

# Scottish Bridge News

The Official Magazine of the Scottish Bridge Union

## John Alexander Matheson

22 JANUARY 1945 – 15 SEPTEMBER 2024



Website: <https://watch.obitus.com/>  
Username: jini6574  
Password: 329046

# Scottish Bridge News

## Editorial

---

This summer saw two sets of European Championship; Open; Women's. Seniors and Mixed Championships in Denmark; and Youth Championships in Poland. We offer extensive coverage of a rather sad set of Scottish results.

It is probably no coincidence that we have recently lost so many of Scotland's greatest players. John Matheson is the latest to go, joining Victor Silverstone, Willie Coyle, and John Murdoch in the all-time Grand Masters Club. John's funeral was well-attended: if you missed it you can watch online.

<https://watch.obitus.com/>

Username: jini6574

Password: 329046

We plan to produce a book about John, to include his bridge history, many of his articles for the SBNews and as much of his wise advice as we can find. We would very much welcome contributions from those who remember his tips.

Another sad loss is Moira McVeigh, a staunch supporter of bridge in Scotland. She was headmistress of South Queensferry Primary School, which meant she had all the skills required to organise bridge players. She acted as Master Point Secretary during the transition from hand recording to computerisation. She had retired from bridge, fearing that her memory was failing, but will be remembered fondly by those who knew her

For various reasons ***we have decided to revert to a quarterly SBNews. The next issue will therefore appear in nd December.*** Watch the website for other news.

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

[liz.mcgowan@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:liz.mcgowan@blueyonder.co.uk)

## CONTENT

## Issue 140

The 56 <sup>th</sup> European Championships		2
Euro Problems		5
The European Youth Championships		6
Declarer Play	Iain Sime	9
Play Challenge Problems	Jim Patrick	11
Play Challenge Solutions	Jim Patrick	12
John Matheson	Various	13
September Bidding Panel	Liz McGowan	15
Panel Answers		24
December Problems		25

## The 56<sup>th</sup> European Championships

The standard of play in a European Championship is very high. Still, Scotland's performance was pretty woeful. Our Open Team finished 29<sup>th</sup> of 30 teams, winning 6 matches and drawing 1; our Mixed Team finished 23<sup>rd</sup> of 23 teams, winning just 4 matches; the Seniors did rather better, finishing 14<sup>th</sup> of 20 teams, winning 8 matches and drawing one.

A 'Chucks' analysis is inevitably subjective and arguably unfair. The Microsite records auctions, not the play of the cards. Did a contract fail because of declarer error, or a killing defence? An example from Match 27:

Bd 5	♠T876	NS Vul
	♥AT	Dlr N
	♦J7654	
	♣K5	
♠J954		♠AK
♥763		♥KQ854
♦KT98		♦AQ3
♣J3		♣QT6
	♠Q32	
	♥J92	
	♦2	
	♣A98742	

This deal was played 94 times.

4 Strong Club pairs stayed out of game. 64 pairs reached 4♥ by East, thanks to the current obsession with finding a 5=3 Major suit fit after a 2NT opener.

4♥ is a pretty hopeless spot. Best defence sees South lead the ♦2. North wins the first round of hearts and gives South a diamond ruff, signalling Suit Preference for clubs. South plays ♣A and another club, North wins and gives partner a second ruff, then overruffs dummy on the third club. Three down.

4♥ was allowed to make twice when South led the ♣A. A clear defensive chuck: a diamond switch still gets a ruff.

32 defenders achieved -3; 13 took only 5 tricks, and 17 settled for -1. Not worth allocating a chuck for the odd imp. But should we allocate a chuck to EW for reaching an inferior contract?

The board was played in 3NT by East 26 times. South led a club. As Hugh Kelsey was wont to say: "3NT is the contract most often let through when it might be defeated."

11 declarers made 3NT. BBO coverage suggests that the defence led 3 rounds of clubs, North discarding a diamond. Declarer tried 3 rounds of diamonds, a heart to the ♥K and a heart ducked to North's ♥A. North regretted his discard: he could cash only the ♦J and declarer was home. (There has been a misplay: If declarer has 4 heart tricks he does not need a fourth diamond. He should keep control of diamonds – cross to the ♦K without cashing both Ace and Queen.)

Some declarers tried to reach dummy with the ♣J at Trick 1. Now South cunningly ducked the second club. Declarer imagined a 5=3 club break and played for a miraculous layout in the pointed suits, surely less likely than North's holding two doubletons.

There is a sure-fire defence to 3NT, one that an expert would spot if the hand was presented as a problem: the defenders play 3 rounds of clubs and North discards the ♥A(!) to create an entry for partner. Impossible to tell if anyone found this play, so hard to allocate chucks either way.

Iain Sime suggests that our teams lack the technical ability to succeed. I suspect that we need better preparation in all aspects of our game.

A subjective estimate shows the Open team chucking about 1,000 imps in its 29 matches, an average of roughly 35 imps per match; the Mixed team chucked 800 odd imps in 23 matches; the Seniors chucked about 550 in 19. If we divide the chucks into bidding and play the ratio is about 3:2 in favour of bidding. Statisticians reckon that bidding is the most important thing on around 75% of deals, which suggests that our card play does need attention.

This deal from match 13 was expensive.

Bd 10	♠J87	All Vul
	♥JT7532	Dir E
	♦64	
	♣52	
♠QT964		♠A53
♥9		♥AK6
♦AQJ98		♦53
♣J4		♣AKT87
	♠K2	
	♥Q84	
	♦KT72	
	♣Q963	

Everybody played in spades, but at 41 of the 94 tables EW overbid to slam. Only 16 made 6♠.

When you are in a bad contract you must be an optimist. Here you assume that the diamond finesse works and that spades will play for just one loser. 7 East declarers received a club lead, which simplified the play.

Other successful declarers combined their chances well: they won the opening heart lead in the East hand, finessed a diamond and tackled trump, running the ♠T to the ♠K. They won the spade return in hand, finessed diamonds again and drew the last trump. The ♦A did not produce the hoped for 3=3 break, so they led the ♣J to the ♣A, discarded a diamond on the

♥K, ruffed a heart and cashed the last trump. In the 2-card ending the original distribution was fairly clear: North was reduced to the 2 clubs he started with, and South had one card in each minor. Declarer played for a squeeze.

The unsuccessful declarers took a club finesse, or tried to ruff out a minor, allowing North to make a trump trick.

All three Scottish EW pairs bid slam. Sadly, none made 6♠. The Open and Mixed teams lost 17 imps against successful declarers; the Seniors only 13 when England stopped out of slam.

A freak deal from Match 19:

Bd 11	♠—	None Vul
	♥AQJ2	Dir S
	♦542	
	♣AT8542	
♠K7		♠AQ8653
♥KT98653		♥4
♦Q86		♦KJT93
♣6		♣9
	♠JT942	
	♥7	
	♦A7	
	♣KQJ73	

Looking at the NS cards you would probably be happy to reach 6♣. When West overcalls in hearts you might fancy 7♣. Only 16 pairs reached club contracts. 66 pairs defended heart part scores; 3 more defended diamonds. 3 EW pairs achieved plus scores, making 2♥, 3♥(!) and 3♦X.

A typical auction was 1♠ - (3♥). North passed, hoping to hear a takeout double. Some did, some found themselves defending 3♥ undoubled. Few negotiated a spade ruff for 2 down. The NS scorecards read +50 or +100.

9 Norths decided to brush aside the overcall and just bid 3NT. They scored a more respectable 400.

Our Open team flattened the board with +100. Our Seniors were confronted by the Faroe Islands: North boldly doubled 3♥, then drove to slam when partner bid clubs. -13. Our Mixed West bid a canny 2♥. The Swiss South re-opened with 3♣ and his partner raised him timidly to game, so the loss was only 8 imps.

6 other teams reached 5♣; 6 reached 6♣, mostly when South was brave enough to re-open with 4♣ when the weak jump overcall came back to him.

Combescore, of the French Open team, was the only South to open 1♣. His partner bid the Grand with panache:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1♣
3♥	Pass	Pass	3♠
Pass	7♣	End	


North knew partner must have at least 5 clubs to bid this way. He guessed that even if there were a diamond loser it might be discarded on a heart.

Most 5-card majorites like to open Majors: some even choose to open 1♠ with longer clubs. The advantage of opening clubs is that you can rebid spades without raising the level. At the same time you tell partner that your clubs are real, and longer or stronger than your spades.

If we divide card play chucks into declarer v defence we see that for the Open and Mixed teams defence outchucks declarer play by 2:1. For the Seniors the ratio is reversed: 1:2.

Several 3NT contracts were let through when a tough defence was not found at trick 2. We are taught to return partner's suit against no-trump contracts, but that is not always best defence. When you have only 2 cards, a holding such as Ax or Kx, and you have won the first trick, you should stop to think.

A couple of examples from Match 11, which was the first match for the Senior and Mixed teams.

Bd 10	♠5432 ♥AQ7653 ♦Q ♣J8	All Vul Dir E
♠AK76 ♥J9842 ♦JT7 ♣T		♠T8 ♥- ♦A96432 ♣AQ432
	♠QJ9 ♥KT ♦K85 ♣K9765	

Most EW pairs played this deal in diamonds, the majority in a sensible part score. The Scottish EW pairs all bid to 5♦, a vulnerable game that might make on a lucky day, not this day. All lost imps.

The worst result came in the Mixed match, where Spain had a bidding misunderstanding and ended in 3NT by West. Declarer had bid hearts, but North decided to lead a heart anyway. South's ♥K scored at trick 1 and the ♥T was returned, covered with the Jack and... ducked! Declarer was now home with 5 diamonds, two spades, a heart and the ♠A.

The winning defence, cashing two hearts and switching to a club, was not clear: North played for partner to have the ♦K and a third heart. South could save the day by postponing the heart return. Assuming North has the ♥A (why would declarer duck?) declarer has only 8 tricks once the diamonds are established. It is safe to play the ♠Q, delaying the heart return till other winners have been cashed. That should alert partner to the distribution and ensure that the contract fails.

# Euro Problems

*Iain Sime*

Bd 2	♠Q962	NS Vul									
	♥A6	Dir E									
	♦T2										
	♣KJT75										
♠A75	<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		♠T8
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥832		♥Q975									
♦AKQ873	♦J964										
♣A	♣QJ6										
	♠KJ43										
	♥KJT4										
	♦5										
	♣8432										

Most tables played 3NT by West. Most Norths led a longest and strongest club. Declarer could enter dummy twice in diamonds to establish and cash a second club trick and the defenders could not make more than 3 hearts.

The deal was flat in our Open match, 3NT making at both tables.

A few Norths were inspired, perhaps by Bird/Anthias, to find the killing spade lead. They included Spain against our Mixed Team: we duly lost 11imps.

Our Seniors defended 3NT by East, and South led the ♥T, promising 0 or 2 higher cards. North can see 8 tricks in dummy but he cannot tell how many hearts partner has. If South has a 5-card suit there are 5 winners to cash; if he has only 4 it would be better to switch. Even if he decides to switch, a club may look more tempting. The spade switch is not obvious.

Our bidding is geared towards playing the hand, but we are still likely to defend twice as often as we declare. Perhaps we should spend more time working at this aspect of the game...

Iain Sime considers some aspects of declarer play: have a go at the problems before reading the article on page 8.

1	♠ 652	
♠3		♠Q
	♠AK7	

The opening lead is a small card. Dummy has three low. RHO plays the Queen. You are going to take this trick. Which card do you play from AK7?

Ace? King? Random? Trick Question?

2 You reach a precarious 4NT via:  
2NT-3♥-3♠-4NT-Pass

♠AT		♠QJ763
♥AJ96		♥K74
♦AK875		♦QJ3
♣K4		♣Q8

Contract: 4NT by West Lead ♠T.

You try the ♣Q, but East wins and returns the ♣J. You see only 9 top tricks. When you start diamonds the opponents will know this – even the man on the moon will know! They won't discard helpfully.

What is the best chance for ten tricks?

3 You are in the wrong contract again after South overcalled spades

♠A7		♠Q93
♥QT94		♥AJ
♦A9852		♦KQJT
♣J4		♣A952

Contract 5♦ by West.

Lead: ♠2 (small from xxx in partner's suit). South plays the ♠T.

If the heart finesse loses, as is likely, how can you avoid losing 3 tricks?

[Article on Page 9](#)

## The 29<sup>th</sup> European Youth Team Championships

These were held in Wroclaw, Poland. They featured Under-26, Under-21, Under-16 and Under-31 teams, as well as Under-26 Women.

Scotland was one of 19 teams in the Under-26 event, which ran for 6 days from 7-12 July. We also sent an Under-31 team: their event had 13 teams, so started later, on 9 July.

Our Under-26s started with a bang, defeating Estonia 20-0. They won their next match against Germany – but the combination of oppressive heat and inexperience meant that they won no more matches, finishing 19<sup>th</sup>.

This deal from Match 3 is instructive:

Bd 9	♠Q972	EW Vul
	♥J9	Dir N
	♦K86	
	♣KT98	
♠KT64		♠J85
♥K42		♥Q83
♦973		♦5
♣543		♣AQJ762
	♠A3	
	♥AT765	
	♦AQJT42	
	♣—	

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

The Israeli NS bid optimistically to slam. South showed 5=6 in the red suits and, presumably, first round controls in the blacks since he did not bother with Blackwood. What should West lead?

An attacking lead is usually best against a slam, and our West led a spade. Dummy's ♠Q scored and declarer romped home. On other leads declarer can establish hearts for 3 discards from dummy, but the 3-1 trump break prevents the essential spade ruff.

East should help partner out by overcalling 2♣ at his second turn. The hand is not far off an opening bid (5 Easts did open) and the suit quality means you are unlikely to be doubled, even at this vulnerability. As a passed hand there is no danger of getting too high. The plus comes from getting partner off to a good lead.

To illustrate the importance of the attacking lead, from the same match against Israel:

Bd 4	♠K9853	All Vul
	♥3	Dir W
	♦Q954	
	♣KT4	
♠62		♠QT7
♥KQT742		♥AJ965
♦AT86		♦K
♣2		♣AQ53
	♠AJ4	
	♥Q	
	♦J732	
	♣J9876	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♥	End		

The auction was long, and West's 3♠ bid was confusing. Our North led a trump. Declarer finessed in clubs, discarded a spade, and claimed 12 tricks. Three other pairs tried 6♥ and duly failed on the attacking spade lead.

Our Under-31 team did not lack experience, but the partnerships were not well established. An average swing of 1 imp per board is considered good tight bridge: Scotland swung nearly 5 imps per board, mostly in the out column. There was one triumphant win in round 10, against the Auld Enemy.

Bd 18	♠A765 ♥972 ♦AQ62 ♣J3	NS Vul Dir E						
♠KQ ♥AT853 ♦K ♣A9872	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		♠32 ♥KQJ4 ♦87543 ♣Q4
W	N	E						
	S							
	♠JT984 ♥6 ♦JT9 ♣KT65							

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	Pass
1♥	Dbl	2♦	4♠
X	End		

At other tables West played peacefully in 4♥, making 10 tricks by establishing a long club. Not many Norths found the takeout double; no other South dared to bid 4♠ at unfavourable vulnerability. +790 went well with +420 for +15 imps.

Bd 21	♠JT843 ♥AKJ6 ♦83 ♣52	NS Vul Dir N						
♠95 ♥T42 ♦T964 ♣AT64	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		♠Q6 ♥9875 ♦752 ♣QJ97
W	N	E						
	S							
	♠AK72 ♥Q3 ♦AKQJ ♣K83							

A slam you would want to be in – but only from the South hand. ♠Q is favourite to drop, and if it does not you may discard dummy's clubs on diamonds if they have not cashed the Ace. England missed slam when their North opened an Ekrens 2♦, perhaps top of their range. Our pair had an interesting auction.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♠

Seems like normal Stayman, with 4♥ the only slam try over 4♠... but what was 5♥? Whatever, it was 13 imps in.

Bd 25	♠KT64 ♥A8765 ♦4 ♣KJ8	EW Vul Dir N						
♠- ♥QJ ♦AQ863 ♣T97432	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		♠QJ9832 ♥T ♦KJ752 ♣5
W	N	E						
	S							
	♠A75 ♥K9432 ♦T9 ♣AQ6							

What should East bid when North opens 1♥? Here it was important to show the 2-suiter, as did our East. South cued 2♠ to show a good heart raise, and West leapt to 5♣, to play in partner's minor. South naturally doubled 5♦, but there was no defence and we collected 750.

The English East was not alone in choosing a pre-emptive 3♠, but he was the only one unlucky enough to be left to play there, doubled. A forcing defence might collect 1100, but we settled for 3 down and 17 imps.

Bd 26	♠73 ♥A42 ♦KJ2 ♣J9642	All Vul Dir E									
♠KJT86 ♥KJ8 ♦T4 ♣KT5	<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		♠AQ9542 ♥Q6 ♦76 ♣Q87
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ – ♥T9753 ♦AQ9853 ♣A3										

Bd 18	♠ – ♥KQT532 ♦Q753 ♣K84	NS Vul Dir E									
♠653 ♥J764 ♦AK4 ♣952	<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		♠Q872 ♥98 ♦JT962 ♣JT
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ AKJT94 ♥A ♦8 ♣AQ763										

Our East, champion of the weak preempt, opened 1♠. South showed his 2-suiter, but NS sagely did not compete over 4♠, a contract which had to fail.

England opened a weak 2♠. Our South passed the noo', and West raised to game. Now South re-opened with 4NT to show his 2-suiter, and ended in 5♦, doubled by West. Most NS pairs competed to the 5-level, and all went down – except Scotland when EW, perhaps demoralised, failed to organise their club trick. Another 12 imps.

With 3 boards to go the score was 67-4, enough for a 20-0 win. But England clawed back 14 imps to reduce the margin to 19.03-0.97.

Our Under-31s managed only two more wins and finished a lowly 11<sup>th</sup> out of 13 teams. Another subjective chuck analysis suggests about 500 imps in 12 matches. The ratio of bidding to card play is around 3:2. There were a number of very big swings, which suggested that one flaw was not giving sufficient attention to slam boards. Playing in the wrong Grand Slam was one very expensive board. This was another, from Match 6 against Turkey.

Slam was bid at 17 of the 40 tables in play. 6NT and 6♥ had no chance.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♣	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♣
End			

Our pair reached 6♣ after a Gazilli auction. West led the ♦A.

If West switches to a heart declarer must ruff two spades in dummy and hope clubs break 3=2 and spades no worse than 4=2. The play must be precise: ruff a spade at trick 2, cash the ♣K, ruff a diamond, ruff another spade, return to hand with a diamond ruff to draw trump.

If West continues diamonds at trick two declarer may be tempted to discard 3 spades on red suit winners. East ruffs the third heart, promoting partner's ♣9.

You can see all the results in the EBL archive. The Microsite records the bidding and opening lead, not the play:

[29th European Youth Team Championships - Results \(eurobridge.org\)](https://eurobridge.org/29th-European-Youth-Team-Championships-Results)

Scotland did not make it on to BBO, but there are records of other matches in the BBO VuGraph Archive. Look under 2024-07.

# Declarer Play

## *Iain Sime*

Before reading this article, try the questions on page 5.

Some believe that there is little to separate expert bridge players in terms of technical ability. Not here there ain't. There is a gap in technical ability between Scottish international players and experts from other countries

I played in the first Camrose of 2024 in Wales. Scotland scored 43 VPs out of 100. Some thought that was a decent result with two (mainly professional) English teams included (once every five years). It was better than most recent Scottish Camrose weekends. However, if you looked closely, it should have been a whole lot better.

Scotland lost seven swings on hands where the contract, declarer and opening lead were the same (or effectively the same). We won only one.

This trend continued into the 2024 European Championship in Denmark. There were three Scottish teams (Open, Mixed and Seniors). Over the three events there were 28 swings in Scotland matches in the same contract and same lead. Scotland's score was 7-21. For every hand we gained points in play and defence, we lost on three. How can we address this?

Some of our adverse swings were mis-defences. But many were because we did not declare as well as our opponents. Our counting, knowledge of suit combinations and percentages are not up to scratch. We don't see all the possibilities.

Or we make it too easy for them to defend. This can happen when we give our hand away by hesitating at the

wrong moment or by not playing the card we are known to have. Go back to hand 1 in the Quiz.

The opening lead is a small card. Dummy has xxx. RHO plays the Queen. Which card do you play from AKx?

1	♠ 652
♠ 3	♠ Q
	♠ AK7

Ace? King? Random? Trick Question?

Answer- Trick Question! I didn't tell you the contract. It depends upon whether it is a suit contract or No-Trump. You are trying to confuse at least one opponent.

If it is a suit contract, you play the Ace. . This is the card you are known to hold. Now neither defender knows you have the King. In this situation, their partner might have it. If you play the King, both defenders will know you have the Ace.

If it is a No-Trump contract, you win with the King. The reasoning is similar. East won't know that West doesn't have the Ace. West also doesn't know whether East might have the Ace.

(The Queen by East from AQx is usually correct here; particularly if East expects to win the first defensive trick). If you play the Ace, both defenders will strongly suspect you have the King. Why?

Answer- because it is normal to hold up with Axx in No Trump contracts.

On a similar theme, few things are worse than declarer taking time over a King-Jack guess. Anticipate that you will have the guess and take the time before it happens. If you hesitate when the suit is led, one defender will know that his partner has the Queen. (If you tank when you also have the Queen, you should be playing your bridge in coffee houses, not bridge clubs!)

Moving on to a couple of hands from Denmark where the Scottish declarer went wrong.

*(The play problems were presented with West as declarer to make them fit into a single column: we hope switching declarer back to South is not too confusing – Ed)*

Hand 2 from the Quiz.

	♠QJ763	NS Vul
	♥K74	Dir N
	♦QJ3	
	♣Q8	
♠K954		♠82
♥Q2		♥T853
♦T4		♦962
♣T9752		♣AJ63
	♠AT	
	♥AJ96	
	♦AK875	
	♣K4	

Contract: 4NT by South. Lead ♠T

They have found the best lead and as soon as you lose a trick the roof will cave in. The tenth trick will have to come from hearts or spades. But, as you can see, both finesses would fail.

The contract should still have been made, as demonstrated by Tim Rees of Wales who also played 4NT.

Take the diamond winners. Don't rely upon international defenders' discards to tell you which finesse will win. Instead, increase your chances by playing ♥AK before taking the spade finesse. Nearly 20% of the time the ♥Q will fall.

Moving on to Question 3.

East's overcall and the opening lead have told you how the spade suit lies. Can you take advantage?

	♠Q93	NS Vul
	♥AJ	Dir S
	♦KQJT	
	♣A952	
♠852		♠KJT64
♥8752		♥K6
♦7		♦643
♣QT86		♣K73
	♠A7	
	♥QT94	
	♦A9852	
	♣J4	

Contract: 5♦ by South. Lead ♠2

There are plenty of ways to go down. It would be a mistake to duck the lead. East should find the club switch and a losing heart finesse would mean curtains. It would also be a mistake to play trumps, because the entry position is fraught. You will need the ♦A to get back to hand for winning hearts. Playing hearts from the top works as the cards lie but if West had the ♥K another spade would leave you a trick short.

The winning play is to take the heart finesse at trick 2. If it wins, take the ♥A, and ruff a couple of hearts with dummy's high trumps. Five trumps, two ruffs, two hearts and two black Aces makes eleven tricks.

When the heart ♥J loses, East is stymied. He cannot cash the ♠K as the ♠Q would then allow a club discard. But exiting with a club is no better. South draws two top trumps from dummy. Then he unblocks the ♥Ace, and returns to hand with the ♦A to pitch dummy's spades on winning hearts. A spade ruff in dummy is the eleventh trick.

On neither of these hands were Scotland the only team to fail. But others solved the problems. So how do we become better declarers?

1. Watch the best players on BBO, Realbridge etc. Try to anticipate how they will play a hand. Would you have done the same?

2. Also on BBO, there are free “declare only” tournaments on Mondays and Fridays. You won’t always receive your just desserts from playing a hand well or badly. You will get a score against 15-20,000 other players. Find them under competitive/free tournaments.

3. Look for play quizzes on bridge sites and magazines. “Bridge World” is aimed at expert players and there are four testing declarer problems, and two defence problems in each issue. They also have a monthly suit combination and often a Swiss match with play and defence problems.

4. Read books on declarer play, often in quiz format. You wouldn’t learn much from Reese or Kelsey on bidding theory, but you can learn a lot from their books on play.

Let’s stop losing points in the play.

*The EBL microsite for the European Championships is:*

[56th European Team Championships \(eurobridge.org\)](http://eurobridge.org)

*There are many excellent books on declarer play: I would particularly recommend the Master Bridge series: by Terence Reese and Roger Trezeli; and by Hugh Kelsey. Once you have mastered Card Combinations, including Safety Plays, Finesse Technique and knowledge of the Odds; Blocking and Unblockings plays; Entry Management; Elimination,; Squeeze technique and the rest... the hard part comes in deciding which technique to apply!*

*This publication carries a series of quiz problems collected by Jim Patrick from real life. Why not give them a try?*

## Play Challenge

*Jim Patrick*

1 None Vul Dealer West

♠KJ876
♥652
♦985
♣64

♠AT542
♥K93
♦—
♣KQ975

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

Contract: 5♠X Lead: ♦Q

After an exciting auction North interpreted your final Pass as forcing and bid one for the road, You have avoided a heart lead – can you make from here?

2 NS Vul Dealer South

♠K765
A54
♦K83
♣JT9

♠AT4
♥6
♦A97
♣KQ8765

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♠	2NT	3♣
3♥	5♣	End	

Contract: 5♣ Lead: ♦J

Information from the auction should point you in the right direction.

*Solutions on Next Page*

# Play Challenge Solutions

*Jim Patrick*

1 None Vul Dealer West

	♠KJ876		
	♥652		
	♦985		
	♣64		
♠Q93		♠—	
♥J8		♥AQT74	
♦QJ74		♦AKT632	
♣JT82		♣A4	
	♠AT542		
	♥K93		
	♦—		
	♣KQ975		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
2♦	3♣	4♠	Dbl
Pass	Pass	5♦	Pass
Pass	5♠	Dbl	End

Contract: 5♠X Lead: ♦Q

A heart lead would give you no chance, but West did not know that.

You must establish clubs for heart discards and will need entries to hand to cash them. Trump are surely 3-0 and you have had to ruff once already. The good news is that East probably has all the Aces, so the ♥K will be a slow entry to hand.

You need not risk a first-round trump finesse. Play ♠A and a second trump to the Jack. Now play a club. If East ducks return to the ♠K to play another club. Ruff the diamond return with your last trump and you can discard dummy's last diamond on a club, then ruff a club to establish the suit. Now lead a heart to reach hand and take your discard on the fifth club.

If East returns a heart instead you discard dummy's third heart and play a crossruff

2 NS Vul Dealer East

	♠K765		
	♥A54		
	♦K83		
	♣JT9		
♠J832		♠Q9	
♥QT72		♥KJ983	
♦J4		♦QT652	
♣432		♣A	
	♠AT4		
	♥6		
	♦A97		
	♣KQ8765		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♠	2NT	3♣
3♥	5♣	End	

Contract: 5♣ Lead: ♦J

You should win the opening lead in hand to guard against it being a singleton, although you really need the diamonds to be 5-2. It is best to lead trumps now. Probably East will win to play a diamond and if West ruffs, there is no way to win unless East has ♠QJ doubleton.

Fortunately, West does not ruff the diamond return, so you draw a round of trumps noting East's singleton which should give him a doubleton spade. Noting the quality of your pips, if it comprises two of the QJ98, you can force an extra trick from spades.

Leave the last trump to give West another chance to go wrong and play a spade to the Ten. West should win and lead a heart but you draw the last trump and cash the ♠A, leaving yourself with a known finesse.

If West does not return a heart, you will make the contract on a double squeeze no matter what East's spades are.

# John Matheson

1945-2004



John was born in Edinburgh. He went to Daniel Stewart's College, then studied medicine at Edinburgh University. It was there that he learned to play bridge in the University Union: the rubber stakes were high for a student, so John had to learn fast. He did.

Scotland had a very strong Camrose team in the 1970s, but John found his way in, partnering two of the strongest players, John MacLaren and Victor Goldberg, later Ian Thomson and Willie Coyle. He was part of the winning team 3 times, and also once when Scotland tied with England. In 1973 he won the Gold Cup, the hotly contested British teams Championship, in an all-scottish team.

He met his wife Trish at the bridge table. They married in 1969, a union that stood the test of time and adversity. They had two children, and for 18 years John gave up competitive bridge to devote himself to his job and family. He did allow himself an annual week in London to play high stakes rubber against the top players of the day, including one of his idols, Zia Mahmood.

He returned to competitive bridge in 1994, finding that bidding had moved on a lot in 20 years. He returned to the Camrose team, first with Victor Goldberg, then with Les Steel with whom he won the Camrose Trophy twice more in 1995-96 and 1997-98. He was delighted to win a second Gold Cup in 2006, again with an all-Scottish team.

John played with many partners in his illustrious career. He was a dedicated student of our game, always happy to share what he had learned over many years. He will be sorely missed.

*Jim Patrick was invited to speak at his funeral:*

I have been asked to say a few words about two of John's great loves, poker and bridge.

I first met John when I joined the Edinburgh Men's Union poker school in 1971. This now old-fashioned draw poker game has continued unchanged but developed from a cut-throat high stakes game into more of a social occasion with my late wife, Kathy and Trish vying to host it. Now, understandably, we find raising a quorum more difficult. John was a good aggressive player, but with a determination not to be bluffed. An unsuccessful call would be explained by, "You've got to keep them honest."

It was only a good while later that I learned that he was the rising star in Scottish bridge who would go on to win a record number of Scottish Cups and make a record number of international appearances. Twice he won the Gold Cup, the British Championship. 18 times winner of the Scottish Cup and 76 international appearances playing

with nine different partners in each. And this was done while taking a decade out at the peak of his game to help bring up his family.

I was proud to be asked to play with him and anything I know about bridge I learned from him. He was generous in his advice even though it was sometimes along the lines of: Jim, when the bidding is finished, I wish you could be replaced by Ian Morrison. His only fault as a bridge player was that he unrealistically expected his partners to play to his high standards.

Even in the latter stages of his bravely borne illness he managed to play a friendly rubber bridge game when he was not only house-bound, but chair-bound. In the later part of his life, he generously gave a lot of his time to help developing partnerships. He also wrote many good articles on bidding for the SBU magazine.

John and Trish were introduced by Kathy, and many a Thursday evening we had a hotly contested game against the wives over a couple of bottles of wine. We also played regularly during their annual stay with us in France. John loved the game, and I miss the early morning call asking if I had time for a few hands.

**Jim Patrick**

*Paul Gipson is a fellow bridge enthusiast who also devotes a lot of time to mentoring Juniors.*

I'm sorry to hear that John Matheson has passed away, another member of a great Scottish generation.

I've only known John for the past 20 years and just as a bridge player. I remember him as an exceptionally

strong player, a man who loved the game: he loved the latest systems and conventions and thought he should adopt anything that was played by the Italians (particularly Versace-Lauria and Bocchi-Duboin).

In his later years, BBO was a godsend, bringing the games of the greats into his home. He did not commentate often, but frequently provided insight to commentators that they had missed.

I've lost count of the number of times he talked about his favourite game: he played with Malcolm Cuthbertson in the 2002 European Championships against Bocchi and Duboin. They finished the 20-board match in 55 minutes! The Scots lost heavily but John felt he was playing with the gods.

In his later years, John often volunteered to mentor aspiring pairs and would invite them to his home for a day of training. Few recovered! John could, and would, provide reams of information on any topic, far more detailed than most could cope with.

In the background was always his wife, Patricia. As John's Parkinson's got worse, she was always on the keyboard while he directed what to do and say.

I have no other details of John's family: like many bridge players, he'd rather discuss hands 😊

**Paul Gipson**

*We plan to produce a book about John.: As well as his history and achievements it will include some of his articles from the ScottishBridgeNews. We would welcome contributions from anyone who ever benefited from his wisdom.*

# September 2024 Bidding Challenge

Liz McGowan

*Welcome to the September Bidding Challenge. The problems were cobbled together in a hurry and turned out to be uninspired. Thanks to the panel for their forbearance and politeness.*

## Problem 1 Teams NS Vul

♠432	S	W	N	E
♥QJ7	-	1♦	X	P
♦95	2♣	P	2♦	P
♣KJ632	?			

*What does partner's cuebid mean? Jack sums it up.*

**PATERSON:** 2♥. I assume 2♦ shows a good raise to 3♣ (or the values for 2NT with no stop).

*The panel agree that it is time to show some strength. What is the best way to do that?*

**FREIMANIS:** 3♦ – forcing, likely showing undisclosed values, no 4-card major suits, and asking for a stop.

**ASH:** 3♦. 2♦ normally shows 'extras' but no obvious bid to make. I will confirm that I have a good hand, no second suit and no diamond stop. If partner now bids 3♥ I can safely raise – with a view to playing in a 4-3 fit if partner has (say) AQxx, AKxx, xx, Axx.

**SHIELDS:** 3♦. The only alternative to consider is 2♥, but I could have a zero-count for that bid, in which case partner might have the option to pass.

*The original takeout double does not promise perfect distribution, but usually holds unbid Majors. A weak responder prefers to bid a Major at the one-level, even with a longer minor. With 0 points I might even respond 1♥ on a 3=3=3=4 distribution. This means that the 2♣*

*response is normally a 5-card suit. In which case the weakest option now is to rebid clubs. Patrick has an alternative way to show weakness.*

With regular partners, I play that after double + cue (or double + double) the cheapest bid (here 2♥) is a double-negative. That would make 3♣ a candidate here (showing some values, albeit less than this) but we really need to force to game after this start from partner.

**GORDON:** 3♦. Partner has better than a suit rebid, so 20+HCP. I must force to game. 3♦ shows no other suit. 2♥ instead might get 3♥ – then what?

*Irving's partners better hold big hands! North could show 17+ by bidding a 5-card Major – but he may not own one.*

*3♦ is not a very helpful bid. I think it suggests longer diamonds and invites partner to bid 3NT with a slender stopper such as Kx. For the majority:*

**PEDEN:** 2♥. 3♣ would be minimum. This shows a 3-card suit. Partner doesn't have 5/5 Majors (he would bid 2♦) and he doesn't have a strong hand with a 5-card Major.

**MCGINLEY:** 2♥. A fragment, denying a diamond stop. Will drive to game over any continuation, as you're just short of a 3♣ bid initially.

**SIME:** 2♥. I didn't respond 1♥, so partner should figure out that my longest suit is clubs and I have values in hearts.

**SHENKIN:** 2♥. A 4=3 fit might work.

**SHORT:** 2♥. Partner is strong and I'd like to show some values, but that's hard without crowding the bidding. 3♥ sounds like my 7-count, but suggests 4 hearts I think, so I'll mark time with 2♥. In any event, a Moysian might work well here.

**DRAGIC: 2♥** I am not bidding NT since I don't have a diamond stop. 2♥ shows better than minimum and I don't mind ending up in a Moysian.

*On his own, Bill has a different way to show strength.*

**WHYTE: 3♥.** My minimum response implicitly denied a 4-card major. Partner has made a forcing bid, but not GF yet. In context I am maximum and must show that. A jump to 4♣ shows a better suit and has the major disadvantage of bypassing 3NT. So I show my heart values, suggesting 3NT as a final contract. I will pass a 4♥ bid by partner, to play in a good 4-3 fit: if partner does not bid 3NT he has no diamond stopper.

*Tim is the only panellist not prepared to risk the Moysian*

**MCKAY: 3♠.** I don't think there is anything else to do.

	Votes	Marks
2♥	11	10
3♥	1	9
3♦	5	7
3♣	1	3

*Partner has ♠AQJT ♥AT6 ♦63 ♣AQ98, just what you need to make 5♣.*

**Problem 2 Teams None Vul**

♠Q72	S	W	N	E
♥7	-	-	-	1NT
♦AQ4	?			
♣KQJT95				

1NT is weak, 12-14.

*The majority favours the obvious:*

**GORDON:** Dbl. Might beat it!

**DRAGIC:** Dbl, No second thoughts vs weak NT. It is more of a problem against a strong NT.

**FREIMANIS: DBL.** Against a weak 1NT probably too strong for a simple 3♣ overcall: there is real danger of missing

game with partner often struggling to find a bid on a variety of hands that will allow a game to make.

**SMITH: DBL.** Guess what I'm going to lead. In defence this hand is well above a 14-count

*Expecting to be on lead against 1NTX is typically optimistic. Other doublers do not expect their call to end the auction.*

**PATERSON:.** Dbl Has partner passed? If yes, then 3♣ to obstruct opponents. If no, I am too good not to double.

**SHORT: DBL.** Well up to strength for me and it looks like I've got a pretty good lead! I'm a bit good for 3♣ by my standards and I can always over-bid a touch with 3♣ if they escape to 2♥.

**MCGINLEY: DBL.** I shall bid my club suit on the next round.

*But what if they bid beyond 2♥? Iain is quite pessimistic:*

**SIME: 3♣.** I could double, but somebody will bid hearts and I will not be well placed. We may not be able to beat 4♥.

**ROSS: 3♣.** Should make it more difficult for opponents to find their heart fit if nothing else.

**WHYTE: 3♣.** I can double and bid clubs later if necessary. But opponents can easily use SOS tactics to find a heart fit. Or my partner can get excited with a good hand and hearts and take us too high. 3♣ tells it like it is, but I would do the same with a Queen less, so a slight underbid. But it bars the opponents, describes my hand reasonably well. If partner bids hearts, I can punt 3NT.

*Tim takes an even more extreme view.*

**MCKAY: 4♣.** Trying your hardest to keep them out of a possible 4♥.

*The panel mostly expects opponents to compete in hearts. On this occasion they have it wrong – it is partner who*

*holds long hearts. Opponents will run to spades. The panellists who wait and see will probably reach 3NT, the top spot, rather than the more stressful 4♥.*

**SHIELDS: PASS.** I generally (as advised by John Matheson) like to nudge them out of 1NT but here nudging with a double can lead to some very awkward auctions, and 3♣ does not show this type of hand. Noting that I have a good lead if 1NT is passed out, and that passing now and bidding 3♣ over any takeout by LHO will describe this hand quite well, I am content to wait.

**VALENTINE: PASS.** I don't see much upside to doubling when it looks like they should have a Major fit. I will feel better placed to take action if I am acting over a transfer to a Major with double/3♣ as preferred.

	Votes	Marks
Db1	10	10
3♣	5	8
Pass	2	7
2♣	0	5
4♣	1	3

**Problem 3 Teams None Vul**

♠KJ8	S	W	N	E
♥J832	1NT	2♥	X	P
♦K5	?			
♣AK87				

2♥ = natural; X = t/o

*Have you discussed the parameters for a takeout double in this situation?*

**WHYTE: PASS.** The rule here is that partner does not have a singleton or void heart. He has a minimum of two cards. If he has a heart shortage, he has other bids e.g. Rubensohl: he can transfer to hearts via 3♦ which is in effect a Stayman with four spades.

*For Bill the double shows the values to raise to at least 2NT, happy to defend if partner has heart length. Mike agrees, but without partnership discussion dares not pass.*

**ASH: 3♣.** With great reluctance! If partner has a singleton heart and only competing values 2♥ may well be making. I play that double guarantees at least 2 hearts and shows at least invitational values. You may not be able to compete a part score if partner has a weakish 4144 hand but at least in this situation you would have an easy Pass, with a reasonable penalty likely.

*Others have lower expectations. But they disagree on the best way forward.*

**VALENTINE: 2NT.** Colours and texture feel wrong for passing. 2NT should hopefully tell partner that we are minimum and have a heart stop.

**SMITH: 2NT.** My heart holding is close to a stop. 3♣ is possible but if he has ♥Tx, for example, you're likely to miss a potentially good 3NT.

*The others want some reassurance about their 'stopper':*

**MCKAY: 3♣.** Too risky to pass although 2♥ is quite likely to go down

**CLOW: 3♣.** I was tempted by 2NT, but I don't know partner's intentions, so I will play safe. He can ask for a heart stop.

**DRAGIC: 3♣.** I will bid 3NT if partner asks for the stop and the message about the quality of my stop will be clear.

**GORDON: 3♣.** Showing a club suit. Partner's double is not game-forcing. You have bid your hand with 1NT - anything from 3♣ to a slam is now possible. 3♥ from partner will force me to bid 3NT. Not pass at any scoring.

**SHORT: 3♣,** I'm a simple soul – over a takeout double, I bid my suit. Not a good

enough stop for 2NT as partner is probably short in hearts.

**PIPER:** 3♣. The hand won't play well and we could lose the first 5 tricks in NT

**PATERSON:** 3♣. I do not like to defend with sketchy trumps at the 2-level against a likely 8-card fit, especially under the long hand. If partner has 5 spades, he will bid them next (for if not good enough for that, would have bid 2♠). So bidding 2♠ is good only if partner has 4 spades but not 4 clubs

*On Problem 1 most of the panel were quite enthusiastic about a possible Moysian 4=3 fit. Not so many this time:*

**SHIELDS:** 2♠. I can easily construct hands for partner (AQxx-x-Jxxx-Qxxx) where 2♥ makes: that rules out a pass. 2NT would be natural here, but there is too great a chance that opponents cash 6 hearts. The choice is to bid clubs or spades (risky but one level lower). Partner always has spades for this double but might have shaky clubs, so I go for the former, hoping to get enough tricks on some sort of cross-ruff.

**SIME:** 2♠. My experience is that bidding a 3-card Major usually works much better than bidding a 4-card minor at the next level

**FREIMANIS:** 2♠ – not a great bid, but probably the least bad option, likely to strike 4 spades with partner.

*I think 2♠ is probably safer than 3♣, though 3=3 fits are not much fun! Either may be a 4=3 fit, and 3♣, a level higher, may see partner convert to diamonds.*

	Votes	Marks
3♣	10	10
2♠	3	8
2NT	4	7
Pass	1	3
3NT	0	1

Problem 4                      Teams                      NS Vul

♠863	S	W	N	E
♥A9	-	3♣	P	P
♦AKJ85	?			
♣Q74				

*This one is a test of temperament. Some are Bold:*

**SHENKIN:** 3NT. Risk v Reward...a lot of risk!

**MCGINLEY:** 3NT. A practical bid (they need ♣A to 7 opposite Kx to cash out.

**ASH:** 3NT. This could be a disaster but the up-side is sufficient to tempt me. If East doubles – presumably showing a top club or good hand, I can always remove this to 4♦.

*Some are Old – it is hard to read the vulnerability:*

**GORDON:** PASS. And hope to take them off 200 or 300, maybe more if we are making a game. If the vulnerability was reversed, you have to bid.

*Others are Less Bold*

**PEDEN:** 3♦. Slightly too weak for 3NT.

**CLOW:** 3♦. Could be very wrong, but passing is too wimpy for me

**SIME:** 3♦. We need to be a little cautious as partner passed 3♣. However, we need to bid: a vulnerable game is possible. If we are on a diamond finesse, that is a favourite.

**DRAGIC** 3♦. Expecting to play there but will raise 3♠ or bid 3NT over 3♥. I would like little bit more for 3NT

**VALENTINE:** 3♦. 3N feels pushy and unilateral. I cannot pass. 3♦ keeps 5m, 4M and 3NT in the picture (partscore too, of course).

**SMITH:** 3♦. Pass cannot be right, and this is the only sensible option. I would suggest the moderator deducts points for any other action.

*Suggestion rejected! I agree with the Cautious:*

**SHIELDS: PASS.** It is either that or 3NT as we are going to score peanuts for 3♦. Bidding 3NT in second seat is more worrying as there might be a big hand sitting over and doubling, but here the potentially big hand is sitting under mine and it might be more cautious. But playing 3NT and drifting off 300 or 400 undoubled is no fun. Partner, who should have fewer clubs than me (we can never be sure these days) did not act and that limits their strength.

**WHYTE: PASS.** Partner does not have the wherewithal to make a penalty double, nor the stuffing to make a major-suit overcall. At favourable vulnerability he is allowed to make a cheeky 6-card Major intervention with minimum values. (The old idea of never pre-empting a pre-empt is in fact old, an idea now discarded.) Sometimes you must accept that pre-empts can be successful.

**SHORT: PASS.** The imps equation is just too adverse to risk bidding 3♦ which is my only possible shot, but minus 1100 might be the result. I think that if my suit were, say, hearts, I just might risk 3♥, but partner is likely to raise that with much less than I need for game so pass is still the disciplined action.

**PATERSON: PASS.** I would chance 3NT sitting over the pre-empt, given that the ♣Q is almost certainly a stop, but that is not true here. 3♦ is a reasonable alternative, but I fear partner might go on when we are already high enough.

	Votes	Marks
3♦	9	10
Pass	5	8
3NT	4	7
Dbl	0	2

**Problem 5**      **Teams**      **EW Vul**

♠2	S	W	N	E
♥QJT86532	-			1♠
♦KQ	4♥	4♠	P	P
♣A2	?			

*They say you should never pre-empt then come again, but this need not apply when you have jumped to game*  
*Some refuse to sell out to 4♠.*

**PEDEN: 5♥.** I know I shouldn't but I cannot resist

**CLOW: 5♥.** The colours are right as long as they are making 4♠. Double is the alternative but with only 2 [possible] defensive tricks, it is risky. Even if partner has the ♠A or ♠K with a singleton heart we might not beat 4♠ if either opponent has good clubs.

**SHENKIN: 5♥.** (Or double if you have an agreement to bid one more unless you are very suitable for defence).

*The majority is content to defend.*

**ROSS: PASS.** I've done my bit.

**PATERSON: PASS.** Strong for the vulnerability, but not sharp enough to double. Might speculate 5♥ at Pairs.

**DRAGIC: PASS.** Partner can see the bidding and the vulnerability and judged not to raise, so 5♥ is probably -500. On a good day I'll score 3 defensive tricks and will take my chances against 4♠.

**SHIELDS: PASS.** we have 5 losers and partner needs to cover 3 of them to make 5♥ – in which case they would bid 5♥. It doesn't take much from partner to beat 4♠, so I am happy to defend.

*Some would not have started from here:*

**SIME: PASS.** Whoever held this hand must have known what to do over (the inevitable) 4♠. I am not that clever, so I would have started with 2♥ and garnered more information. So I am

guessing; all that I have to go on is that points in short suits suggest defending.

**GORDON: PASS.** I would not have bid 4♥ - this is a hand to listen, then hope to make an informed decision. Now we have made them guess, it's wrong to gild the lily. I would need the ♥A instead of the ♣A to consider a double in this auction, showing a 4♥+ bid.

*Will starting slowly work better here? If North bids 4♠ over 2♥ (or Pass the noo') you are still badly placed.*

**MCKAY: PASS.** You've had your chance to bid – and it could well go off

**SMITH: PASS.** Bidding on might well be the right action, but I would be showing total disregard for partner. 5♥ is unlikely to make, so it is a unilateral sacrifice. You have more values than you might have for your 4♥ bid, but that gives you better chances in defence.

*Some believe they have a two-way shot. A "do the right thing, pard' double.*

**VALENTINE: DBL.** I saw this idea mentioned by a Finnish player. "The X is a 5♥ bid, which I have decided to make, but partner can override with surprise trump tricks and an otherwise worthless hand, or a near initial penalty double with defensive stuff."

**FREIMANIS: Dbl** – since 4♥ is technically a pre-emptive bid, Dbl should imply willingness to compete to 5♥, providing both offensive and defensive values with partner to decide the best course of action.

**McGINLEY: Dbl.** as "I want to bid 5♥, but you can defend if you wish"..

	Votes	Marks
Pass	9	10
Dbl	6	8
5♥	3	7

## Problem 6 Teams All Vul

♠A	S	W	N	E
♥AK873	-	P	P	1♠
♦KQ42	X	4♣	P	P
♣K95	?			

*This problem was a damp squib. The panel is unanimous in doubling again. But what does double mean here?:*

**McGINLEY: Dbl.** Now penalty with big hand.

**GORDON: Dbl.** Still takeout - good things might happen

**PEDEN: Dbl,** Penalties but takeout if partner has long suit.

**ASH: Dble.** A really tough one! My hearts are not robust enough to bid at the 5 level and I have good defence. It is difficult to construct a hand for partner where we can make game but not get at least 500 in defence.

*Well, the 500 was accurate but it is small consolation for a vulnerable slam.*

**SMITH: Dbl.** The alternative is 4NT showing 2 places to play, but this is actually a fairly balanced hand. With suitable shape partner can decide whether to take action at the 5-level, but I'll feel comfortable if he passes – well at least until dummy goes down!

**SHORT: Dbl.** "Action", requiring partner to "do something intelligent". I must have a good hand and I have 4NT as a definite takeout so partner may be able to bid with shape and a few cards or pass with a flat hand and few values. Incidentally, 4NT from partner last time should show a few values and a flat hand. With a 2-suiter and some values they had 4NT available over 4♠ for a 2-suited takeout.

**Ross: Dbl.** Can't let 4♠ go without doing something

**SIME: Dbl.** Looks normal so I expect the same outcome, whether good or bad, at the other table.

**CLOW: DBL.** If partner takes this out to 5 of a minor I won't be too worried.

**PATERSON: Dbl** What else? If the ♠A were a minor Ace, then 4NT is possibly superior.

**McKAY: Dbl.** Can't let them bully you off the hand. Even if it makes the downside is pretty limited

	Votes	Marks
Dbl	18	10
Pass	0	8

### Problem 7 Teams NS Vul

♠QJ8	-			2♦*
♥KQT75	X	2♥*	P	2♠
♦AK	?			
♣KQ3				

\*2♦ = Multi, weak2 in either M

\*2♥ = pass or correct to your M

*Bridge players disagree about the best defence to the Multi, but for most one meaning of double is "a hand too strong for any other call". Ronan is alone in thinking this hand does not qualify.*

**VALENTINE: 3♥.** Don't really understand why I didn't bid 2NT over 2♦. Failing that, bidding NT now shows a better hand than I have. So I will show a strong hand with hearts. Partner can still bid 3♠ to ask for a stop so should keep 3NT/4M in play.

**PIPER: 3♥.** Sometimes 20HCP is a burden.

*The remaining panellists have no objection to the double.*

**McGINLEY: DBL.** Showing a 2NT opener (an immediate 2NT would be 16-19). Sounds like spades are 6-1 or 6-2?

**SIME: DBL.** Then 3♥ over partner's "Lebensohl" 2NT showing a strong flexible hand. I have the right point count for 2NT, but if they can duck a spade I would need running tricks.

**SMITH: DBL.** We have Lebensohl in our armoury, so if he has a pile of rubbish we will be able to stop.

**ROSS: DBL.** Toss-up with 3♥.

*The majority think that 2NT is the best description:*

**SHIELDS: 2NT.** Shows a hand too good for 2NT on the previous round. Pass and then 2NT would be the minors, but I doubled. Is there a problem?

**PATERSON: 2NT,** Presumably 2NT immediately would have been 16-19, so this is routine. The character of the hand is wrong for 3♥ or another double. Partner's pass over 2♥ does not preclude points enough for game.

**DRAGIC 2NT:** 20-22 balanced. And maybe we have methods of checking for 5 card major ...

**SHENKIN: 2NT** shows 19-21.

**SHORT: 2NT.** Flat hand, too good for a 15-18 2NT first round, and clearly the best bid. We can still find a 5-4 Heart fit via our 2NT methods and a 5-3 fit may well play best in NT anyway. I do not like a second double at all. What do we do over 3 of a minor from partner? Punt 3NT? At least with 2NT we have a chance to stop short of game. I'd much rather lose -200 in 2NT minus 2, than 800 in 3NT doubled minus 3!

**WHYTE: 2NT.** There are three possibilities here, pass and 3♥ being the other two. Pass transfers the decision to partner, but I think my hand is too strong to take that risk. We are very likely to have a heart fit. If West has four hearts and one or two spades, he would have bid 2♠. But playing in hearts

exposes us to a likely spade ruff. My hand is NT-orientated 2NT is clearly the better bid.

**GORDON: 2NT.** For me, this shows more than a strong NT. I play X of 2♠ as penalty.

**FREIMANIS: 2NT** – probably showing about 19-21 HCP, hopefully partner has a way to inquire about a 5-card major suit later on, should there be interest to pursue a game contract

**MCKAY: 2NT**-hoping this shows a bit more after the original double

	Votes	Marks
2NT	11	10
Dbl	4	7
3♥	2	5
3NT	0	3
4♥	0	2
3♣	1	1

**Problem 8 Teams NS Vul**

♠954	S	W	N	E
♥QT93	-	1♣	P	1♠*
♦9875	P	2♠	P	3♥*
♣84	P	3♠	P	4NT
	P	5♠	P	6NT
	P		End	

1♠ shows 4+♦s.

3♥ is 4<sup>th</sup> suit FG

5♠ = 2Keycards + ♠Q

What is your lead?

*The originally published auction meant that North was actually on lead. Mea Culpa. The panellists received a corrected version and voted for all four suits.*

**PATERSON: ♣6.** Given that spades are splitting, I hope to put declarer to a premature guess on this sort of hand: KQxxx / x / xx / AQJTx opposite AJ / KJx / AKQJxx / xx

*A well-thought out shot IMO. Also attacking through dummy's strength:*

**PIPER: ♠4.** I don't normally like lead problems but this is brilliant! Any red card is barking in my opinion. You must cut communication between the monster black 2 suiter and red 2 suiter, torrid defence to follow.

**DRAGIC: 9♠.** If partner has the ♥K then I need to lead that suit. Dummy's keycard response points to 2 black high cards missing, so I'll lead declarer's short suit.

*Tim tries a different spade*

McKay: ♠5. I think E has the hearts well covered, a spade should give nothing away as they have the ♠Q. I don't want to pick up partner's values.

*Bill Whyte agrees. His answer is too long to quote in full, but he does consider the fact that partner might have made a lead-directing double of 5♠ or of 6NT with a suitable club holding. Also that declarer may have chosen 6NT to protect his heart holding.*

**MCGINLEY: ♦9.** Attacking diamond lead per system: the 9 to show 0/2 higher. Sounds like most other suits are lying well for declarer.

**SHORT: ♦9.** If it's a finesse, E can take it anyway and it may also disrupt communications. I would like to know what West would open if 5/5 in the blacks? If 1♠, W has 6 clubs and 5 spades, I guess. If 5/5 is possible, I might try a club. But the risk with a black suit is that it is something like KJxxx opposite A10 and I find partner's Queen. Finally, partner would double with a good club holding to help me, which has not happened

*It does seem likely that South has a long diamond suit, and that any honours partner has will drop. This lead is most likely to give nothing away.*

*The other panellists choose the other red suit, hoping that partner has the ♥K and another trick somewhere.*

**PEDEN:** ♥T. Showing a higher honour, not the Jack. Dummy has 5 spades and probably 6+ clubs. If I lead one of these declarer will probably be able to set it up and take the diamond finesse or run his 5+ diamonds.

**SIME:** ♥3. If this gives away a trick it is more likely the thirteenth than the twelfth. Every suit is breaking, so I cannot see us beating this unless partner has the ♥K and a trick. East is obviously prepared for a heart lead, but can that be AJx? The choice of heart depends upon our lead agreements- I would lead the Ten if I was sure partner wouldn't duck from Kxxx.

**SMITH:** ♥9/10. Sounds like time for an aggressive lead hoping to set up our heart trick when partner gets in with his only entry.

**ASH:** ♥3. My smallest heart as I want partner to play me for an honour. I would not normally consider such a risky lead against a NT slam, particularly as they may have a misfit – However the spades and clubs look to be breaking well and my diamond holding doesn't look promising,

**SHIELDS:** ♥T. it is hard to tell where declarer is going to go for tricks, but one strategy might be to run a couple of long suits. If declarer needs to lose the lead in doing that, we must have set up our second trick in good enough time. It is appropriate therefore to attack, as we often do against a suit contract. Of course if partner has none of the ♥AKJ this might be a disaster.

**FREIMANIS:** ♥T. Seems like opponents might be in a misfit, but, on the other hand, if a diamond finesse is needed or

spades breaking 3-3 is needed, declarer will get that, so seems like establishing 2 quick tricks might be important here.

**VALENTINE:** ♥T. Nothing else appeals.. Diamond feels like I am potentially doing declarer's work for them. Leading through natural clubs feels wrong. Leaves me with a heart. Feels like my best shot to build tricks for the defence.

**CLOW:** ♥3 Might look dangerous but any other lead could pick up partner's Honour holding. Playing for partner to hold A,K or J Hearts looks safer.

**SHENKIN:** ♥Q. A black card risks picking up partner's Queen. Dummy may have a singleton heart - more likely the Jack than Ace or King. Don't lead ♥10 - partner may not play the King if held and dummy is singleton. H3 is alternative.

*I must say that I think declarer is more likely to have the ♥K than the Ace here –he may have chosen no-trump to protect the King from the lead. So I would lead anything but a heart, hoping to score a trick in another suit before cashing the Ace. Any of the other suits might work well.*

	Votes	Marks
♥	11	10
♠	4	9
♣8	1	8
♦	2	7

*Congratulations to the leading scorers – though I may say that they might not have scored so well at the table!*

## Panel Answers

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
<b>Top score</b>	2♥	Dbl	3♣	3♦	Pass	Dbl	2NT	♥9/T	
<b>Miro Dragic</b>	2♥	Dbl	3♣	3♦	Pass	Dbl	2NT	♠9	<b>79</b>
<b>Irving Gordon</b>	3♦	Dbl	3♣	3♦	Pass	Dbl	2NT	♥T	<b>77</b>
<b>Jack Paterson</b>	2♥	Dbl	3♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl	2NT	♣6	<b>76</b>
<b>Robert Clow</b>	2♥	3♣	3♣	3♦	5♥	Dbl	2NT	♥2	<b>75</b>
<b>Mike Ash</b>	3♦	Dbl	3♣	3NT	Pass	Dbl	2NT	♥2	<b>74</b>
<b>Barnet Shenkin</b>	2♥	Dbl	3♣	3NT	5♥	Dbl	2NT	♥Q	<b>74</b>
<b>Brian Short</b>	2♥	Dbl	3♣	Pass	Dbl	Dbl	2NT	♦9	<b>73</b>
<b>Iain Sime</b>	2♥	3♣	2♠	3♦	Pass	Dbl	Dbl	♥2	<b>73</b>
<b>Bill Ross</b>	2♥	3♣	2NT	3♦	Pass	Dbl	Dbl	♥T	<b>72</b>
<b>Gints Freimanis</b>	3♦	Dbl	2♠	Pass	Dbl	Dbl	2NT	♥T	<b>71</b>
<b>Harry Smith</b>	3♦	Dbl	2NT	3♦	Pass	Dbl	Dbl	♥9/T	<b>71</b>
<b>Patrick Shields</b>	3♦	Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl	2NT	♥T	<b>70</b>
<b>Mike McGinley</b>	2♥	Dbl	3♣	3NT	Dbl	Dbl	Dbl	♦	<b>69</b>
<b>Douglas Piper</b>	2♥	Dbl	3♣	3NT	Dbl	Dbl	3♥	♠4	<b>69</b>
<b>Ronan Valentine</b>	2♥	Pass	2NT	3♦	Dbl	Dbl	3♥	♥T	<b>67</b>
<b>Tim McKay</b>	3♣	4♣	3♣	3♦	Pass	Dbl	2NT	♠5	<b>65</b>
<b>Bill Whyte</b>	3♥	3♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl	Dbl	2NT	♠9	<b>65</b>
<b>Derrick Peden</b>	2♥	3♣	2NT	3♦	5♥	Dbl	3♣	♥T	<b>63</b>

## Competitor Results

**Congratulations to Bob Brown (GBC) who achieved a top score of 77.**

Other good scores:

Name	Club	Score
Dave Duddell	New Melville	74
Ali Gordon	GBC	72
Ken Rae	Lerwick	72
Linton Horsfall	Carlton	70
Robin MacPherson	New Melville	68
Maurice Franceschi	Carlton	66
Pam Warner	New Melville	65
Angela Horsfall	Carlton	65
Russell Frame	GBC	64
Danny Hamilton	Buchanan	62

# SBNews Bidding Panel Problems

December 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](mailto:t.vandelisle@gmail.com)

quoting your SBU Membership number.

Closing date: 15 December 2024

## Problem 1 Teams All Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠QJ87432				
♥JT9	-	1♦	2♣	P
♦983	?			
♣-				

## Problem 2 Teams EW Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠-				
♥7	-	-		1♥
♦AKQT74	?			
♣T97543				

## Problem 3 Teams EW Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠72				
♥AJT854	-	-	-	1♣
♦AQ4	1♥	1♠	2♦	2♠
♣A6	?			

## Problem 4 Teams NS Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠T2				
♥AK5	-	-	-	3♦
♦T64	?			
♣AKJ62				

## Problem 5 Teams EW Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠KQT8				
♥AQ63	2♣	2♦	Dbl	P
♦QT	?			
♣AQJ				

\*2♣ = 20-21 balanced or any game force

Dbl = some values, no good suit.

## Problem 6 Teams NS Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠72				
♥AQT872	-	3♣	3♠	P
♦KJ82	?			
♣A				

## Problem 7 Teams NS Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠AKQ7653				
♥43	-	-	-	2♥
♦AKQ8	Dbl	3♥	P	P
♣-	?			

## Problem 8 Teams NS Vul

	S	W	N	E
♠A943				
♥Q8	-	-	-	1NT
♦9876	P	2♦	P	2♥
♣KT5	P	3NT	End	

2♦ = transfer to ♥s

What is your lead?