

November Bronze Bidding Challenge

This set of problems comes from the National League, weekend 2

Problem 1 **Teams** **All Vul** **Dealer South**

♠J2	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥QJ2	-	-	-	1♦
♦K98	?			
♣AKJ94				

None of the panel finds a Pass. Nor did they consider a takeout double with so few cards in the Majors. They split evenly between two possible calls, neither particularly appetising. Votes for 1NT range from the confident...

SANDERS: 1NT. All the requirements, 15 points, a diamond stop and a source of tricks in the club suit.

... to the less sure.

MALE: 1NT. Preferred to 2♣ or pass. Imperfect in many ways, but as usual, the best of a poor selection.

1NT will probably survive if partner has half the points left after RHO has opened the bidding. But what if partner is weak? If North is strong enough to double 1NT may not play well.

The other half of the panel vote for a simple overcall.

TUDOR: 2♣. With only one stop in diamonds I'm not saying 1NT.

FRAME: 2♣. Tempted to venture 1NT but I have downgraded my 15-count with Jx in spades - this will also help partner if he's on lead.

There is another argument for overcalling 1♦ with 2♣ – it uses up opponents' space and may make it harder for them to find their major suit fit. My casting vote goes to the less risky option.

.	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♣	4	10	18
1NT	4	9	16
PASS	0	7	1
DBL	0	2	2

Partner has QT73 T94 Q7 QT82. At the table North doubled 1NT and collected 500 via 5 heart tricks, the ♠AK and the ♦A.

Problem 2 **Teams:** **All Vul** **Dealer East**

♠AKT753	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥AJ5	-	-	Pass	1♣
♦AKQ5	Dbl	Pass	1♥	Pass
♣-	?			

When we make a takeout double, then change the suit, we show a hand too strong for a simple overcall, usually 18+HCP. Most of us would agree with Steve, that even a jump new suit, while showing a big hand, is not forcing.

MALE: 2♣. A strong bid after a double, showing a big hand. Partner has shown less than an 7/8 count. But we don't need much from partner.

Derek is determined not to miss a vulnerable game, and takes the pressure off partner:

SANDERS: 4♠. This hand is extremely strong you and can expect to make game opposite very little so best not give partner an option to go wrong.

It is unlikely that 4♠ will fail, but it may not be best spot. What if partner has a singleton spade and 5 small hearts? The majority of the panel try to investigate the best contract via a cuebid of opponent's suit, a call that is certainly forcing.

HAMILTON: 2♣. I think doubling then bidding the opponent's suit shows a massive hand, which is what we have. Doubling then bidding Spades would limit our hand. We may still not be able to find out if partner has five hearts though

MCKAY: 2♣. I reckon that a UCB is my best shot, although the continuations are tricky. Presumably 2♥ from partner could be 4-card hearts and weak, so over that is 2♠ forcing? (I would hope so).

SIME: 2♣. Start of a torture session for partner. It is not inevitable that they will rebid 2♥. We will not reach 6/7♦ opposite 2-4-4-3 if I bid spades now.

All five 2♣ bidders are aware that partner's forced response may not be very helpful, but it does no harm to try. Mike is the most optimistic of the panellists.

GALLACHER: 4♣. Splinter. My double forces partner to bid and while game in a major is probable there might be a slam here.

Indeed there might, but partner will likely read this as agreeing hearts and rebid 4♥, which does not seem to get us very far.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♣	5	10	6
4♠	1	8	5
4♣	1	7	1
2♠	1	6	11
3♠	0	5	3
4♥	0	4	6
1♠	0	2	5

Partner has J2 Q9732 986 K95. Not a lot, but enough for 6♥ to be playable. He should really bid again over 2♠ but passed feebly at the table.

Problem 3 Teams: EW Vul Dealer East

♠A42	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥Q975	-	-	1♥	Pass
♦AKJT9	?			
♣Q				

Everybody wants to make a slam interest noise here. The Losing Trick Count should get you excited: even a minimum opener with 7 losers puts you in the slam zone. There are several conventional routes.

MALE: I could bid 2NT (a Jacoby raise), 2♦ then a delayed game raise, or, my preference, a splinter to 4♣.

MCKAY: 4♣. A splinter - agreeing hearts. Some people play that this hand is too strong to splinter in which case I would bid 2NT (Jacoby) and if that's not in your system then I would have to bid 2♦.

A splinter raise uses a lot of space. Many partnerships prefer to limit the range to a maximum of 13 or so in case partner signs off in game. Two panellists accordingly vote for 2NT, a Jacoby raise showing 4-card support and a hand strong enough to raise to at least game.

HAMILTON: 2NT. Good raise. 4♣ would be a splinter and I'm fine doing that with a singleton Queen, but the problem is partner will almost certainly rebid 4♥ then are we good enough for 4♠?

SIME: 2NT. With diamonds being a source of tricks, this hand is too strong to splinter, even discounting the bare Queen.

Jim chooses the Delayed Game Raise:

TUDOR: 2♦. Close between 2♦ and a 4♣ splinter. I've opted for the slow approach, let partner know I have a diamond suit...

The source of tricks in diamonds could be vital: if partner has as little as xx AKJxxx Qx xxx slam is cold, but he is unlikely to co-operate over a splinter or 2NT. If the auction proceeds 1♥ – 2♦ – 2♥ – you could splinter now, though that might suggest only a 3-card heart raise.

Derek goes further:

SANDERS: 3♦. A jump shift gets the strength of the hand over and also make a slam try at the same time. We can support hearts on the next round of bidding.

This gets the source of tricks and the support across – but not the excellent outside controls. Seems like a case of “so much to say – so little room”.

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

Partner has K76 AKJ63 7 AK87. 7♥ is an excellent spot, but half the field missed it.

Problem 4 Teams: None Vul Dealer East

♠86532	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥8	-	-	1NT	Dbl
♦KQ73	?			
♣K43				

We were interested to see how the panel would react to a penalty double of the weak no-trump.

HAMILTON: PASS. I'm up for playing 1NTx/xx, whatever the system lets us (I'm hoping opponents sometimes double 1NT quite light like I do!)

The other panellists are reluctant to bank on partner's potential heart stopper. I confess that I find their enthusiasm for this 8-high spade suit rather odd.

FRAME: 2♥: A transfer to spades - RHO's double may be based on a running heart suit.

Russell plays Exit Transfers to get to his 5-card spade suit. This seems quite a popular method, ensuring that the stronger hand becomes declarer, but it has limitations when you want to run and do not have a 5-card suit. A widely recognised method for dealing with penalty doubles is Helvic, where redouble shows any 5-card suit. Partner responds 2♣, which you can pass, or convert to your real suit.

MALE: REDBL. Promising partner a five card suit somewhere. And await developments.

The other part of Helvic allows you to bid a 4-card suit in a 4=4=3=2 or 4=4=4=1 hand, promising a higher suit also and maximising your chances of finding a 4=4 fit. Here you might remove to 2♦, treating this spade suit as a 4-carder. With a doubleton diamond partner bids 2♥ and you convert to spades. None of the panel fancies this, they have other considerations:

TUDOR: 2♠. An SOS redouble might lead to finding a diamond fit. But it will also make it easier for opponents to find their heart fit.

MCKAY: 2♠. Hopefully showing a non-constructive hand with a 5-card suit. I'll not use the redouble / wriggle in order to try and keep them from bidding their hearts. I'll not pass either (although it might make) as we are playing teams and the potential gain is relatively small.

SIME: 2♠. Tempted to sit for the double, but:

1. South may have running hearts, or
2. North is about to remove to hearts, in which case I can steal the part score.

If we are playing the normal rescue (redouble with 1-suiters) then 2♠ directly ought to show some values. So partner is allowed to bid 3♠ should they still bid hearts.

The Exit Transfer has been marked down because partner may not understand, and, even if agreed, it allows North a free double.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♠	4	10	14
REDBL	1	8	1
2♦	0	7	0
*2♥	2	6	12
Pass	1	6	10

Partner has AT4 J932 A9 QT76 and has miscounted a tad. On this occasion 2S is where you want to be.

Competitors Top Scores

Another tough set, it seems. Top score was just 37 this time.

Everybody who achieved 25 or more deserves a mention.

2* Master	Charles Fogelman	GBC	34
	Will Iles	Stewartry	31
1* Master	Robin Macpherson	New Melville	35
	Roy Heanes	New Melville	31
	Alasdair Adam	Direct	28
Master	Neil Bulleid	Buchanan	35
	David Hartley	St Andrew	32
	Marilyn McDonagh	Carlton	31
District Master	Paul Kerr	Troon	37
	Rosemary Jamieson	Carlton	36
	Alan Paterson	Johnstone	36
	Ken Tait	Marmion	36
	Graham Vincent	Linlithgow	36
	May Armour	Kyle	33
	Sheila Ritchie	Dundee	33
	Liz Forbes**	Oban	27
	Jean Cousins	Buchanan	25
Local Master	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	35
	Keith Smith	New Melville	34
	Angela Ford	Maccabi	32
	John Ramsay	Carlton	32
	Chris Mickley	Nairn	31
	Peter Beckett	New Melville	28
	Gavin Easton	Longniddry	25
Club Master	Linton Horsfall	Carlton	37
	Angela Horsfall	Carlton	34
	Stephen Carr	Ness	33
	Jacky Lindsay	New Melville	31
	Wilma Currie	Kilmacolm	29
	Debbie Bland	Bearsden Academy	25
Novice	Evelyn Watson	Stepping-Stone	25

**** Congratulations to Liz on moving up from Local to District Master**