Q1086 and am also non vulnerable.

The double stopper in opponent's suit is indeed far more useful than e.g. Ax or Kx, a single stopper that is easily dislodged. But a 1NT overall opposite a passed partner is always risky: LHO has an easy double if maximum for his pass. Here you will be fine if opponents lead diamonds, but how will you feel if they attack in hearts?

We have a single vote for the 4-card overall:

BARON: 1♠. Not ideal with a 4-card suit but a good suit and opening hand

Mike Lawrence's ground-breaking book "Overcalls" lists 3 requirements for an overcall of 1Major on a 4-card suit: you need opening strength; a strong suit; and no better option (such as a takeout double).

This hand is almost perfect – but Lawrence would prefer better spade pips, e.g. AKJ9.

Two panellists favour discretion:

HAMILTON: PASS. If we have game on partner will re-open with a double

SIME: PASS. Close to 1NT since the diamonds behind opener compensate for being a point light. Some would try 1♠. I prefer that my overcalls have 5 cards.

The panel agrees on one thing: the heart shortage makes this hand unsuitable for a takeout double.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
1NT	5	10	12
PASS	2	8	28
1♠	1	6	6
DBL	0	4	5
2♠	0	2	1

Partner has 8765 KQ96 32 K73 so will be tempted to bid over 1NT. Breaks are bad so you cannot make more than 7 tricks in NT. On this occasion it is best to let opponents try to find somewhere to play

Problem 3 Teams: All Vul Dealer West

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠K632	1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
♥AQ653	?			
♦-				
♣A986				

Sometimes hands improve as the auction develops. This one has, when partner fails to respond in our void! Russell remains quite pessimistic:

FRAME: 3♣. Not strong enough to reverse with 2♠ but hoping that partner now shows diamonds, in which case I'll venture 3♠ (4th suit forcing) on our way to 3NT.

Others decide to invite game in clubs.

SIME: 4♣. I am assuming that 3♦ (splinter) is not on this menu. I haven't yet met a bronze player who regards 3♦ as anything other than natural, game forcing. At least they are all on the same page.

Peter and Derek, two of our teachers, agree with this call. It is an unambiguous game invitation, perhaps all that the hand is worth. Others are more ambitious.

Male: 4♦. Super club fit, good controls, void make this a 4♦ call for me.

4♦, a double jump in a new suit, can hardly be natural, so it is clearly a Splinter bid, showing shortness with a club fit. It does, however, force partner to game, presumably in clubs, when we cannot be sure that this is best. Partner would respond 2♣ with 4=4 in the minors, in which case we might prefer to play in no-trump. Or East might still have 3-card heart support, when 4♥ might be superior. Taking all this into account, Mike comes up with an alternative:

BARON: 2♠. My hand is much improved by the club bid - looks like void is useful, slam a possibility. I make a game-forcing bid see what partner has.

Forcingness is a concept which learners may find difficult to grasp. A forcing bid is one which requires partner to bid again. A game-forcing bid requires partner to keep bidding till game is reached. But forcingness varies.

After a one-over-one response a rebid in a lower-ranking suit is **not** forcing (e.g. 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦)
a rebid in a higher suit (e.g. 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥) **is** forcing, but not all the way to game.

After a two-over-one response a rebid in a lower-ranking suit **is** forcing (e.g. 1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥ forces to 2♠)
a rebid in a higher suit (e.g. 1♦ - 2♠ - 2♥) is forcing to game,

The difference lies in the greater strength required for a 2-over-1 response.

Since a new suit is forcing, there is no need for a jump rebid; extra strength can be shown later.

A jump in a new suit becomes unnecessary, and an unnecessary jump is a splinter bid.

But not everybody agrees with this, so Tim hedges his bets:

McKay: 3♦ (or 4♦, depending on our agreement.) If we agreed that 2♦ forces to 2♥ then 3♦ will be a splinter. Otherwise, 4♦ is the splinter (agreeing clubs). Given that I'm filling in, 4♦ is more likely.

3♦ leaves more room for partner to describe their hand. If playing this style 4♦ should show a void.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
4♣	3	10	8
3♦	1	9	0
3♣	2	8	18
4♦	1	7	5
2♠	1	5	18
5♣	0	4	2
2♥	0	2	1

Partner had Q74 K2 A82 KQ752. It's not a bad slam.

Problem 4 Teams: EW Vul Dealer West

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠986				
♥AK54	1♥	1♠	Dbl	Pass
♦K75	?			
♣AQ7				

When we opened the bidding, our plan was to rebid in NT to show our point range. Does the lack of a spade stopper change that plan? Half our panellists think not.

EDMOND: 1NT - we have the hand so must bid something positive – risk losing 5 spade tricks

MALE: 1NT. I think I will venture 1NT. South didn't raise spades, so it looks as though partner has three spades and a probable stop. Even if not, we have a strong chance to run seven tricks outside spades.

SANDERS: 1NT. Every action I take will misrepresent the hand, so this is the cheapest and despite no spade stop have the right point count and shape!

An alternative might be a DAB (Directional Asking Bid) where you cue opponents' suit to ask partner if he has a spade stopper.

FRAME: 2♠: This is a very difficult situation as 1NT, 3♣, 3♦ and 3♥ are all unattractive but I do want to let partner know I have decent values - he will be expecting a half stop from me in Spades but hey ho 😊.

BARON: 2♠: Tell me more partner. I was going to rebid 1NT but that would imply a spade stop. (I was tempted to leave double in, but the vulnerability is wrong.)

Pass would be a brave choice! If 1♠ is failing surely 3NT is likely to make?

The problem with 2♠ is that it may take you too high when partner has a minimum for the negative double.

The panel had one other suggestion:

MCKAY: 2♣. Difficult. I have no spade stop. I could risk 1NT, which shows my point count-given that the 1♠ bid has not been supported, however I will be disciplined (as always)

HAMILTON: 2♣? Don't like it, though.

Neither do I! It is an underbid suggesting a completely different distribution.

As Iain points out, the 1NT rebid does not mean you must play in NT. If partner has the values for game and doubts about the spade stopper, he can check out the best contract by cue bidding spades himself.

1NT seems the least bad choice: if they cash the first 5 spade tricks you are not down yet. Rebidding hearts, or trying another suit, will persuade partner that you have a 5-card major – it may all end in tears.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
1NT	4	10	12
2♠	2	8	13
2♣	2	7	14
2NT	0	5	1
PASS	0	4	4
3♠	0	3	2
2♥	0	2	2
3♥	0	1	1
4♥	0	1	2
3♣	0	1	1

Partner has 74 Q93 AJT2 J865. You can make 1NT, or 3 of either minor, but only 8 tricks in hearts.

Top Scorers

Congratulations to **Alasdair Adam** and **Robert MacTier** who top scored with 38. Alasdair and Robert were closely followed by **Janet Ironside** on 37.

Name	Rank	Club	Score
Peter Martin	5 Star Master	New Melville	36
Roy Heanes	2 Star Master	New Melville	33
Elaine Martin	2 Star Master	New Melville	31
Alasdair Adam	1 Star Master	Stirling	38
Robin MacPherson	1 Star Master	New Melville	34
Pam Warner	1 Star Master	New Melville	30
Ken Brown	Master	Pentland	36
David Hartley	Master	St Andrews	36
David Olive	Master	Caledonian	35
Graham Vincent	Master	Linlithgow	35
Paul Kerr	Master	Troon	34
Andy McKinnel	Master	Linlithgow	33
Brian Rattray	Master	Oban	33
Ken Tait	Master	Marmion	31
Dawn & Peter Beckett	District Master	New Melville	33
Quentin Stephens	District Master	Aberdeen	32
Keith Smith	Local Master	New Melville	36
Linton Horsfall	Local Master	Carlton	31
Robert MacTier	Club Master	Bearsden	38
Janet Ironside	Club Master	New Melville	37
Brian Allan	Club Master	Dundee	35
Debbie Bland	Club Master	Bearsden	33
Fiona McCourt	Club Master	Bearsden	33
Wilma Currie	Club Master	Kilmacolm	33
Sandie Watson	Club Master	New Melville	33
Jacky Lindsay	Club Master	New Melville	30
Ian Lawson	Novice	New Melville	35
Mairi Lawson	Novice	New Melville	33
Annie Brown	Novice	New Melville	30
Ian Johnston	New Member	New Melville	35
Jackie Johnston	New Member	New Melville	33