

Scottish Bridge News

Editorial

This edition has extensive coverage of the Camrose series. In the Camrose itself our team failed to improve on the first weekend's performance: we finished where we started, 5th out of 6 teams.

In the Junior Camrose (Under 26) the smaller NBOs have trouble assembling even one team, and England usually provide a second team to bring the numbers up to six. This year Scotland managed to provide two teams. We finished third and fourth behind England and Ireland.

The Junior events were held in Belfast, and Northern Ireland provided the sixth team for the Peggy Bayer, the Under 21 event. Our team of 5, with three 15-year-olds, finished a creditable third.

The hands from the Camrose and Junior Camrose are available in the RealBridge Archive, but there was no coverage of the Peggy Bayer. Danny Hamilton has written about the team's adventures, and more detail is available on his blog:

<https://bridgedanny.blogspot.com/search/label/Peggy%20Bayer>

For various reasons ***we have decided to revert to a quarterly SBNews. The next issue will appear in early June; then September and December.*** Watch the website for notice of its appearance.

As ever, contributions will be warmly welcomed. Please send them to:

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The Second Camrose Weekend

Scotland began the weekend lying 5th of the 6 teams. Could we improve?

We have a bit of a reputation for lacking aggression in the auction. Analysis shows that we lose just as many points in card play.

Match 1 v Ireland


Bd 12	♠AT9 ♥T97532 ♦KJT3 ♣—	NS Vul Dir W
♠J875 ♥KQ ♦Q95 ♣AQT3		♠63 ♥A86 ♦A842 ♣K987
	♠KQ42 ♥J4 ♦76 ♣J6542	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	2♥	2NT	Pass
3NT	End		

South led partner's 'suit' against the hopeless game. North played the ♥2, Suit Preference for diamonds. Declarer tested clubs with the ♣A and North discarded the ♠9, presumably to reinforce the diamond message. But he followed by discarding the ♠T on the second club, forgetting that partner could lead diamonds only if he gained the lead. East now led a spade towards dummy, South rose with the Queen...

In the other room the contract was played by West. North led the ♥T, then discarded the ♥2 to show that there was no future in hearts. His next discard was the ♦3. Our declarer gallantly tried an intra-finesse in diamonds, leading to the nine then running the ♦Q – to no avail.

Match 1 v Ireland

Bd 20	♠K972 ♥86 ♦9762 ♣KJT	NS Vul Dir S
♠QT6 ♥754 ♦K54 ♣8752		♠A8 ♥AKQJ2 ♦QT3 ♣A43
	♠J543 ♥T93 ♦AJ8 ♣Q96	

Contract: 3NT by East: Lead: ♥9


The auction was simple: 2NT – 3NT. 3 Souths led hearts. When North follows it is clear that South has made a passive lead from ♥T9x(x). There are 7 winners; an 8th will come from diamonds.

Skilled declarers put opponents to an early guess. One East cashed hearts, making NS discard, before testing diamonds. His opponents were eventually forced to open up spades. Another led a spade to the ♠Q at trick 2. He got lucky: both North and South discarded clubs in the end game.

Our declarer ducked a club at trick two. North switched to the ♦7, which ran to dummy's ♦K. South won the next diamond and returned a heart. Now East tried to sneak a spade through. It looks better to cash the hearts, forcing opponents to discard, then play ♣A and another, hoping to endplay someone.

The other Souths led a spade. Two declarers guessed to play the ♠T for an easy 9 tricks. Against Scotland Tom Hanlon misguessed, rising with the ♠Q. He won the ♠A and immediately put South to a guess by playing a diamond to the ♦K and one back to the ♦T. It was hard for South to read the situation and he continued spades.

Match 3 v Northern Ireland

Bd 15	♠QT93	NS Vul
	♥J953	Dir S
	♦82	
	♣Q72	
♠K8762		♠J
♥7		♥AQ862
♦64		♦AKT75
♣KT983		♣AJ
		♠A54
	♥KT4	
	♦QJ93	
	♣654	

At 4 tables EW bid the misfit to the hopeless 3NT. Scotland did better:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	Pass
2♠*	Pass	2♥	End

*2♠ = spades and a minor, weak


South had passed before he realised that the 2♥ bid was insufficient. West shrewdly passed, and East secured an overtrick for +140. This would gain 8+imps in any other match, but Northern Ireland did even better:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	Pass
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	End

This looks a pretty poor spot, but Rex Anderson showed his class. He won the diamond lead, cashed the ♥A and ruffed a heart, returned to the ♦K and ruffed another heart. Next, he cashed the ♣A and ♣K and ruffed a club in dummy. 8 tricks already. When he played another heart from dummy South discarded and he made a third ruff in hand. His remaining ♠Kx was bound to produce a 10th trick. +420 and 7 imps to Northern Ireland.

South beats 4♠ by ruffing the 4th heart with the ♠A, holding declarer to just one more trump trick. Perhaps it was just too hard to read the distribution.

Match 4 v EBU


Bd 2	♠AT92	NS Vul
	♥Q92	Dir E
	♦976	
	♣743	
♠KQ5		♠J8763
♥KJ84		♥A5
♦K8532		♦4
♣6		♣AKJ92
		♠4
	♥T763	
	♦AQJT	
	♣QT85	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♠	End		

The 2/1 auction was quite informative, allowing Mike Bell to find the brilliant lead of the ♦Q. Declarer naturally ducked, and South switched to a spade. North won the Ace over dummy's King. A second trump kills the contract, but North returned a diamond. Declarer could now crossruff his way to 10 tricks, but he was still bamboozled by the lead. He discarded a club, allowing South to win the ♦A for one down.

We were fortunate to lose no imps here. A less informative auction in the other room persuaded Barnet Shenkin to lead a club. Declarer played trump. Brian Spears ducked the ♠K but won the ♠A over the ♠Q and played a third spade. East tried a diamond now, but Barnet did not rise with the Ace, and declarer ducked. The ♥T switch guaranteed defeat. A muddled declarer actually achieved -3.

Match 5 v England

Bd 20	♠854 ♥K942 ♦Q964 ♣AJ	All Vul Dir W
♠K96 ♥AJ76 ♦T5 ♣Q875		♠AT3 ♥T83 ♦AK732 ♣K4
	♠QJ72 ♥Q5 ♦J8 ♣T9632	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	End		

South led the ♣9. For those who play strong Tens the nine is led from T9x(x). When North contributed the ♣J the situation was clear: it would be easy to establish a second club trick, and opponents could not continue the attack on clubs without conceding a third trick. Declarer won the ♣K and led a low heart. Peter Crouch made an astute play of the ♥Q, giving the impression that he might also hold the King. declarer was now guaranteed a second heart trick, but the winning line was still not clear. He crossed to a diamond and led the ♥T, ducked all round. Now he played two more diamonds, uncovering the 4=2 break. North won and played a spade, and declarer decided to play for split honours in that suit. The spade was his fifth loser. One down.

Our defender also led the ♣9 but North took the ♣A and switched to a diamond, ducked to South's ♦J. South also decided to get busy and switched in turn to the ♥Q. Andrew McIntosh won the ♥A, stylishly unblocking the ♥8,

then ran the ♥6. He unblocked the ♣K before playing a third heart to establish his ninth trick. North returned a diamond and Tosh cashed his winners, squeezing South in the black suits to make an overtrick.

If there is a moral it is that our players do not practice enough against top defenders. In play and defence we are inclined to go after tricks rather than waiting for them to fall into our laps. Sometimes it is best to follow Granny's Rule: do not win a trick you might duck unless you are sure you know what to lead to the next trick.

Camrose Second Weekend

1	England	88.61
2	EBU	62.38
3	Ireland	59.38
4	Wales	37.63
5	Scotland	33.20
6	N Ireland	19.80

Camrose Final Rankings

1	England	148.44
2	EBU	131.51
3	Ireland	117.19
4	Wales	85.13
5	Scotland	75.14
6	N Ireland	35.19

The Junior Camrose

The Junior event is dominated by England: they have won the Trophy 44 times out of 54. Scotland is the only other country named on the trophy: we have won 7 times and tied with England 3 times. England have greater numbers and a well-organised training scheme. Ireland have also invested in their juniors recently. Scotland needs to follow their example.

Some of the Home nations have difficulty assembling teams. Wales is given special dispensation to include slightly overage players. Until this year the 6th team was provided by England, but Scotland sent a second team to Belfast to bring the numbers up to six.

Junior Bridge is rarely dull, so we went looking for large penalties. There were surprisingly few!

Match 1 Scotland v SBU

Bd 5	♠AK87532	NS Vul
	♥843	Dir N
	♦Q7	
	♣9	
♠Q		♠JT
♥AT96		♥K52
♦A93		♦K652
♣AKJ32		♣T865
	♠964	
	♥QJ7	
	♦JT84	
	♣Q74	

The Scottish North thought this worth opening 1♠. His partner found a 3-card raise and West overcalled 3♣, where more experienced players would make a takeout double. Now North jumped to a suicidal 4♠. East led a trump and declarer did not bother to establish a heart for the 8th trick. But only -300: no double, no trouble.

The SBU North opened just 2♠ but went on to game when partner found a raise. 4♠ was doubled, but the defence went astray, establishing dummy's diamonds and failing to cash their hearts. Not a troubling double, just -200.

In other matches the normal 3♣ opener was passed round to West, who doubled, giving East a headache. The Double Dummy Solver makes 10 tricks in either minor, but he peeks. One poor East was -4 in 5♦. But undoubled.

Match 3 Scotland v Northern Ireland

Bd 15	♠J7	NS Vul
	♥975	Dir S
	♦AQ5	
	♣A9832	
♠AQ943		♠T62
♥AK6		♥J43
♦KJ863		♦T9742
♣—		♣T7
	♠K85	
	♥QT82	
	♦—	
	♣KQJ654	

Our West managed to get himself doubled in 4♦. North led the ♣A and started to worry when it was ruffed. Declarer played trump, and North can set him a big problem now by switching to a heart. If declarer persists with trump a second heart establishes a winner to go with the inevitable spade for one down. Peeking DDS solves the problem by playing the ♠Q from hand at trick 4! Spades are established, South cannot profitably attack hearts... Back in the real world, North did not switch, and declarer scored an easy 510.

Not quite so good as the English declarer who made 5♦X. No heart switch, and when he led the ♠T from dummy South covered with the King.

The SBU team scored 12 imps against Wales. They defeated 5♦ in one room and doubled 5♣ in the other. West is endplayed at trick 1: a diamond lead allows South to discard 2 spades; a spade lead gives a trick, and 3 rounds of hearts provide a discard for one of dummy's spades. There is no record of how declarer went two down.

Match 5 Scotland v Ireland

Bd 13	♠T984	All Vul
	♥972	Dir N
	♦QJ8762	
	♣—	
♠K		♠A2
♥AKJ843		♥QT6
♦—		♦AKT43
♣KJT632		♣984
	♠QJ7653	
	♥5	
	♦95	
	♣AQ75	

At most tables East opened 1♦; South overcalled in spades, West bid hearts and North raised spades pre-emptively. The SBU settled for doubling 4♠. They made the obvious 5 defensive tricks to collect 500. Surely not enough to compensate for a vulnerable slam?

Against Scotland Ireland sailed into 6♥. North led the ♦Q, declarer won – and led a club at trick 2. South rose with the ♣A and gave partner a ruff for the setting trick. It looks better to draw trump first, ending in dummy. Then run the ♣9: if South rises with the ♣A there is a second entry to dummy by overtaking the ♠K. A pick-up for Scotland? Alas, no, our West had an optimistic punt at the Grand: he was doubled and 2 down.

England also bid 6♥ against the SBU. North found the spade lead that removes an entry to dummy.

Declarer played two rounds of trump before tackling clubs but that was not good enough. (Peeking DDS cashes two diamonds to remove South's safe exit cards before running the ♣9.) And so the SBU gained a surprise 12 imps

In the Wales / Northern Ireland match the contracts were 6♣ and 6NT, where communications were rather easier.

Match 9 Scotland v England

Bd 2	♠J92	NS Vul
	♥J8543	Dir E
	♦JT52	
	♣7	
♠K3		♠QT8
♥92		♥AKQ76
♦A		♦KQ743
♣AJ986543		♣—
	♠A7654	
	♥T	
	♦986	
	♣KQT2	

This was the English auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	1♥	1♠
2♣	2♠	3♦	Pass
3♠*	Pass	4♦	Pass
6♣	End		

Should South double 6♣? That contract is likely to fail by at least two tricks, but might there be a better spot? The auction at the other table was:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♥	1♠
2♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♣*	Dbl
Redbl	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl	End	

The English North mistakenly thought he could beat 4♥. Declarer can make 11 tricks quite easily but he settled for 10. +590 gave Scotland 12 imps.

If our South doubles 6♣, East can run to 6♥-1 for the same score; or stand firm and lose 500, giving Scotland 14 imps instead of 12.

Scotland were a team of 4, which demands a lot from the players. They began their final match just 4VP behind Ireland, so a small win might secure second place. Board 1 was ominous:

Match 10: Scotland v Ireland

Bd 17	♠A	None Vul
	♥AQ2	Dir N
	♦KQ7432	
	♣T62	
♠643		♠K98752
♥JT974		♥—
♦A86		♦5
♣93		♣AKJ854
	♠QJT	
	♥K8653	
	♦JT9	
	♣Q7	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♠	4♠	Pass
Pass	5♥	Pass	Pass
Dbf	End		

Some pushy bidding landed Scotland in the wrong strain. Wales played in 5♦X, one down and a good save against 4♠. (DDS takes 4 tricks against 5♦: West overruffs the third club with the ♦A and gives partner a heart ruff.)

5♥ is doomed by the evil break to lose 800, though declarer was given a chance to escape for -500. In the other room Scotland played in 5♣X, a contract which DDS makes with ease, but our non-peeking human did not. -14 imps.

The SBU East was doubled in 4♠, making the obvious overtrick and scoring 6 imps against England by not doubling in the other room.

There were several 800 penalties over the weekend, but only one larger one.

Match 10: Scotland v Ireland

Bd 26	♠—	All Vul
	♥AK97	Dir E
	♦K96	
	♣JT8763	
♠KJ73		♠T62
♥53		♥JT862
♦J85		♦AT42
♣K952		♣Q
	♠AQ9854	
	♥Q4	
	♦Q73	
	♣A4	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	-	2♥	2♠
2NT	Dbf	Pass	Pass
3♣	Dbf	3♦	Pass
Pass	Dbf	End	

West expected more from partner's vulnerable Lucas 2, but his efforts to compete allowed North to get into doubling rhythm. The result was -1100.

The SBU North-South had a less costly mixup on this board. They also played in 3♦, a 3=3 fit, but undoubled, so lost a mere 300.

Both Scottish teams suffered heavy losses in the last match, but they had done well enough earlier to finish 3rd and 4th.

Junior Camrose Rankings

1	England	157.74
2	Ireland	139.03
3	Scotland	115.91
4	SBU	78.37
5	Wales	60.93
6	N Ireland	43.82

NPC Report

Danny Hamilton

I'm in Belfast with the Scotland U21 team, competing for the **Peggy Bayer Trophy** against the other home nations. In my team we have captain Kevin and old-hand Alexander, who will be playing most of the matches. We also have three 15-year-olds making their debut - it's a learning experience for Rachel, Niamh and Isla.



This pictured also appeared in The Times on Monday 19th February 2024, as part of a story titled "Winning schoolgirl bridge players bust stereotypes".

Our aim is not to lose 20-0 to England, and to be competitive with everyone else...

Friday 16 February was a good day, as we all made it successfully to the hotel. Friday's bridge doesn't start until 7 pm, which is when the players will have to do their bit. There were a few issues affecting the other Scotland team with missing passports and not realising there are two airports in Belfast, but I think they're all here now too.

Two of the youngsters in my charge are just back from a school trip to Iceland, where they said they didn't have too much free time. In their free time this afternoon they declined to play bridge as they didn't want to fog their minds before tonight's matches. I went out to explore the local area.

We began our campaign with a 19-1 loss to England, then bounced back with a big win against NIBU, the second Northern Irish team.

Saturday began by beating Wales, putting us in third overall. Next was Ireland, our closest rivals. Here's a board where we did well.

Bd 22	♠J93 ♥864 ♦Q3 ♣AJ864	EW Vul Dlr E									
♠AK ♥A3 ♦AKJT ♣97532	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠QT8542 ♥Q ♦8764 ♣KT
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠76 ♥KJT9752 ♦952 ♣Q										

Our South finished in 4♥x-2. A good result non-vulnerable. On the other table our East made 4♠x on a club lead. Well played, Niamh, a doubled game is always good to settle the nerves. It wasn't enough though, and we lost to Ireland 5-15.

Lunch today was soup. Just soup! I'm still waiting for the second course. It was billed as a *light lunch*, and the soup was quite nice, but no one expected just soup. I decided to walk half an hour through the countryside to the local shop so the team had enough to eat. On my return I caught up with the bridge. We did well against Northern Ireland. The highlight was this slam:

See top of next page

After South (Rachel) opened 2NT North (Kevin) transferred then drove to 6♠. There were no problems in the play. Ireland also bid the slam, as did England in another match.

Bd 3	♠KQT9864	EW Vul
	♥854	Dir S
	♦K6	
	♣9	
♠J5		♠3
♥J762		♥AT3
♦8754		♦QJT93
♣QT6		♣J743
	♠872	
	♥KQ9	
	♦A2	
	♣AK852	

Five matches down and at the half-way stage we were firmly wedged in 3rd, behind England and Ireland. Next, we played each team again, beginning with England. An 18.3 - 1.7 loss to England was a slight improvement.

That was the official finish to Saturday, but most of the players weren't finished yet, and took part in the late-night Speedball. I thought it would be a good thing as a coach to play in this event, to make me more sympathetic towards the players' mistakes. This worked well. The very first card I played was a lead out of turn. I then checked that they were playing 4♥. No, it was 4♠. Making, wasn't it? No, one off. I was all over the place and understood better the pressure the players had been under...



Team mascot Timon mixes up the cards against Wales

On **Sunday** morning the team beat NIBU again and then had a close match against Wales. This hand was critical.

Bd 21	♠AJT9732	NS Vul
	♥AK2	Dir N
	♦2	
	♣T3	
♠K8		♠—
♥Q863		♥T75
♦A74		♦JT863
♣Q842		♣KJ765
	♠Q654	
	♥J94	
	♦KQ95	
	♣A9	

Our North-South did well to get to 4♠. Declarer won the club lead and tried the Ace of trumps. When that failed to drop the King she was looking at one loser in each suit. The winning line is to play on diamonds, setting up a discard for a losing heart. It's a textbook hand. Alas, Wales have read the textbook but we haven't. The 12 IMP loss means we lose narrowly. 4♠ was bid and made on 4 out of the 6 tables.

In our second match against Ireland Kevin made 4♥ as North.

Bd 3	♠A4	EW Vul
	♥KQJT98	Dir S
	♦J	
	♣J843	
♠KJ763		♠QT82
♥7		♥542
♦K874		♦A652
♣A75		♣K2
	♠95	
	♥A63	
	♦QT93	
	♣QT96	

One way the defence can beat it is with a club ruff, another is by setting up a spade trick. If they do both they get it two off. Presumably they did neither,

On the other table Rachel and Isla bid to 4♠ East-West. This is an excellent contract, and only needs diamonds to break kindly. In fact, one of the prepared deals I use for teaching in my classroom in Glasgow is almost exactly like this - although in that one diamonds are 3-2 and you can make the contract. Here we went one off, but still a good board overall.

Across the event Hearts were bid three times and only Kevin made 10 tricks. Only the English East-West made 10 tricks in Spades.

Overall we lost 15-5, a similar score to against Ireland last time, and cementing us in 3rd place out of six overall.

Our final match was against Northern Ireland, who we beat comfortably again. Here are my reflections on the whole weekend:

- It was great meeting in person, rather than online. Everyone agrees about this.
- It would be nice if the same set of boards were used in both the Peggy Bayer and Junior Camrose, so that we could all chat together about the deals.
- The bridge was of quite a variable standard. I think in this situation the focus should be on encouraging the newer players, which it has been.
- The hotel has been good, apart from the disappointing soup lunch.

Peggy Bayer Rankings

1	England	190.24
2	Ireland	151.55
3	Scotland	118.04
4	Wales	73.29
5	NIBU	36.88
6	N Ireland	30.00

This article has been gleaned from Danny's blog, written during the event. You can read the full version on <https://bridgedanny.blogspot.com/search/label/Peggy%20Bayer>

Full details of both Junior events, including a program with some interesting pen portraits of the participants, can be found on the Northern Ireland Bridge Union website:

[Junior Camrose and Peggy Bayer Trophies 2024 – Northern Ireland Bridge Union \(nibu1.co.uk\)](#)

You can replay the Junior Camrose hands by logging into RealBridge and looking in the February 2024 Archive.

Back in the Club

Iain Sime

I was keen to return to the Camrose Club. I used to meet up with friends from Ireland, Wales and England twice a year for a game of high-quality bridge. My previous visit was in 2017. Thereafter I lost my place in the Scotland team.

But along came a new partnership, with Derek Diamond, and I had renewed hope. A successful final “performance event” and we were in the team for the first weekend in Newport in 2024. It had been 7 years since I last saw some of my old clubmates. How would we fare?

On Friday evening Derek and I lined up against Hastings Campbell and Sam Hall of Northern Ireland. At the other table we had Douglas Piper and Alex Wilkinson. Their opponents were the most capped pair in Camrose history, Rex Anderson and David Greenwood.

We picked up a few overtrick imps on the first few boards before Douglas and Alex outbid our opponents on Board 4.

Game All Dealer West

West	East
♠AKQJT2	♠96543
♥AQT2	♥5
♦A6	♦J74
♣6	♣AT94

Alex

2♣

3♠

4♦

4NT

6♠

Douglas

2♦

4♣

4♥

5♣

I like Alex’s first two bids. 2♣ followed by 3♠ announced that they were going to game in spades. That made the auction simple. Three cuebids were

followed by RKC. Half of the 6-table field missed the slam including our opponents. They bid an Acol 2♠-(Double)-4♠-Pass.

On the next board we were lucky when Sam Hall made an unfortunate decision to balance.

Bd 5	♠75	NS Vul
	♥AK94	Dir N
	♦QT3	
	♣AKJ3	
♠KQ743		♠96
♥65		♥QJT3
♦AJ42		♦976
♣Q7		♣8654
	♠AJ82	
	♥872	
	♦K85	
	♣T92	

WEST	NORTH <i>(Iain)</i>	EAST	SOUTH <i>(Derek)</i>
	1NT ¹	Pass	Pass
2♣ ²	Pass	2♦ ³	Pass
2♠	Dble ⁴	End	

¹1NT = (14)15-17

²2♣ = any single suit

³2♦ = Pass/correct

⁴Dbl = takeout

Derek passed 1NT with his flat 8-count and we were slated to lose 10 imps against 3NT made at the other table. But Sam balanced and I had the chance to double 2♠ for take-out. Derek was happy to convert to penalty. We defended accurately, collecting our two tricks in each side suit. Declarer then had to play trumps from hand so that was another three losers. Four down for 800 and a 5-imp pick up.

I was hopeful of another pick-up on the next board when we had a good auction to 6♦.

Bd 6	♠AKJ ♥AT974 ♦Q972 ♣3	EW Vul Dir E									
♠732 ♥Q85 ♦JT83 ♣765	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠KQJT42 ♥J72 ♦— ♣8654
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠965 ♥K6 ♦AK654 ♣A98										

WEST	NORTH (Iain)	EAST	SOUTH (Derek)
		Pass	1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♦
End			

4♠ was a cuebid; 5♠ showed 2 keycards plus the trump Queen. The 4/0 trump split scuppers 7♦: I had to play carefully to make six. Disappointingly Rex and David also sailed into 6♦ slam, and David also made 12 tricks. But our next gain was just around the corner.

In the course of the weekend Scotland would lose five game swings on the play of the cards. Same contract, same lead, they made, we didn't. This was the one time where we turned the tables.

(See top of next column)

Both tables bid 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♠ - 3NT - 4♠ - Pass. East led his club.

Suspecting a singleton, I played the ♦A and ruffed a diamond. Then the ♠K pinned the Jack. East kept forcing me in diamonds to wind up with the last trump. But by then he had no more diamonds and dummy was high. Ten tricks David Greenwood ruffed a club at trick 2. An intermediate trump might have survived, but the ♠2 was over-ruffed.

Bd 7	♠KT98752 ♥T875 ♦4 ♣2	All Vul Dir S									
♠J ♥32 ♦KJ983 ♣QJT74	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠AQ643 ♥J64 ♦T762 ♣8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠— ♥AKQ9 ♦AQ5 ♣AK9653										

Douglas switched accurately to the diamond and the contract was dead.

That made the score 35-0 in our favour. The next two boards saw adverse 5 imp swings: Sam and Hastings reached a better partial; then David found a more testing lead than I did against 2♥.

The next partial went our way, then something more significant. Both sides reached 4♥ by North.

Bd 11	♠96 ♥AKQJ964 ♦97 ♣KJ	None Vul Dir S									
♠QJ2 ♥8 ♦AKJ4 ♣T8432	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠K74 ♥7532 ♦T862 ♣A7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠AT853 ♥T ♦Q53 ♣Q965										

Douglas led a spade; he and Alex then successfully cashed their diamonds and a spade before the mice got at them. Our opponents led the ♣A and then tried to cash too many diamonds. The ♠A remained on table as an entry to the winning club. Furthermore, they had doubled. 12 more imps.

The next board was a routine 4♠ at 5 out of 6 tables. David and Rex had a

bidding accident and ended in 5♣ on a 4/3 fit. The cards were not forgiving, and we had 13 more imps.

Then came a double game swing:

Bd 14	♠—	None Vul
	♥KT986543	Dir E
	♦J6	
	♣T54	
♠K98732		♠JT6
♥A7		♥J
♦K		♦98432
♣KQ62		♣AJ93
	♠AQ54	
	♥Q2	
	♦AQT75	
	♣87	

WEST	NORTH <i>(Iain)</i>	EAST	SOUTH <i>(Derek)</i>
		Pass	1♦
1♠	4♥	End	

What should you call an 8-card suit? Trump! East didn't lead diamonds when given the chance, so I ran my winning trumps and watched their discards. It seemed to me that West must have the ♦K or East would have supported spades. I therefore played to drop it.

At the other table the Irish didn't save against 4♠, which made easily, losing only a diamond and two trumps. Another 13 imps, our fifth 12/13 imps swing of the match.

I was hoping for flat boards from here. Like nearly all my other wishes in this set, this one came true. The score was 76-10 to Scotland. We sat out the second half and team-mates added another 3 imps.

That dream start to the weekend didn't continue. Against two strong English teams we had a loss and a draw. We suffered disappointing losses to both Ireland and Wales.

But it was good to be back.

Play Challenge

Jim Patrick

1 NS Vul Dealer South

♠K96
♥AKJ63
♦T54
♣T5

♠AT3
♥T982
♦AK72
♣A7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♥
End			

Contract: 4♥ Lead: ♣K

You win the opening lead and cash the ♥AK. On the second heart West discards a club. How do you continue?

2 NS Vul Dealer East

♠A642
♥Q84
♦QT64
♣AK

♠Q85
♥KT92
♦A75
♣QJ4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Dbl	Pass
1NT	Dbl	2♣	Pass
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
End			

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♣2

You win the opening lead and play a heart to the King and one to the 8, which scores. How will you make East pay for his injudicious bidding and misdefence?

Play Challenge Solutions

Jim Patrick

1 Both Vul Dealer East

	♠K96								
	♥AKJ63								
	♦T54								
	♣T5								
♠Q752 ♥7 ♦J863 ♣KQJ8	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E	♠J84 ♥Q54 ♦T9 ♣96432	
	N								
W	S	E							
	♠AT3								
	♥T982								
	♦AK72								
	♣A7								

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♥
End			

Contract: 4♥ Lead: ♣K

You win the ♣A and cash the top hearts, but West shows out on the second heart, discarding a club.

You now have a loser in each suit. If diamonds break 3-3 you can discard a spade: if not you need to force opponents to open up spades for you, then play for split honours.

Play ♦AK and another. You go down only if East has 4 diamonds and a cashable club. Here West wins the third diamond, and can cash a club, then exit with the fourth diamond. You ruff and endplay East with the third heart,

If East has 4 diamonds, he can cash the heart and exit with a diamond, but now you endplay West with a club. East could play a club instead of the 4th diamond, but that endplays West one trick sooner.

2 NS Vul Dealer East

	♠A642								
	♥Q84								
	♦QT64								
	♣AK								
♠KJT93 ♥J53 ♦82 ♣T52	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E	♠7 ♥A76 ♦KJ93 ♣98763	
	N								
W	S	E							
	♠Q85								
	♥KT92								
	♦A75								
	♣QJ4								

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Dbl	Pass
1NT	Dbl	2♣	Pass
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
End			

Contract: 3NT Lead: ♣2

You win the club lead and play a heart to the King, then one to the 8, which holds. Now it is a simple matter of counting East's hand. He must have 5 clubs and at least 4 diamonds for his double. From the play so far it is inconceivable that the hearts are not 3-3. He has at most 1 spade.

You have 3 clubs, 1 diamond, 1 spade and can make 3 heart tricks. East surely has the ♦K and probably the ♦J.

You need to endplay him but, if you play a heart now, he can exit a club or a spade. Then your only entry to hand to cash the fourth heart is the diamond ♦A. Exiting a diamond after that means you lose too many tricks - 1 heart, 2 clubs and 2 diamonds.

Cash the Aces of clubs and spades before putting East in with a heart and he has to give you an entry to hand with a club. Now cash your heart and play a diamond to the ♦T.

March 2024 Bidding Challenge

Liz McGowan

Thanks to the 17 panellists who have responded this month. One huge loss is John Murdoch, whose contributions were always thoughtful and thought-provoking.

Problem 1 Teams Both Vul

♠K93	S	W	N	E
♥AKJT	-	1♠	P	2♠
♦4	?			
♣A8532				

The panel could not find a good solution to this problem. Some just had to take some action:

MCGINLEY: 2NT if it means 'two places to play', rather than strong balanced. [A t/o Double is no good as you can't deal with a 3♦ response.].

I confess that I was surprised the other day to see someone make a natural 2NT bid on this auction. Have you discussed it with partner? Gints for one believes 2NT would be natural here.

FREIMANIS: 3♣. I do not like bidding such a bad suit, but Dbl may land us in 3♦ and 2NT may have absolutely no play even when partner has a relatively decent hand. Partner should not have many spades on the auction, so hoping to see some support in clubs.

VALENTINE: 3♣. Wish my suit was better, but if I wait for the perfect hand to take action, then I'll be waiting too often. Passing puts too much pressure on partner to reopen and leaves us unclear as to the strain/level we should be playing in if 3♠ is passed back to us.

It is reasonable to assume that you have an 8-card fit somewhere. The problem with 3♣ is that your fit may not be in clubs. Suppose partner has something like xx Qxxxx xxxxx x?

SMITH: DBL. Not happy with this but there is too much chance of missing a vulnerable game if you pass, and 3♣ with that horrible suit does not get the hand across. I shall pull 3♦ to hearts.

ROSS: DBL. Not sure what I'll do if partner bids 3♦.

ASH: DBL. There is a real risk that partner bids diamonds and I turn a potential plus score into a minus. But there are too many hands where we can make a heart or no-trump game and partner will be unable to bid if I pass. With a really aggressive partner, who protects with the flimsiest of values if short in spades, I might consider Pass, but even he will not bid with x Qxxxx xxxxx Kx - with 4♥ not a bad bet.

Nearly half the panel gives up.

CLOW: .PASS. Perhaps a little wimpish but this looks like a 20-20 deal so the spades have the upper hand.

MCKAY: PASS. I **so** want to bid but the auction is still open and if I double partner may well bid diamonds and we could be in trouble.

WHYTE: PASS. Yes, I am a wimp, but look at all the negatives. Partner is short in spades, maximum two, but has not intervened, and thus does not have, say, 11 points and a 4-card heart suit, so 4♥ looks impossible. My ♠K is not useful, my club suit is anaemic. Can I miss a club fit? Sure, but spades are a higher suit.

SIME: PASS. The ♠K is a dubious value and West may be very strong. Partner,

holding short spades, will balance if game is possible. If not, we may as well defend. Guessing between the alternatives of Double, 2NT or 3♣ might work or might lose 1100.

SHIELDS: PASS. I clearly have two viable places to play but there is no easy way to get there. Partner is short in spades and can still bid if opener passes, and if opener doesn't pass then I have avoided telling opener where the missing high cards are located.

PATERSON: PASS. Not worth 2♣ over 1♠, let alone a bid over 2♠. But at Pairs NV, might bid 3♣ to prevent a diamond lead. Or if I knew EW played double of 3♥ as a game try, I might bid that!

GORDON: PASS. Fixed! Anyone for 3♥?

Yes, there is one:

SHENKIN: 3♥. Some play 2NT for hearts and a minor.

I like this call! It gets you to the right spot when partner has hearts and attracts the best lead when he does not. Your suit is so good that a large penalty is very unlikely.

Problem 1	Votes	Marks
Pass	8	10
3♥	1	8
2NT	3	7
Dbl	3	4
3♣	2	2

Problem 2 **Teams** None Vul

♠AQ7	S	W	N	E
♥3	-	-	1♦*	1NT
♦7432	?			
♣A9642				

*1♦ is normally UNBAL, 5-cards unless 4=4=4=1

Several panellists see no problem here:

MCGINLEY: Dbl. If they run to 2♥ then will rebid 3♦.

DRAGIC: Dbl. I shall bid diamonds on my next turn. Better than game forcing 2NT or underbidding (2♦, 3♦, Pass).

ASH: Dbl. I will follow up with 3♦ if they remove this to hearts. An immediate 3♦ is normally played as a more distributional raise but, if I were to take the view that game is unlikely, that might cut out their heart suit. However, if they get to 3♥ and partner doubles, I will be happy to take the penalty.

VALENTINE: Dbl. Seems right to convey my values at this point. If they manage to find a heart contract, then I can always subsequently support diamonds if partner does not want to penalise 2♥.

The other half of the panel has no interest in doubling a heart contract and choose to go after a different plus score. They want to support diamonds. In unusually pessimistic mode:

MCKAY: 3♦. Not constructive, trying to keep them out of a possible heart fit.

FREIMANIS: 2♦. I have the values to penalise 1NT, but I can see that opponents likely have a fit in hearts. I want to secure myself against a scenario where opponents quickly get to 3♥ and all I have told my partner is that I have got some values. I will make one further takeout Dbl if opponents compete.

ROSS: 2♣. (tempted to double).

Others are looking for game:

SHIELDS: 2NT. This is a powerful diamond raise; if partner has shortness in a Major I want to show support before LHO bounces, and if partner has short clubs the hands fit together very well

PEDEN: 3♥. Splinter. (A bit pushy.)

CLOW: 3♣. Fit jump. We may be cold for 5♦, or even a slam, if partner has a perfecto eg xx Axx KQJxx KQx. I want to play in game if he can cooperate.

SIME: 3♣. Starting with a double lets them find their heart fit. I want to play in 3♦ opposite a minimum. The Fit Jump 3♣ allows that and also secures a better lead if they bid 3♥ regardless.

I was taught that a Fit Jump indicates a source of tricks, values concentrated in the suits we bid. Since most of our points are in spades I prefer the alternative game tries.

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

Problem 3 Teams None Vul

♠K	S	W	N	E
♥AQ	1♣	P	1♠	P
♦75	?			
♣AKQ97632				

Some hands do not fit nicely into our bidding methods. The panel offers no fewer than 8 suggestions here.

Miro believes that opening 2♣ might have avoided any problem...

DRAGIC: 2♥. It will be difficult to recover after a misclick on opening bid.

...but the others accept the problem as it stands. Agreeing with Miro's choice of fake reverse:

ROSS: 2♥. (only thing I can think of that's forcing)

Others prefer a different reverse:

WHYTE: 2♦. My only sane forcing bid.

SHIELDS: 2♦. I want to get to 3NT and could just bid it; going via 2♥ might encourage a diamond lead; reversing into 2♦ and then bidding 3NT feels the best way to get a heart lead, and after I show the minors partner will always accept 3NT as a good spot.

VALENTINE: 2♦. Too good for 3NT and 3♣. Fake a reverse and then keep bidding clubs. Partner will get the picture. If partner tries to bid blackout over 2♦ we can always restart the force with 4♣.

Others choose to rebid clubs, at different levels. Keeping 3NT in the picture:

PATERSON: 3♣. Huge underbid, but everything else is a shot in the dark. Sometimes you need to bid at the wrong level to maximise the chance of finding the right contract. NOT 3NT, with the diamond weakness and signalling the likely singleton spade to opponents.

GORDON: 3♣. Unlikely to be passed. 3NT is a possibility, as is 2♥.

Robert tries to set trump:

CLOW: 4♣. Bid your controls, partner.

Not sure partner will read this request – he might assume this was showing at least a partial fit in spades.

Gints bids what he hopes to make:

FREIMANIS: 5♣. The hand is certainly too good to rebid just 3♣, but I do not want to risk lack of cover in the diamond suit. If partner has got something in diamonds, 5♣ should have a good chance of making as well.

Mike adopts a softly, softly approach:

MCGINLEY: 2NT. With something in hand so am not ruling out greater things. However, 3NT may be the only making game; the alternative rebid of

3NT [solid minor] alerts West that they may need to cash out, so now might find an unattractive diamond lead from the likes of AQx(x).

ASH: 3NT. No bid is 'correct' for this kind of hand. However most modern players play this as long and good clubs and about these values so, if partner does remove this to 4♠, he will have a self-supporting suit and will be pleased to see my support. Of course. 5♣ may make when they are cashing the first 5 diamonds but first they have to find the lead (West didn't overcall 1♦) and then partner may well have enough to stop the run of the suit.

SIME: 3NT. Not quite a prototype, but the best description. Partner can drive to 6/7♣ from here.

SMITH: 3NT. A solid suit with values outside. It would be nice to have a diamond stopper as well, but if all hands met all the criteria for a bid, it would be a very different game. No number of clubs gets this hand across, and an artificial reverse takes you into uncharted territory, too likely to bypass 3NT, the most likely game.

I fear we are already in uncharted waters. The majority of the panel point to flaws in 3NT, so I split the tie in favour of the more imaginative approach.

Problem 3	Votes	Marks
2♦	4	10
3NT	4	8
2NT	1	7
2♥	3	6
5♣	2	5
3♣	2	4
4♣	1	3
4NT	0	2

Problem 4 Teams EW Vul

♠K87	S	W	N	E
♥43	-	-	1♦	1♥
♦3	?			
♣KJT9865				

By contrast, a problem with only 2 possible solutions. Most simply bid their suit after giving passing consideration to alternatives:

CLOW: 2♣. And then 3♣ if partner is allowed to bid 2♦. I'd like to bid more but I have agreed (with myself) to play fit jumps!

ASH: 2♣. This should show about 10 hcps but I am simply not prepared to Pass this hand. I do not like to conceal a good 7-card suit I might consider Double – normally showing 4 spades – but with Hxx and a ruffing value, it is acceptable..

MCGINLEY: 2♣. Forcing for one round. Instead of Dbl, this leaves you better placed if LHO is about to raise hearts.

SMITH: 2♣. 1NT is possible as it denies a major and probably denies diamond support, but this suit is worth being clearly shown.

SIME: 2♣ If I don't bid clubs now, I may not have another chance. The extra length compensates for the missing points.

SHIELDS: 2♣. If partner has extras and short clubs we could get too high, but I always prefer to tell partner where I live.

PATERSON: 2♣. Why on earth not? Even if you play the fashionable "2 over 1 forcing to game" nonsense without competition, it cannot apply here. (Of course if you play weak jump responses, 3♣ would be routine.)

A minority think it unnecessary to introduce their suit yet.

ROSS: PASS. I would like to have been able to bid a weak 3♣.

That would indeed be useful here, but the jump new suit in competition is generally played as Fit.

MCKAY: PASS. I'm pretty sure I shall get another chance to bid.

DRAGIC: PASS. I'll bid clubs on my next turn if below game. I need little bit more for an immediate 2♣ bid, at least ♣A instead of ♣K.

VALENTINE: Pass - I am assuming double shows 4 spades? If 4+, sign me up for 1♠. Otherwise, 2♣ overstates our hand where we could have a misfit. Passing now and then bidding clubs later in the auction feels like a pretty reasonable description of our hand.

Ronan refers to a trend where double is used to show 4 or more spades and a 1♠ call denies 4 spades, inferentially showing clubs. (I can vouch for the forgettability of this method.) It would be unwise to assume that partner has read the script – and in any case it would not get over the quality of the club suit.

Irving and Bill are quite scathing:

GORDON: PASS, Can't see the problem

WHYTE: PASS. No alternative, which is another way of saying "what else".

They are presumably content never to mention their 7-card 2-loser suit.

Problem 4	Votes	Marks
2♣	11	10
Pass	6	7
3♣	0	2

Problem 5 **Teams** **Both Vul**

♠AJ42	S	W	N	E
♥QT96	-	1♠	Dbl	1NT
♦J63	?			
♣Q2				

Everybody is bidding – and most panellists are inclined to trust opponents rather than partner.

CLOW: 2♥. This may be a 10 count, but it's not really worth a penalty double of 1NT. With both opponents bidding, partner may have doubled on a minimum 1444 hand, so a free bid is enough.

WHYTE: 2♥. I will get another bite of the cherry.

PIPER: 2♥. Gentle – seems a lot of points in this pack.

ASH: 2♥. Dbl might work best here but with my values and both the opponents bidding, I suspect partner has a weak(ish) but suitable hand. He must be ready to cope with a 2♥ response and I am full value for this bid.

SHIELDS: 2♥. I have quite a few HCP but I am willing to trust RHO to have values for a vulnerable 1NT bid, and that dampens my ambitions. There is also a danger in doubling first as I might not be able to bid 2♥ on the next round, and I am not keen to bid 3♥.

ROSS: 2♥. Pity there isn't a bid for two and a half hearts,

DRAGIC: 2♥. RHO's 1NT helped me avoid jumping to 3♥. Partner would happily raise to 4 holding xx AKxx Axx Axxx.

FREIMANIS: 2♥. I could Dbl 1NT to show some values, but it also would likely put us in a spot where we need to compete beyond 2♠ should opponents bid again, and this is not a great 10-count.

SIME: 2♥. Enough with the loose quacks. Cuts out West's minor suit rebid.

PATERSON: 2♥. Poor 10 count, with which if E had passed I would either stretch to 3♥ or bid 1NT. But it is now very likely that partner's double is light

and will have a single spade and 4 hearts, so I can now bid 2♥ in comfort, intending to compete again (perhaps with double) if need be.

Some consider doubling 1NT, but only a few choose to do so.

McGINLEY: Dbl. If they run to 2m I shall rebid 2♥ [partner's assumed 4-cd suit].

SMITH: DBL. Far too good for 2♥, and I don't want to get too high too quickly. When they retreat to a minor I will show my heart support.

VALENTINE: DBL. Suggestion to defend 1NTx. Doesn't really feel like we should be doing anything else. If they run, we can always find our heart fit later.

Problem 5	Votes	Marks
2♥	13	10
Dbl	4	7
3♥	0	4
Pass	0	2

Problem 6 Teams None Vul

♠QJ98	S	W	N	E
♥5	-	-	1♠	4♥
♦AKT5	?			
♣KQ72				

Everybody goes slamming, except:

ASH: 4♠. I am prepared to look stupid if partner has the right cards for slam, but anything else risks a minus score. Even if I thought I was good enough, 4NT here should not be 'asking for keycards' – better as either the other two suits or one minor and some spade fit.

4NT was the popular choice, but what does it mean here? Miro and Bill agree with Mike that it is not a keycard ask:

DRAGIC: 4NT. 2 places to play or, as in this case, a strong slam invite when I correct to 5♠. This is one of rare situations where we would prefer 4NT to be RKCB.

WHYTE: 4NT. Ostensibly for the minors and when partner chooses one, I then go back to 5♠. Partner now knows I am asking him, if he has any extra, to bid 6♠. An immediate 5♠ denies a heart control, this shows a heart control.

I agree with these three that 4NT here is not keycard: no suit agreed, and it is not a jump. I am surprised that so many panellists are of a different mind:

PATERSON: 4NT. If partner has 3 of the 5 Aces, slam will usually be playable, and possibly huge. Otherwise, we might go off in 5♠, but not often.

VALENTINE: 4NT. This ought to be RKC for spades, feels like the only sensible tool for investigation. 5♥ achieves little, 5♠ could be raised to 6 missing the ♣A, so 4NT and establishing what we have in terms of keycards feels right to establish the right level.

McGINLEY: 4NT. RKC in Spades, getting to the heart of the matter. If partner shows 3 KC, then will try slam. Alternatives like immediate 5♥/5♠, or X followed by 5♥/5♠ are ambiguous.

SIME: 4NT. RKCB for spades. If partner has AKxxx, Jx, xxx, Axx (about his worst hand with three key cards) slam will make if West is 4/4+ in the minors (quite likely). Draw trump, ruff a heart, cash the top diamonds, ♣King-Ace, trumps, squeezing West.

SMITH: 4NT. RKC. Assuming most of the heart honours are on my right, I cannot conceive of an opening hand for partner which puts the 5-level in danger.

Irving Gordon also thinks 4NT is Keycard. I am unconvinced!

A minority of panellists opt for a cuebid.

SHENKIN: 5♥. Let partner make the last mistake.

CLOW: 5♥. Tricky, but Double might end-play partner into passing holding 3 hearts. 4♠ is not enough and 4NT will torture partner even more.

SHIELDS: 5♥. It feels like 4♠ is just too little (give partner 13 hcp outside hearts and count our losers) and I have three ways to show stronger. I distinguish the 5♥ choice from 5♠ only in terms of showing a heart control. The third alternative (bidding 4NT and then 5♠) is undefined for me, although were the majors switched this would show the weaker raise of hearts.

FREIMANIS: 5♥. Certainly an invitational raise to slam' I would like to bid 4NT as keycard, but it is a dangerous bid which may be taken as both minors. If partner responds 5♠, I will likely have to pass and hope that we do not make 12 tricks since I do not need much from partner, but I certainly need the right cards,

Problem 6	Votes	Marks
4NT	10	10
5♥	6	8
4♠	1	3
5♠	0	2

Problem 7 Teams All Vul

♠KQ943	S	W	N	E
♥T53	-	P	1	2NT*
♦K8	?			
♣KT4				

*2NT = 5-5+ minors

5-card majorites extol the advantages of being able to make 3-card raises in competition. In this situation a raise to 3♥ is often stretched, so Bill opts to bid game.

Ross: 4♥. Can't be far away even with the likely bad break.

The other Bill, with more experience of the style, takes a different approach:

WHYTE: DBL. This allows partner to bid 3♠ if he has the opportunity / space. My heart support is too flimsy to show immediate support.

I play double here as penalty interest with a misfit, so I would not dare use it with an unfamiliar partner.

Mike has a plan:

MCGINLEY: Dbl. Penalty interest. But when they run to 3m, then will bid 3♥, hoping this shows a raise to 3♥ with defensive values in the minors. Compare to an immediate 3♣ cuebid, showing a crisp invitation + in Hearts.

SHIELDS: DBL. Every partnership has different methods here, but a safe option is to double and then bid 3♥ – that has to be a game try hand. It hints at having spades on the side when I don't double their rescue, which might matter as LHO on this auction could well have length in hearts (a fact which discourages me from being too pushy). If partner doubles a rescue by LHO, I shall be happy to defend.

ASH: 3♦. As everybody should have an agreement as to what bidding their suits means, this is an unfortunate question. Some play that 3♣ shows constructive values in the other major. If I am not allowed to play this simple convention, put me down for 4♥. At least it will be them making the 'last guess'.

I suspect that a fill-in partnership will not have time to discuss this situation There are two cuebids: one should show a sound raise based on high cards; the other shows a strong hand with the unbid Major. I wondered if the panel might agree about which is which.

FREIMANIS: 3♠. A good heart raise in a lot of partnerships as Dbl would likely indicate lack of support for hearts.

VALENTINE: 3♣. This should be a good raise with heart support. Don't see any reason to introduce spades when we are so limited for space. If 4♥ is not pre-emptive and is limit, then this would also work, but 3♣ feels safer in uncharted waters with an unknown partner

DRAGIC: 3♣. Bidding 4♥ sends a wrong message. 3♣ risks ending up in 5-2 fit.

PIPER: 3♣. must be some sort of heart support.

MCKAY: 3♣... if this shows a good hand with heart support, otherwise I'll just go 4♥ as my minor suit Kings look well placed.

PATERSON: 3♣. I think it is almost standard for 3♣ to show a good hand with 5+ of the other major, while 3♦ shows a sound raise to 3+ of partner's major. Given my well-placed Kings I treat my hand as worth an opening, and show spades, intending to support hearts next.

PEDEN: 3♦. Showing spades: I shall bid 2NT over 2♥ by partner.

CLOW: 3♦. Invitational+ with spades, if partner bids 3♥ I shall probably succumb to bidding 4♥ with my working Kings.

SMITH: 3♦. Roy and I have agreed that the higher cue bid shows a sound raise to at least the 3-level. I hope this partner is singing from the same hymn sheet.

Irving points out one advantage to using the higher cue to show a good raise:

GORDON: 3♦. Showing hearts. 3♣ would make it easier for LHO to bid 3♦.

No consensus, I am afraid. Make sure you have an agreement with your regular partner!

Problem 7	Votes	Marks
3♣	7	10
3♦	5	9
DbI	4	7
4♥	1	5
3♥	0	4
3♠	0	3
4♠	0	1

Problem 8 Teams None Vul

♠T4 ♥KJT963 ♦J7 ♣QT6	S	W	N	E
	2♥	Pass	4♥	4♠
	P	P	X	End

What is your lead?

Most of the panel cannot see beyond the suit partner has raised:

FREIMANIS: ♥J. I do not want to give anything away as partner likely has this covered without need for a special lead but could see a diamond being the right lead for a potential ruff.

Some panellists try to outsmart the conductor with an 'expert' lead,

WHYTE: ♥K. This is an old chestnut. We have tricks in the minors, best to try and retain the lead, to enable a switch. In addition, partner may not have any heart honour so at least the singleton Queen will not win a trick.

GORDON: ♥K. In case I need to be on lead at T2. ♠4 also possible.

PIPER: ♥K. Try and do something sensible at trick 2

DRAGIC: ♥K. Let's see that dummy and partner's signal.

SHIELDS: ♥K. Partner tells me the contract is going down and will be expecting a heart lead; this adds to the danger of randomly leading any other suit. It also allows me to stay on lead in case leading something through

dummy at trick two matters. There is a danger that partner with ♥Ax overtakes and returns the suit, but partner should allow for this lead. There is a danger that declarer has ♥Axx and is depending on a shortage in dummy and some ruffs which I could cut by leading trumps, but if they have chosen the wrong trump suit, leading the ♠T might give away a trick.

SHENKIN: ♥K. Choice between this and the J♥. Try ♥K and see what to play next maybe. (If leading a trump retain the 10.)

Sound advice re the trump lead, but only Jack actually leads trump here.

PATERSON: ♠4. Partner's double shows roughly a strong NT, not a spade stack. The main danger is that E has heart length and W has shortage, so I lead trumps. Otherwise, we should beat it on weight of points.

Now for those who are going to beat the contract.

ROSS: ♣6. No point in leading a heart.

Indeed. Partner is surely not counting on heart tricks to defeat 4♠.

CLOW: ♦J. A club or even a spade might be right. Partner must have a decent hand.

MCGINLEY: ♦J. There may be a quick diamond ruff, or a slow one if partner has ♠A. Don't think partner has enough spade length that a forcing defence would work.

VALENTINE: ♦J. I fully expect this to score me 0 with the overlord of this poll, but it would be my lead of choice. A heart cannot be right, we may need that entry to partner's hand later and it may not even stand up. So let's attack and see if we have diamond tricks or ruffs to

establish in diamonds. Clubs rate to be placed favourably so no rush there.

It is just possible that Ronan is privy to my strong views on the iniquity of leading random doubletons, particularly Jx and Tx. But there are no 'nevers' in this game, and I make an exception here, where partner may want you to try something that is not a heart...

Ash: ♦J. What does the Double suggest? Probably partner thinks that they are going off anyway but just in case it is marginal I will assume he does not think a heart lead is best. There is a chance that the ♦J will set something up for partner or even get me a ruff, but that would be a bonus. Most importantly it doesn't give anything away.

I set this problem to test the panel's views on what the double might mean. At the table I passed, partner led a heart, game made. I held ♦AK and ♣A, so a minor suit lead beats 4♠. I wondered if double might persuade partner to try something other than a 'normal' heart. If 4♣ is about to fail on weight of cards the lead will not matter much, but perhaps partner is suggesting that you try something else?

Problem 8	Votes	Marks
♥K	10	10
♦J	4	8
♣6	1	7
♥x	2	5
♠4	1	2

Congratulations to the panellists with the leading scores, but also to those who scored less well this time. Most of the top-scoring choices would not have been mine, but the conditions of contest do not allow me to be too subjective!

Panel Answers

March 2024

Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Top Scoring Choice	Pass	Dbl	2♦	2♣	2♥	4NT	3♣	♥K	Tot	
1=	Douglas Piper	2NT	Dbl	3NT	2♣	2♥	4NT	3♣	♥K	75
	Iain Sime	Pass	3♣	3NT	2♣	2♥	4NT	3♣	♥K	75
3=	Patrick Shields	Pass	2NT	2♦	2♣	2♥	5♥	Dbl	♥K	74
	Bill Whyte	Pass	Dbl	2♦	Pass	2♥	4NT	Dbl	♥K	74
5	Miro Dragic	Pass	Dbl	2♥	Pass	2♥	4NT	3♣	♦A	73
6	Irving Gordon	Pass	Dbl	3♣	2♣	Dbl	4NT	3♦	♥K	70
7	Barnet Shenkin	3♥	Dbl	2♥	2♣	2♥	5♥	Dbl	♥K	69
8	Harry Smith	Dbl	Dbl	3NT	2♣	Dbl	4NT	3♦	♥K	68
9	Mike McGinley	2NT	Dbl	2NT	2♣	Dbl	4NT	Dbl	♦J	66
10	Bob Clow	Pass	3♣	4♣	2♣	2♥	5♥	3♦	♦J	65
11=	Tim McKay	Pass	3♦	5♣	Pass	2♥	5♥	3♣	♥K	64
	Ronan Valentine	3♣	Dbl	2♦	Pass	Dbl	4NT	3♣	♦J	64
13	Jack Paterson	Pass	3♣	3♣	2♣	2♥	4NT	3♣	♠4	63
14	Mike Ash	Dbl	Dbl	3NT	2♣	2♥	4♠	3♦	♦J	62
15	Gints Freimanis	3♣	2♦	5♣	2♣	2♥	4NT	3♣	♥K	57
16	Derrick Peden	2NT	3NT	2♦	Pass	2♥	5♥	3♦	♥J	56
17	Bill Ross	Dbl	2♣	2♥	Pass	2♥	4NT	4♥	♣6	51

Competitors Top Scores

Congratulations to **Bob Brown** of the **GBC** who top=scored with **68**.

Other good scores:

Stewart Pinkerton	(Prestwick)	67
Douglas Mitchell	(Buchanan)	62
Dave Duddell	(New Melville)	59
Ken Rae	(Lerwick)	59
Sheila Templeton	(Kyle)	57
Cameron McLatchie	(GBC)	53
Andrew Ramage	(Carlton)	51

SBNews Bidding Panel Problems

June 2024

You are always South, playing with an excellent first-time partner. You have agreed to play Strong no-trump, 5-card majors, 3-card minors.

Please send your answers to the Scorer:

t.vandelisle@gmail.com

quoting your SBU Membership number.

Closing date: 31 May 2024

Problem 1 Teams None Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠K93				
♥AKJT	-	-	Pass	2♠*
♦4	?			
♣A8532				

*2♠ = weak

Problem 2 Teams All Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠A4				
♥A	-	-	2♥*	P
♦KJ9654	?			
♣KJ64				

*2♥ = weak

Problem 3 Teams All Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠Q6543				
♥-	-	-	1♣	1♥
♦A8763	1♠	2♥	P*	P
♣Q98	?			

*Pass denies 3♠s (you agreed Support Xes)

Problem 4 Teams None Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠AKT876				
♥-	-	1NT*	P	2♦**
♦QT542	?			
♣K7				

*1NT = 12-14 **2♦ = transfer to hearts

Problem 5 Teams All Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠QT84	P	P	1♣	P
♥AT875	1♥	Dbl	2♣*	2♠
♦95	?			
♣A7				

*2♣ denies 3♥s (you agreed Support Xes)

Problem 6 Teams All Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠QT82	-	-	P	P
♥KT6	1♦	1♠	Dbl	P
♦AQT74	?			
♣7				

Problem 7 Teams NS Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠-				
♥AT842	-	-	1♣	P
♦AKJ94	1♥	4♠	P	P
♣T43	?			

Problem 8 Teams NS Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠A942	P	3♦	P	4♥
♥A875	End			
♦84				
♣T63				

What is your lead?