

# 2022 Bronze Bidding Challenge: September

More problems from the European Youth Championships in July.

## Problem 1 Teams:EW Vul, Dealer East

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠Q43	Pass	3♣	4♠	Pass
♥42	?			
♦AT93				
♣AT74				

*What to expect from partner's jump to game over a pre-empt? There are 2 possibilities: a long suit and little else; or a big hand that expects to make.*

*Almost all the panel look for slam. The majority start with a cue-bid, hoping partner will show a heart control:*

**Male: 5♣.** A super hand opposite a partner that can jump to 4♠.

**Tudor: 5♣.** If partner's jump to 4♠ is partially influenced by her holding a void in clubs then news of the ♣A might not improve her hand! She also knows that I have less than 12 points (after my initial pass) so she can hopefully re-assess her hand on that basis.

*Tim and Mike G opt for 4NT, asking for Aces:*

**McKay: 4NT.** Partner shouldn't be pre-empting over a pre-empt so well worth exploring slam.

*It is not clear how Blackwood will help. What next if they are missing an Ace? Partner is unlikely to have a shortage in hearts but might have ♥KQ or the missing Ace might be in spades.*

*Derek takes the direct route:*

**Sanders: 6♣.** Partner's jump overcall of a pre-empt shows a very strong hand so there is no danger of not having twelve tricks. There is a slight risk that the opponents can take the ♥AK, but they may well need to lead a heart so prefer this to the alternative 5♣ cue bid.

*The late Tom Culbertson used to say that a slam flawed only by missing two top honours in a plain suit was at least 50%: it fails when the hand on lead has AK; makes when the leader prefers not to lead away from one honour; and makes when the leader has no honours and fails to guess well. Here you would expect to get a club lead most of the time. The real problem is: where are 12 tricks coming from?*

*Almost all the European Youths could not envision 12 tricks and passed. Mike agrees:*

**Baron: Pass.** I would not assume partner had a big hand – double is available to show that. The A♣ is a good card but where are 12 tricks coming from? The pre-empt makes it hard but there is a danger of letting it push you too far for a bad score.

*Something to discuss with partner: if you expect to make 4♠ should you start with double, reserving the jump to game for weaker hands with a long suit?*

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
5♣	5	10	4
Pass	1	8	9
6♣	1	6	4
4NT	2	4	14

*Partner had ♠AKJT765, ♥AQ8, ♦K5, ♣J so 6♣ was a fine spot; 13 tricks when the heart finesse surprisingly worked. But would he make the same bid without the ♦K?*

## Problem 2 Teams: None Vul, Dealer East

	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠K7	-	1♠*	1♠	Pass
♥AK3	?			
♦T8732				
♣Q42				

\*1♠ = 3+cards

*This is not nice! Clearly you have to do something – your side could easily have game on, most likely in no-trump, or possibly in spades.*

*The panel splits: one group prefers to mark time with 2♦.*

**Tudor: 2♦.** I tend to play this (change of suit over an overcall) is as encouraging but not forcing. I don't like it with the poor suit, but other options are equally unappealing!

*Tim, Mike B and Danny all believe the change of suit is forcing and hope to learn something from partner's rebid. Danny looks ahead:*

**Hamilton: 2♦.** I'd play this as forcing. If partner rebids 2♣ I'll pass, else I'll need to decide if my Qxx is a club stopper.

*Others prefer not to introduce such a poor suit and think 2NT is the value bid:*

**Gallacher: 2NT.** South cannot find a bid to support her partner. If my partner was short in clubs she might have doubled rather than overcall. I have 12 points with the ♣Q and a balanced type of hand.

**Frame: 2NT:** This is tricky and depends on the meaning of 2♣ - I would love it to be asking for a stopper but I'm sure that partner will take it as showing spade support and 3♣ is clearly too pushy!

*Some players use 2NT in competition to show a 4-card raise of partner's suit, reserving the cuebid for a 3-card raise. Might that apply here? In any case, 2♣ will surely be taken as a UCB, some sort of spade raise. You might bid 3♣ over partner's response to 2♦, that would clearly be a stopper ask – but that gets the auction rather high.*

*Iain is more pessimistic:*

**Sime: 1NT.** Enough with a tenuous club stop and nothing in my long suit. On a bad day even 1NT might be too high – seven top winners but we have to throw one as they cash out.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2♦	4	10	12
2N	4	9	7
1N	1	7	8
2♣	0	6	1
2♠	0	3	1
Pass	0	1	2

*Partner had ♠A86432 ♥J982 ♦KJ ♣5. 2♣ is a comfortable spot, many were allowed to make 10 tricks. DA was onside but there was a heart loser*

### Problem 3 Teams None Vul, Dealer East

♠KQ632 ♥A9 ♦AJ75 ♣AK	West	North	East	South
	-	-	2♠*	Pass
	?			

2♠ = weak, 5-10

*The panel choose to investigate slam in different ways, the most popular being 2NT, asking for more information.*

**Sime: 2NT.** A feature and range ask. Partner bids 3♣ with a minimum and shows a feature otherwise. If the feature is a red suit King, we can look beyond 4♣.

*It is hard to see what other feature partner could have! Iain knows exactly what he is asking for. Most competitors who chose 2NT thought it was asking for Ogust-style responses.*

**Gallacher: 2NT.** I have 21 HCP and partner bids a weak 2 in my best suit. I'll be disappointed if my partner has only 5 points including the Ace and Jack of spades. I can count 10 tricks. It seems a tossup between 6♣ and 2NT asking how good her hand is.

*Derek points out that it would be nice if 2NT asked for a singleton on this deal.*

*To quote SJ Simon: "slam bidding is mental play". Imagine partner has Ace to 6 spades. You count 10 winners. If you can make 2 ruffs in your hand that makes 12. So slam will make even when partner is minimum with a singleton diamond; or CQxx so you can discard the losing heart; or even four small clubs and only 3 red cards*

*Russell finds a way to focus partner's attention on the diamond suit:*

**Frame: 3♦.** Natural and forcing, helping partner to judge when I make a slam try on the next round.

*I wonder what that slam try might be? Some of the panel cut to the chase with Blackwood.*

**Hamilton: 4NT.** 6♣ is very likely, maybe 7♣ if partner has the right hand. If playing a feature ask 2NT to find a diamond singleton would be handy.

Indeed. 7♠ will make if partner has the ♥K and a singleton diamond. Most partnerships do not have the methods to find out. Best to follow advice from Bob Hamman: "Don't play me for perfect cards. I don't have them."

My personal view is that there are so many hands where 12 tricks are there that I may as well bid slam and see if it makes. A more scientific approach may help only the defence.

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
2N	5	10	11
6♠	0	9	6
4N	3	8	9
3♦	1	7	1
4♠	0	2	3
3NT	0	1	2

Partner had ♠AT9875, ♥32, ♦94, ♣Q74. Not a particularly strong opener, but 6♠ is cold. Only one pair of Juniors bid slam – and it looks as if they were employing Gerber!

#### Problem 4 Teams EW Vul, Dealer South

	West	North	East	South
♠6	-	-	-	1♣
♥4	?			
♦AQJ8542				
♣KT75				

We can all agree that it would be a good idea to bid some number of diamonds. The question is: How many? It rather depends on how the remaining HCP are divided between North and East.

Both Mikes and Tim adopt the 'softly, softly' approach.

**McKay: 1♦.** Tricky - any jump in Diamonds is usually pre-emptive (in most people's methods) so bid 1♦ and hopefully the auction won't end there. We don't really know whose hand it is yet.

**Baron: 1♦.** I wouldn't pre-empt as partner is not a passed hand. 6♦ may be on, 3NT may be better than 5♦, or a part score in diamonds may be all there is. Don't cramp the space to find this out.

*This may work well on some layouts. One thing we know: over 1♦ someone will bid a Major. If the auction returns to us at the 4-level in hearts or spades what shall we do?*

*No panellist chose 2♦. For several competitors that might be an Intermediate Jump Overcall, but it seems like a misdescription, falling between constructive and pre-emptive.*

*Most of the panel choose a pre-empt, hoping to make life difficult for North. Iain and Derek agree on the 3-level.*

**Sanders: 3♦.** I am a bit top-heavy for a pre-emptive jump overcall but the unfavourable vulnerability does indicate a sound hand.

*Jim and Steve give up on the remote possibility that 3NT might make, preferring to put on the pressure.*

**Male: 4♦.** It's a very good 3♦, 7/4 shape. Let's make the opponents guess at the 4 level.

*Danny and Russell go all the way:*

**Hamilton: 5♦.** Although partner is an unpassed hand I'm tempted to go for a big pre-empt and in fact can't resist. Hoping that North has the majors and will be forced to guess.

*The problem with this is that North may be forced to guess to double. At this vulnerability you might be lucky to escape for -500 if partner has no diamond support.*

	Votes	Marks	Competitors
1♦	3	10	12
4♦	2	8	1
5♦	2	7	1
3♦	2	6	9
2♦	0	3	8

*In real life partner had most of the remaining HCP: ♠KQ972, ♥JT65, ♦K3, ♣A3. 3NT was a lucky make, 5♦ needed some help from the defence. There were some large penalties when NS ventured too high in a Major.*

## Competitors Top Scores

*Not easy to score well this time – everybody who scores 25 or more merits a mention.*

<b>2* Master</b>	Charles Fogelman	GBC	32
<b>1* Master</b>	Robin MacPherson	New Melville	37
	Roy Heanes	New Melville	32
<b>Master</b>	Neil Bulleid	Buchanan	40
	Marilyn McDonagh	Carlton	33
	Jane Smithson	Berwick	30
<b>District Master</b>	Paul Kerr	Troon	37
	Jean Cousins	Buchanan	35
	John Smithson	Berwick	31
	Graham Vincent	Linlithgow	31
	Rosemary Jamieson	Carlton	28
<b>Local Master</b>	Gavin Easton	Longniddry	32
	Peter Beckett	New Melville	30
	Margaret Mainland	Orkney	29
	Angela Ford	Maccabi	28
	Larry Watson	Buchanan	27
	Chris Mickley	Nairn	25
<b>Club Master</b>	Helen Adamson	Kirkcaldy	31
	Debbie Bland	Bearsden Academy	25
<b>Novice</b>	Mairi Lowson	New Melville	34
	Evelyn Watson	Stepping-Stone	32
	Wilma Currie	Kilmacolm	29
	Ian Lowson	New Melville	28