

Bronze Bidding Challenge: October 2023. Comments and Scores.

This month's problems were faced by our Under31 Team in SOL11.

Problem 1 Teams NS Vul Dealer North

♠T976	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥Q6	-	1♠	3♥ ¹	Pass
♦A4	?			
♣AJ876				

13♥ = Weak jump overcall

The majority of the panel elect to Pass.

SANDERS: Pass. Partner has made a jump overcall at favourable so may not be that great and will almost certainly need a singleton. Don't mind a raise to 4♥ if East is generally very sound for this kind of action.

FRAME: Pass: I only have a couple of tricks (outside chance of 3 with a ruff) to help partner but, with too many losers, I'm happy to leave him at the 3-level or even to defend if opponents re-open.

But nearly half vote to move forward:

TUDOR: 4♥. The right vulnerability to put the opponents to a guess.

MALE: 4♥. The ♥Q is a big card, partner is short in spades, I have 2 Aces, it is teams scoring. It is mathematically correct to try for thin games.

I am sure more panellists would bid on if vulnerable, when the game bonus is larger and partner's jump might not be quite so weak. What do you need from partner to make game? ♥AJTxxx, the ♣Q and a singleton spade would be nice...

SIME: 4♣. I don't expect this to be a popular choice, but it should be lead-directing with heart support. If partner's hearts are AJxxxx a heart lead might give North his 4♣.

The idea of introducing a new suit for the lead is a good one. It cannot be an attempt to play in your suit at the 4-level, so should be a fit bid, showing the values to raise to 4♥ with a club suit on the side.

If North is about to bid 4♣ all on his own this bid might get partner off to the best lead, but that seems unlikely. Perhaps this suit is not quite good enough for what might be considered a slam try...

Problem 1	Panel	Marks	Competitors
Pass	5	10	33
4♥	3	8	9
3NT	0	7	0
4♣	1	6	0

Partner had ♠Q ♥AK96532 ♦T ♣Q543 so 4♥ makes, but 3NT, chosen by our Under-31 hero, is declarer-proof when hearts break no worse than 3=1. (I guess our passers would all bid 4♥ with partner's hand.)

Problem 2 Teams: NS Vul Dealer East

♠K642	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥Q72	-	-	Pass	Pass
♦K8	?			
♣QJT7				

Many players choose to open light in third seat because partner's new suit response is no longer forcing. Jim points out the dangers.

TUDOR: Pass. Even though I'm in third position it's not good for partnership moral when you open and partner takes you seriously and stretches a response!

If you open a weak no-trump a passed partner should not be considering game, which may explain why the panel rather fancy that bid.

MCKAY: 1NT. Third in hand you are trying to talk your opponents out of bidding. Even if doubled the vulnerability makes it a lower risk bid.

MALE: 1NT. Pass or bid ? it's a bidders' game!

SANDERS: 1NT...only eleven points but third in hand with the favourable vulnerability. See how the ♠T gives the suit good texture so will award the hand an extra point!

The ♣T is not quite enough for lain:

SIME: Pass. Only the ♣T makes this a problem.

Danny likes the fact that a new suit response from a passed partner is not forcing:

HAMILTON: 1♣. Just about worth opening, as decent suit and we can handle any response from partner (bidding spades or passing).

Many players are inclined to open any old 13 cards in 3rd seat. My personal preference is to open light only when I have a suit that I would like partner to lead when opponents buy the contract.

Problem 2	Panel	Marks	Competitors
1NT	5	10	9
Pass	3	8	23
1♣	1	7	5
1♠	0	3	5

Partner had ♠5 ♥T653 ♦AQT65 ♣A62. The minor suits lie well, and only an unlikely defence beats 3NT! So this is a good time to open light.

Problem 3 Teams: EW Vul Dealer North

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠A9		1♠	Dbl	2♥
♥K854				
♦T9732	?			
♣93				

Is this hand strong enough to compete at the 3-level? Derek believes so:

SANDERS: 3♦. Despite the unfavourable vulnerability and given it's very likely that the opponents have a 9-card spade fit (doubleton at most in partner's hand after the takeout double) there are a few hands partner could have where we can make 5♦.

Danny sees another reason to bid:

HAMILTON: 3♦. The opposition surely have a big spade fit so there might be a good sacrifice here.

Most of the panel settle for a wait and see approach.

FRAME: Pass: I can't justify bidding at the 3-level, vulnerable, with such a meagre collection although I will happily cooperate if partner makes another move.

BARON: Pass - N/S may have a misfit and are in trouble. You are likely to have a second chance to bid and can then decide to compete.

MCKAY: Pass. 3♦ would be quite risky. All you are likely to gain is a part score but you might get doubled and lose 200/500. You have 2 defensive tricks, so you may well take them off in their final contract.

MALE: Pass. I do not have enough for a free bid. Are the hearts 4=5=4=0? It's a potential misfit.

There is indeed something odd about this auction! Partner does not seem to have a very strong hand, so you expect him to have a few hearts. Yet RHO has bid hearts, suggesting at least 5 cards. If the bid is genuine opener must have a lot of spades.

SIME: Dble. I play this as exposing South's potential psyche, i.e. four or more hearts and values.

In the early days of contract bridge it was fashionable to psyche. Rather than simply raise partner over a takeout double you tried to bid opponents' best suit to put them off bidding it themselves. Which is why many experts double here to say: "RHO pinched my bid." Psyches are rarer now, but the meaning remains. Partner may decide to play in the bid suit anyway, knowing of bad breaks in advance.

Problem 3	Panel	Marks	Competitors
Pass	6	10	24
3♦	2	8	12
Dbl	1	7	3
2NT	0	4	3

Partner had a light double ♠72 ♥AT97 ♦AQJ6 ♣J86. The 2♥ bid was genuine!

Problem 4 Teams: EW Vul Dealer North

♠AJT2	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥KT6	-	Pass	Pass	1♣
♦AK7	Dbl	Pass	1♠	Pass
♣KT4	?			

This was the only problem this month to produce a lot of different answers from competitors. At the table an opponent simply bashed game, but the panel are more circumspect. They believe that a single raise shows extra values.

EDMOND: 2♠. A dilemma between good middle values but no ruffing prospects. For me the latter makes me bid just 2♠ showing at least 15 points – after all partner might have nothing at all but was forced to bid.

HAMILTON: 2♠. Needs an alert partner, who recognises that bidding 2♠ must believe there is still hope of game opposite the 0-8 1♠ response, so must be a very good hand.

FRAME: 2♠. I must make a further try in case partner can cooperate but I don't want to punish him for bidding, as I asked, with only minimal values.

Some players automatically raise the response to their takeout double with 4-card support and a singleton somewhere – but here a singleton club might be more valuable than the King. Tim believes this hand is just too strong for a single raise.

McKAY: 3♠. Your partner may have nothing so you need to be cautious, despite needing to push for game. Partner should go to game with a good 6 count or more.

We all know that “points do not make tricks” in suit contracts, but this hand has no wasted Queens and Jacks and the Kings sit over the opening bidder. The problem in a spade contract might be a lack of entries to partner's hand. Two panellists come up with a different way to try for game.

BARON: 1NT. Shows a strong flat hand with a club stop. Partner may go on with a maximum, or long spades.

SANDERS: 1NT. Given I did not overcall 1NT must have upgraded this to 19 points. Partner will now be well placed to take appropriate action and I can still convert back to spades anyway.

If partner has a bust this may be as good a contract as any – but opponents' silence suggests partner may have a few points. The only problem might be whether to convert to spades after a raise.

Problem 4	Panel	Marks	Competitors
2♠	6	10	5
1NT	2	9	4
3♠	1	8	10
2♣	0	7	3
2NT	0	4	9
4♠	0	4	4
3NT	0	3	1
Pass	0	1	4
3♥	0	1	1
4NT	0	1	1

Partner has ♠K873 ♥3 ♦QJT9 ♣Q732 so either game should make, but 3NT is uncomfortable on a heart lead.

Competitors Top Scores

No perfect scores this time. Congratulations to David Edelman, Graham Vincent and Alan Paterson who were best scorers with 38 and creditable mentions to Margaret Mainland and Robert MacTier who were just one point behind on 37.

2* Master	Will Iles	Stewartry	36
	Roy Heanes	New Melville	31
1* Master	David Edelman	Maccabi	38
	Alasdair Adam	Stirling	32
	Robin MacPherson	New Melville	31
Master	Graham Vincent	Linlithgow	38
	David Hartley	St Andrew	36
	Ken Brown	Pentland	35
	Andy McKinnel	Linlithgow	33
	Robert Taylor	Linlithgow	33
	Paul Kerr	Troon	32
	Pam Warner	New Melville	31
District Master	Alan Paterson	Johnstone	38
	Dawn & Peter Beckett	New Melville	36
	John Smithson	Berwick	34
	Tony Goldberg	GBC	34
	May Armour	Kyle	32
	Ken Tait	Marmion	31
Local Master	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	37
	Lesley Robertson	Peebles	36
	John Ramsay	Carlton	34
	Keith Smith	New Melville	31
Club Master	Debbie Bland	Bearsden Academy	34
	Pauline Briody	Direct Member	34
	Sandra Mair	Carlton	32
	Sandie Watson	New Melville	32
	Wilma Currie	Kilmacolm	31
	John Baraclough	Ness	30
	Linton Horsfall	Carlton	30
Novice	Robert MacTier	Bearsden Academy	37
	Ian Lawson	New Melville	30
	Evelyn Watson	Stepping-Stone	30

Congratulations to regular competitor Andy McKinnel on becoming a Master.