

2022 Bronze Bidding Challenge: April

A rather small panel this time: I was too busy travelling about to chase them up... I am sure there are people out there who would be happy to help – volunteers welcomed.

Problem 1 Pairs: NS Vul Dealer East

♠AQ654	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥Q6	-	-	1♣	P
♦Q4	1♠	P	1NT	P
♣AQ84	?			

Partner's rebid shows 15-17 HCP, which suggests that slam is in the air.

A number of competitors try to trot out an Ace-asking bid, but, assuming we are playing SBU Standard, this is not an option. Gerber is used only as an immediate response to a 1NT or 2NT opener; and 4NT is not Blackwood when no suit is agreed. It is quantitative, inviting partner to go on if not minimum.

In any case, knowing how many Aces partner has will not help you decide whether slam can make. Partner could have Kx AKx Jxx KJxxx; or xxx AKx AJx KJxx. One competitor weighs up the options and comes up with a practical shot:

6♣. Lots of room for error here! Showing a club fit with a non forcing 2♣, 3♣ or 4♣ could result in missing what looks like an obvious slam. ... Since West knows the likely point count and the club fit, the decision is between 4NT (quantitative) or 4C (Gerber). It almost doesn't matter what the response is... Since either bid runs the risk of East passing, in the absence of a better force, perhaps 6♣ is best.

Our panellists prefer a slower approach.

SANDERS: 3♣. This action gets across the shape and is also a slam try, otherwise you would use Checkback Stayman. How good is the hand opposite four Kings and an Ace? Not an unlikely holding, partner can only hold Aces, Kings and Jacks, given we have all the Queens! 6♣ looks to be a great spot, hard to imagine it is worse than on a finesse.

The only problem with 3♣ is the possibility that it might not be considered forcing. It should be, provided partner follows the sage advice: "When in doubt, it's forcing".

The panel mostly play some form of Checkback Stayman, where responder's 2♣ rebid is an enquiry about opener's length in the Majors. This can be a useful way to reach the best game when there is a choice between 3NT and Four of a Major. But no two panellists play CB in exactly the same way, so using it in an untried partnership will probably lead to misunderstanding.

Steve comes up with a different forcing bid.

MALE: 3♠. I need to set up a game-forcing situation. As Checkback is unavailable I bid 3♠, to be followed by a quantitative 4NT (Keycard if partner supports spades).

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
3♣	4	10	17
3♠	1	9	0
6♣	0	8	2
4NT	0	7	12
4♣	0	5	6
2♥	1	4	0
2♣	1	3	2
3NT	0	2	7
6NT	0	1	1

The hand comes from the Pairs event at the recent SBU Congress in Peebles. Partner has J AK82 AJ3 K9652 so 6♣ is where you want to be.

Problem 2 Teams: None Vul Dealer West

♠K764	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥8	P	P	1♥	Dbl
♦J96	?			
♣KT865				

Funny how a simple takeout double can create a problem. You were about to respond 1♠ - should you ignore the double and bid 1♠ anyway?

TUDOR: 1♠. A little short on high cards to redouble. Generally speaking I bid as if there had been no takeout double.

Most competitors agree. My personal approach is not to ignore the double completely. I would not respond 1♠ on eg ♠8743. If I bid 1♠ I show a fair suit, one I would like partner to lead if we end up defending.

What are the alternatives?

Redouble shows around 10+ HCP, usually with no fit for partner's suit, perhaps hoping to penalise opponents. This hand is not quite strong enough.

1NT is a little stronger than usual, more like 7-10, with no primary support and stoppers in the unbid suits. You have only one stopper, and no-trump often plays badly on misfit hands.

2♣ suggests a stronger, or more single-suited hand.

Half the panel has a different solution: you no longer need to keep the bidding open as a courtesy to partner, who now gets a second bid courtesy of RHO.

FRAME: Pass (in tempo!!): Awaiting developments - if partner bids 2♦ over 1♠ or 2♣ we're well placed for 3NT; if he passes I'm happy to defend; and if he doubles I'll investigate game in the black suit not bid by my LHO by cue bidding their suit.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
1♠	4	10	25
PASS	3	9	6
1NT	0	7	11
REDBL	0	5	2
2♣	0	4	2
2♠	0	2	1
3♠	0	1	1

The hand comes from a Women's Team practice match against Norway. Partner had J A9543 AKQ82 AQ, so 5♦ was a reasonable spot. One or two competitors may have misread the problem, thinking it was partner who had doubled. Any suggestions on how to present the problems in a clearer format?

Problem 3 Teams: NS Vul Dealer North

♠JT83	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥KQ2	-	2♥*	Dbl	3♥
♦K9543	?			
♣2				

* weak2

Over a pre-empt partner's actions are generally based on the assumption that you have around 8HCP, so you need more than that to jump to game. Here you have 9HCP, but the value of your heart honours is questionable opposite partner's known shortage and under opponents opening bid. Only one panellist is optimistic:

FRAME: 4♠: I have a 7-loser hand with 4-card support in partner's likely spade suit.

Most competitors and three panellists settle for a simple response.

MALE: 3♠. Another hard decision. The opponents have at least 9 hearts, so 3NT is not an option: heart lead, lose a subsequent trick and a heart through. Disaster. Partner will probably raise 3♠ to 4♠ and that may not play well. But it's teams, and partner usually guarantees 4 spades in this auction.

TUDOR: 3♠. Too good to pass and other options seem more flawed to me. Partner may raise with three card support. That might test my declarer play!

Derek has an alternative suggestion:

SANDERS: Double; This is a classic responsive double indicating two places to play. If partner bids spades we have probably done enough so can pass and if clubs can correct to 4♦. Either way we will locate a fit and also give ourselves a reasonable chance of bidding a good game.,

When partner makes a takeout double and RHO raises opener's suit the responsive double is a useful way to show some points and no clear direction of travel. It is unlikely that you want to double for penalties; on the rare occasion when you have a penalty double you just have to pass and hope partner can double again.

Perhaps I am influenced by the result at the table, but my vote goes to Pass! If partner is not strong enough to bid again I am happy to defend.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
3♠	4	10	25
DBL	2	9	7
PASS	0	8	4
4♠	1	7	6
3NT	0	4	4
4♦	0	3	1
4♥	0	1	1

Another hand from the Norway match. Partner had 7654 JT A4 AKT73, perhaps a dubious takeout double. South had ♠AKQx and unsportingly doubled 4♠ for -500

Problem 4 Teams: EW Vul Dealer West

♠AT8	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥Q	1♣	P	1♠	P
♦AQ8	?			
♣AJT963				

A nice hand, perhaps improved by partner's bid. The most popular rebid was a straightforward 3♣.

SANDERS: 3♣ is fine no need to do anything clever! Let's shows 15-17 points with a good six card suit and ask partner to do something sensible. They can pass if weak and have plenty of space to bid if a bit stronger.

MCKAY: 3♣. Not perfect, but a forcing 2♦ bid might mislead partner.

3♣ is indeed descriptive, but it is not forcing. Might we miss game opposite a minimum response with 5 spades? Mike and Steve decide to emphasise their spade support.

GALLACHER: 3♠. I have 17 HCP and ruffing possibilities with the bare ♥Q. I need to show the strength of my hand and am prepared to play in a possible Moysian fit.

3♠ is not forcing either, but partner will be more tempted to bid game if they have length in spades.

Danny and prefer to invent a reverse to make the auction forcing.

HAMILTON: 2♦. I don't like it but I think a phony reverse is the best chance of getting us to a good contract if partner has five Spades. If Diamonds get raised I'll try and get out of it.

It is generally safe enough to invent a lower-ranking suit – you can keep putting partner back to spades, and if they insist on diamonds they will have at least 5 cards with only 4 spades. The reverse is just a one-round force after the 1over1 response, but the auction may get out of control.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
3♣	3	10	26
3♠	2	9	5
2♦	2	8	10
3♥	0	7	1
2♣	0	4	4
2♠	0	3	1
1NT	0	1	1

This one comes from a Seniors match. Partner has K9765 A93 T3 KQ4 and you want to find a route to 6♣ (safer than 6♠ which might fail on a diamond lead through the AQ). How would you bid it with your favourite partner?

Competitors Top Scores

2* Master	Will Iles	Stewartry	34
1* Master	Alasdair Adam	Direct Member	35
	Roy Heanes	New Melville	34
	David King	Berwick	32
	Fiona McElhinney	Dunfermline	30
Master	Robin MacPherson	New Melville	40
	Marilyn McDonagh	Carlton	37
	David Olive	Inverness Caledonian	34
	Alex Sutherland	New Melville	34
	Neil Bulleid	Buchanan	33
	David Edelman	Maccabi	32
	Alan Kirk	Bearsden Improvers	32
	Jane Smithson	Berwick	32
District Master	Paul Kerr	Troon	39
	John Smithson	Berwick	36
	Ken Brown	Pentland	35
	Richard Leeson	Peebles	34
	May Armour	Kyle	31
	David Hartley	St Andrew	31
	Sheila Ritchie	Dundee	30
Local Master	Peter Beckett	New Melville	40
	Douglas Woodburn	Doon	40
	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	38
	Keith Smith	New Melville	37
	Grace McVey	Doon	34
	Gavin Easton	Longniddry	33
	Chris Mickley	Nairn	33
	Angela Ford	Maccabi	31
Club Master	Liz Forbes	Oban	37
	Andrew MacLeod	Carlton	37
	Stephen Carr	Ness	36
	Helen Adamson	Kirkcaldy	34
	Fiona McCourt	Bearsden Improvers	32
	Debbie Bland	Bearsden Improvers	31
	Jacky Lindsay	New Melville	30