

IRISH BRIDGE Journal

Winter 2024/Spring 2025

Welcome

As this is the first Journal of 2025, let me belatedly wish all readers success, health and happiness at and away from the table this year.



Enda Murphy, Editor

In January, we sadly marked the loss of Aileen O'Keeffe. A multi-decorated international, Aileen and husband John established a legendary Bridge Nursery in Dun Laoghaire. We extend sincerest sympathies to Aileen's children - Vanessa, David and perennial international Rebecca. This issue is pleased to carry an Appreciation by Aileen's friend and partner, Valerie Hand. Aileen did Irish bridge some service. May she rest in peace.

Thanks to the good offices of Máire O'Keeffe [of Bridgeatagance fame], the Journal has secured an interview with the one and only Daniel O'Donnell. Daniel shares his enjoyment of the game with us, and we are most grateful to him. Having been in touch with the great man by phone and in print, I can tell you there's no mistaking his love for the game.

It would be remiss of me to neglect to mention the success of columnist Melissa Brady, who finished second in the Jackson [National Women's Pairs]. Way to go, Melissa! Not only that, the scratch pairing of Dermot O'Brien and Gordon Lessells [Journal contributor and unofficial photographer] had a great run to second spot in the Geraldine. The message is clear - writing for the Journal improves your results. Everyone I may in future pester for articles please take note!

I have previously extolled the virtues of the Regent Bridge Club League competitions, and am happy to re-iterate that commendation. Playing on the crack [some would say crackpot] Fred Barry team in the Premier League, a minor gripe has arisen this season - the unavailability of some teams to fulfill scheduled fixtures.

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You make the news!

The Journal wants to hear from your Club!!

Send a photo and caption of a noteworthy event.
Be the next Club to be profiled in our "Club Focus" feature.

Contact editor@cbaie



Whilst personal circumstances may of course intervene from left field, that is the very reason why most teams enter enlarged squads – so as to be certain that four players can be fielded on the appointed day. Having had two fixtures bounce around because opponents were not available to play as scheduled, I can attest to the frustration it causes. We may need a rule whereby the only valid “excuse” for missing a fixture is international representation commitments. Here endeth the sermon.

Our regular columnist, Peter Pigot, is now offering Partnership Coaching across a wide range of aspects of the game. Peter is a first-class coach – contact via PeterPigotBridge@gmail.com.

CBAI CEO Dermot O'Brien in his article raises a key challenge for the future of our game - namely, how to achieve a repositioning of



Freddie Volcker [France], Adam Mesbur, Nick FitzGibbon, John Carroll, Mark Moran and Tom Hanlon.

Bridge in the minds of the younger cohort. You know, the tech generation with an attention span of approximately four seconds. This conundrum is engaging the minds of Bridge officialdom worldwide. But just as politics are too important to be left to politicians, so must all we rank-and-filers give it some thought. Dermot will be more than happy to hear your ideas.

In closing, well done to Team Ireland[ish] for retaining the prestigious Lederer Invitational Trophy in February - Nick FitzGibbon, Adam Mesbur, Mark Moran, John Carroll, Tom Hanlon and Freddie Volcker [France]. When I tell you that Zia Mahmoud was on the second-placed team, you'll have an idea of the elite standard. JC Superstar, who was winning his fifth title, will share an interesting deal in the next issue.

Enjoy the Journal.

Enda Murphy
editor@cbaie.ie



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Test Your Declarer Play

Tomás Roche

You are West as declarer, playing teams.
What is your play strategy on each board?

Answers on page 30



Board 1 Dealer North. Vul None.

		♠ Q96	
		♥ QJ7	
		♦ 54	
		♣ Q10853	
♠ 4	N	♠ AJ852	
♥ 10	W	♥ K842	E
♦ AKQJ108		♦ 976	
♣ AKJ75	S	♣ 2	
		♠ K1073	
		♥ A9653	
		♦ 32	
		♣ 94	

W	N	E	S
	P	P	P
2♣	P	2♠	P
3♦	P	3♥	P
4♣	P	4♦	P
4NT ¹	P	5♣ ²	P
6♦	All Pass		

¹3♦=RKCB for D; ²1 or 4 key cards

The Play

North leads the ♦5 against 6♦. How do you plan the play?

Board 2 Dealer East. Vul N/S.

		♠ KQ9843	
		♥ 752	
		♦ K5	
		♣ AK	
♠ 762	N	♠ AJ10	
♥ J108	W	♥ AK	E
♦ A		♦ QJ107643	
♣ QJ9842	S	♣ 6	
		♠ 5	
		♥ Q9643	
		♦ 982	
		♣ 10753	

W	N	E	S
		1♦	P
1NT	2♣	3NT	All Pass

The Play

North leads the ♠K against 3NT. How do you plan the play?

Board 3 Dealer South. Vul E/W.

		♠ J86	
		♥ 7	
		♦ 10953	
		♣ QJ652	
♠ 2	N	♠ K953	
♥ AQJ10652	W	♥ K943	E
♦ 963		♦ AQ7	
♣ 107	S	♣ A8	
		♠ AQ1074	
		♥ 8	
		♦ KJ8	
		♣ K943	

W	N	E	S
			1♠ ¹
3♥ ²	P	4♥	All Pass

¹1♠=5-card-major; ²Weak Jump Overcall

The Play

North leads the ♠6. How do you plan the play?

Board 4 Dealer West. Vul All.

		♠ 1052	
		♥ 95	
		♦ 7	
		♣ Q976542	
♠ AK	N	♠ QJ964	
♥ Q87	W	♥ 1063	E
♦ AKJ106		♦ 9842	
♣ AK10	S	♣ 8	
		♠ 873	
		♥ AKJ42	
		♦ Q53	
		♣ J3	

W	N	E	S
2♣	P	2♦	P
2NT ¹	P	3♥	X
P	P	XX	P
3♠	P	3♣	All Pass

¹3♦=23-24 HCP; ²Transfer to spades; ³Lead Directing; ⁴Asks partner to complete the transfer

The Play

North leads the ♥9 against 4♠. South takes the ace and king and continues with a third heart. After ruffing this trick, North exits with a trump. How do you plan the play?

Bidding Quiz 9

By Bob Pattinson



All eight hands are from teams events. Entries to bobpattinson@gmail.com by 30th April 2025.

Good luck!

Question 1

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ A10
- ♥ 32
- ♦ AKT9843
- ♣ 82

W	N	E	S
	1♦ ¹	2♠ ²	X
3♣	?		

¹ 1♦=4+ ² 2♠=6-10: 6 suit

Question 2

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ 2
- ♥ KT74
- ♦ AKQJ8
- ♣ 974

W	N	E	S
	P	1♠ ¹	1♦
1♣	P	2♣	?

¹ 1♣=3+

Question 3

Dealer East. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ 92
- ♥ Q942
- ♦ AK2
- ♣ AQJ9

W	N	E	S
	1NT	P	2♥
2♣	P	3♦	P
3NT	P	3♦	?

Question 4

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ J
- ♥ 52
- ♦ AKT3
- ♣ AQT832

W	N	E	S
	2♠ ¹	P	4♠ ²
?			

¹ 2♠=6-10: 5-5 or 5431 or 5440
Any second suit
² 4♠=barrage

Question 5

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ K853
- ♥ AKQJ863
- ♦ -
- ♣ 42

W	N	E	S
			1♦ ¹
P	1NT	?	

² 1♦=4+
² 1NT=6-10: F1: denies 4 card major

Question 6

Dealer East. Vul E/W. Teams

- ♠ 7
- ♥ 3
- ♦ AQ2
- ♣ AK987532

W	N	E	S
		2♠ ¹	?

¹ 1♠ = 6-10: 5-5 or 5431 or 5440

Question 7

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ T52
- ♥ K85
- ♦ A
- ♣ AKJT86

W	N	E	S
	P	3♥ ¹	?

¹ 2♥=7 card pre-empt

Question 8

Dealer South. Vul All. Teams

- ♠ A986
- ♥ KT8752
- ♦ J
- ♣ 42

W	N	E	S
			?

Entries to:

bobpattinson@gmail.com

by 30th April 2025

Please remember to state your grade in your entry

- Novice/Intermediate
- Master (below Life Master)

Bidding Quiz System

General Approach:

Five card majors, three+ minors, 2/1 GF,
1NT = 15-17,
2♣ = art GF with 2♦ waiting response

Balanced Hands

4333, 4432, 5332
(with five minor)

12-14 and 18-19 open 1♣/♦

20-22 = 2NT (may include five card major hence play puppet Stayman)

Major Suit Responses

1NT = 5-10 F1:
2♣/♦/♥ = 2/1 GF

3♣/♦/♥ over 1♠ opening and 2♠/3♣/♦ over 1♥ opening = four card+ trump support: 8-11 : first or second round control in bid suit.

3M = 4-7 and 4+ trumps

2NT = Jacoby 16+:
4+ trumps:

Opener bids a singleton at the three-level, a second five card suit at the four-level, rebids 3M with 17-19, 4M with 12-14, and 3NT with 15-16.

Responses to the forcing 1NT:

example for 1♥: 1NT: 2♣ = Gazzilli : either 11-16 with 5M and 4+ clubs or any 17+ hand

2♦ = 11-16 : 3+ diamonds

2♥ = 11-16 : 6+ hearts

2♠ = 14-16: 6 hearts and 5 spades

2NT = 14-16 : 6 hearts and a 4 card minor : now 3♣ pass/ correct; 3♦ = GF asks for minor; 3♥ - to play

3♣/♦ = 14-16: 5-5

3♥ = 14-16 : 6+ hearts and strong suit

Example of Gazzilli after 1♥:1NT:2♣

2♦ = any 8+ suit

2♥ = 5-7 : 5+ hearts

2♠ = 5-7 : 6+ spades

2NT = 5=7: 3 suiter with short hearts

3♣/♦ = 5-7 : 6+ minor

After responder bids 2♦ opener rebids 2M with 11-16 and 5M and 4+ clubs
2NT = 17-19 balanced : other bids game forcing

Responses to 1nt Opening (15-17)

2♣ = non-promissory Stayman

2♦/♥/♠/NT = transfers

3♣/♦/♥/♠ = long suits with slam interest

Two-Level Suit Opening Bids

Bid	Meaning	Responses
2♣	23 + or equivalent unbalanced	2♦ = waiting bid
2♦/♥/♠	6-10 : six card suit, using rule of two, three or four depending upon different vulnerability of the two sides	2NT = enquiry: opener signs off with three-level rebid of own suit with minimum and bids a new suit to show a feature or 3NT with a feature in the opening suit

Three/Four-Level Opening Bids

Bid	Meaning	Responses
3♣/♦/♥/♠	6-10 : six or seven card suit	New suit forcing
3NT	Eight card broken minor suit	4♣ = pass / convert 4♦ = interested in club slam but only part score in diamonds 5♣ = willing to play in game in either minor 4M = asking bid; interest in game in either major: seeks control in bid major 4NT = name suit and quality: 5♣/♦ = confirms suit but denies Ace or King : 5♥/♠ = respective suit and holds Ace or King in that minor
4♣/♦	Namyats: eight card solid major in ♥/♠ : three key cards	Bid of intermediate suits 4♦/♥ asks for shortage and 4M denies any shortage
4♥/♠	Eight card broken suit: less than three key cards	4NT = Roman key card Blackwood : 1430
3NT	Ace asking	5♣ = no ace; 5♦/♥/♠/6C = ace in bid suit; 5NT = two aces

Opening Side Action over Interference

Bid	Meaning
Negative double	Shows values in the remaining two suits
Support Double	Opener confirms three card trump support, so a raise of the suit shows four card support
4th suit	Forcing: asking for more information
Cue bid	Unassuming and forcing: asks for more information
Jump cue	Has a long running suit: seeks NT stop
2NT	Relay to 3♣: this may then be passed or converted to a new long weak suit; thus a direct new suit at the 3-level is GF
Transfers after own 1NT is overcalled	Double /new suit/2NT are all transfers to the next suit (2NT over 2♠); follow up in second suit is game forcing; transfer to intervening suit asks for NT stop, and now accepting the transfer denies a stop and 3NT confirms one

Intervening Bidding

Bid	Meaning
1NT overcall	16-18
Weak jump overcalls	6-10
Two suited overcalls	Direct cue = two highest suits 2NT = two lowest suits; 3♣ = two remaining suits
5-5 : either 6-10 or 15+	
Defence to 1NT	Double = minor two suiter or major two suiter: advancer assumes minors first 2♣ = three suiter with clubs; 2♦ = three suiter with diamonds 2♥/♠ = either six card suit or the bid suit plus a minor side suit: 2NT asks for the minor

Slam Bidding

Roman key card Blackwood (1430) and Kickback in the minors (1430)

Non serious 3NT: when a trump fit is found 3NT is artificial confirming a minimum hand still prepared to show controls if partner fails to sign off. By passing 3NT shows a strong hand, bidding 1st or 2nd controls up the line.

CBAI News

Dermot O'Brien



I have expressed the view previously in these Notes that organised bridge in Ireland has been recovering well from the impact of the pandemic a few years ago. I am pleased to report that the recovery is continuing strongly in season 2024/25.

At national level, we have had capacity fields for many of our major competitions, and we have actually had to close entries for several of them. You never like to turn willing participants away, but in at least three cases this season it would have been physically impossible to fit any more tables into our chosen venues. Our congresses are also reporting higher turnouts than recent years, significantly so in some cases, and we have the great news that three congresses either have returned live for the first time since the pandemic or will do so later in the year – Ennis which took place in January, and Sligo and Killarney which are both scheduled for June. There are also stirrings from another dormant congress that it may re-appear in 2025/26 if a suitable weekend can be found.

At local level, things also appear to be going well generally. We expect overall membership numbers to be up again this season, and some clubs have been doing remarkably well, buoyed in most cases by bridge classes contributing new members. If I could single out a few, reasonably randomly, for special mention we have Dunshaughlin (+23%), Ballymahon (+24%), Paulstown (+27%), Portumna Contract (+37%), Gort (+53%) Naas Golf (+54%), and Menapia, Wexford (+61%), while in the South Midland area both Callan and Durrow have more than doubled their membership since last year. We have also had

a number of new clubs join the CBAI, and, very hearteningly, a further six former CBAI clubs have re-affiliated this season for the first time since the pandemic.

It is notable that many of these strongly growing clubs are outside our main cities, contrary to popular belief. In fact, a few of the big city clubs are reporting a drop in member numbers this year, as they have lost the benefit of non-local players who joined to take advantage of their online offerings during covid, but have let those memberships lapse as their own local clubs have re-opened for live bridge. It's good news that the Association's numbers overall will grow even after the impact of these apparent "losses".

So far, so good. However, before we get too complacent, it needs to be stressed that bridge in Ireland, and indeed throughout much of the world, faces some very major challenges. Although we do not ask our members to divulge their age when they join the CBAI, other countries report that their average member is over 70 years of age, and by observation, we can probably acknowledge that to be the case here too. Card-playing is diminishing rapidly as a hobby within our society, which in turn makes bridge a more difficult game to learn for the uninitiated. Like most bridge federations, we find it very hard to make a connection with younger people, either juniors in schools and colleges, or younger adults in the 25-40 bracket. Finally, as we run our periodic promotion events, we realise just how difficult it is to convey the appeal of our game to people who know little or nothing about it. You really need to play the game to see just how great, and how addictive, it is.

One of our recent juniors, Michael Donnelly, posted a comment on the bridgewinners website on this topic, flagging just how old-fashioned bridge seems to people of his generation; one of our current juniors, Matthew O'Farrell (recent winner of his first national title – doubtless the first of many) contributed his thoughts, as did a number of others from all over the world. I'd encourage you to read the [thread](#) if you're interested. One difficulty identified is that the people responsible for the promotion of bridge within clubs and organisations such as ours are (ahem!) generally themselves older and therefore less attuned to what will appeal to younger people. Additionally, many of the potential solutions (e.g. shorter games, adapted introductory versions of bridge, simplified scoring, computer apps, etc) are often unpopular with established players who see them as somehow "dumbing down" the game, which makes it harder to get support for these kinds of initiatives.

In the same bridgewinners thread, Samantha Punch of Scotland, who is a top player and also a professional sociologist doing extensive academic research on bridge as a mind-sport, makes the valid point that another stumbling block is the lack of joined-up thinking, or as she puts it, "the bridge world's (in)ability to collaborate across countries and continents, pooling skills and resources", together with the difficulty of getting funding for projects that need it.

I am pleased to say that the European Bridge League (EBL) has already recognised this problem, and has created several transnational workgroups, in which I am involved on behalf of Ireland,

precisely to pool our resources and experience to look for solutions on these issues. The group I am on has set itself the objective of rebranding bridge, and our mantra is that we are looking for ways to change its image to one that is more modern, fun, exciting, social, and accessible, and in particular to make it more appealing to younger people. I plan to ask Michael and Matthew, and anyone else who has the interest, to contribute to my thinking on this topic. Another group has already been successful in raising some (initially modest) European funding for a pilot project on junior bridge. Ireland will not be involved in this just yet, but hopefully the pilot will be successful, and a more extensive programme will emerge. When I occasionally shiver with dread about how challenging all this may be, I am reassured by the realisation that we don't need to solve ALL these problems all at once. ANY advances we can make will improve the viability of bridge in the long-term.

What can you do as a member of the CBAI? Plenty of things, it seems to me. Start by encouraging your friends to take up bridge; if we all got one person to sign up for classes and only one in five stayed the course and joined a club, then the CBAI's membership would grow by 20%. Introduce your children or grandchildren to the game and, if they like it, put them in touch with the Junior Committee and let them enjoy it and learn about it with other people of their own age. Give us your ideas on how to reposition bridge to make it more appealing to younger people. Share the benefit of your wisdom on content for social media, making videos, or anything else that you think would be useful in getting our message out. Play out in competitions and interact with other bridge players and discuss this issue with them, and encourage your clubmates to do the same. Volunteer to serve on the Junior Committee, or even to help them out every now and again, or contribute to the working group I'm setting up. In short, to paraphrase John F Kennedy's famous dictum, "ask not what bridge can do for you, ask what you can do for bridge".

And finally, a reminder of the opportunity for members to acknowledge the unsung (and unpaid!) work that so many volunteers already do within our Association via the annual President's Merit Award. This award is designed to recognise the quiet heroes and heroines of Irish bridge - the volunteers without whom clubs or regions could not function, but who never seek acclaim or put themselves forward for formal office. I am sure we all know people like this.

A special nomination form is required, which is available on request from Head Office. The closing date for nominations has been extended to 14 March 2025, after which CBAI President Catherine Byrne will adjudicate on all the submissions. Anyone nominated previously but not chosen as a winner remains a candidate, so there is no need to nominate them again. There are always lots of deserving candidates, but we can only have one winner, so apologies in advance if your nominee is not chosen.



CBAI President Catherine Byrne presenting David Walsh with his Grand master salver at the Master Pairs in December 2024, with Tom Quinlan, representing CBAI sponsors, AL Homecare.



CBAI President Catherine Byrne presenting John Noonan with his Grand master salver at the Holmes Wilson in February 2025.

Results and Upcoming Fixtures

National Results

Master Pairs

(Templeogue, 14-15 December)

- 1st Pat McDaid & Zrinka Kokot
- 2nd John Carroll & Mark Moran
- 3rd Frank Davey & Tom Lawlor
- 4th Helen Friel & Philip Robinson

Men's & Women's Pairs & Teams (Clane, 11-12 January)

Revington Cup (Men's Pairs)
Conor Boland & Tom Hanlon

Jackson Cup (Women's Pairs)
Elaine O'Kelly & Ailbhe Mealy

Geraldine Trophy (Men's Teams)
Peter Goodman & Dan McIntosh
Micheal O Briain & Pdraig O Briain

McMenamin Bowl (Women's Teams)
Mairead Haugh & Roisin De Jong
Margaret Farren & Anna Carr

Confined Regional Masters Pairs (Templeogue, 1 February)
Konstantin Rabkin
& Evgenia Gladysheva

Confined Regional Masters Teams (Templeogue 2 February)
Pam Harrington & Eamon Martin
(jnr) Noel Bradfield & John Lyons

Holmes Wilson Cup (Mount Wosleley, 8-9 February)

- 1st Matthew O'Farrell, Tommy Garvey, Peter Goodman, Dan McIntosh
- 2nd Tom Hanlon, Mark Moran, Adam Mesbur, Nick FitzGibbon
- 3rd Karel De Raeymaeker, Anna Onishuk, Kelan O'Connor, Conor Boland
- 4th Mairead Haugh, Justin Corfield, Claudiu Dima, Roisin De Jong



Tommy Garvey, Peter Goodman, Matthew O'Farrell and Dan McIntosh - winners of the Holmes Wilson 2025.

Novice & Intermediate Congress (Roganstown Golf & Country Club, 10-11 February)

Gala Pairs
Simon Burrell & Paul Twomey

Jim Fitzgerald Trophy (Mixed Pairs)
Vincent Bissett & Veronica Buttmer

New Ireland Trophy (Intermediate A Pairs)
Philomena Sweeney & Paul Twomey

Kervick Trophy (Intermediate B Pairs)
Marion Moran & Annette Callaghan

Waterford Crystal Trophy (Novice Pairs)
Helen Locke & Robin Conway

JJ Kiely Trophy (Intermediate & Novice Teams)
Camilla McLoughlin, Phyllis Carew,
Vincent Bissett, Joe Bissett

National Pairs Competition (Ennistymon, 24-25 February)

Davidson Trophy (Open Pairs):
Cian Holland & Derek O'Gorman

Laird Trophy (Inter A Pairs)
Celine Smyth & Anne Kearney

Civil Service Cup (Inter B Pairs) Tom Roche & Joan Peppard

Upcoming Fixtures

Date	Event	Venue
2024		
Mar 3	CBAI Sims Pairs Week	Check Local clubs
Mar 7-9	Camrose Trophy, Weekend 2	Northern Ireland
Mar 8-9	IBU Burke & O'Connor Trophies	Cavan Crystal Hotel
Mar 22-23	National Teams Championships	Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise
Mar 28-30	Clonmel Congress	Talbot Hotel (Clonmel Park)
Apr 4-6	Tralee International Congress	The Rose Hotel, Tralee
Apr 11-13	Lady Milne Trophy	England
Apr 22-24	IBU Seniors' Congress	Cavan Crystal Hotel
Apr 25-27	2nd European Online Women's Team Championship	Online on RealBridge
Apr 26	JJ Murphy Trophy	Loughrea Hotel & Spa
Apr 26	Lambert Cup	Loughrea Hotel & Spa
Apr 27	Cooper Cup	Loughrea Hotel & Spa
Apr 26-27	Moylan Cup	Malahide Bridge Centre
May 10	IBU Club Pairs All grades	Templeogue Bridge Centre
May 12	Celtic Nations Sims Pairs Week	Check Local clubs
May 16-18	Teltscher Trophy (Senior Camrose)	CityNorth Hotel, Gormanstown
May 24	National 4Fun Teams Final	Westmanstown
May 24-25	IBU Egan Trophy	La Mon Hotel, Belfast

Aileen O'Keeffe

An Appreciation

Valerie Hand

The Bridge fraternity are mourning the death of Aileen O'Keeffe. Ar dheis de go raibh a hanam usal.

Aileen was an outstanding Bridge player. She represented Ireland 20 times - World, European, Eu and Home International (Lady Milne) Championships. She was partnered by her daughter, Rebecca, Ann Montwill and myself. Rebecca and Aileen played in Killarney in July 1991 as Rebecca celebrated her 21st Birthday! Aileen and Rebecca are the only Mother and Daughter to have played in partnership on Irish teams.

Aileen won 17 National Championships – McMenamin, Holmes Wilson, Kelburne, Master Pairs, Burke, Moylan and Egan. She also represented Leinster in the Interprovincial titles. She won many National Championships with her husband, John, (whom she met at Bridge classes).

Aileen was a very popular Bridge teacher. She showed infinite patience and support to struggling beginners. There are hundreds and hundreds of Aileen's students now enjoying their game, many of whom may not have persevered without her. She loved teaching and it is fair to say, her students loved her too. Her children Vanessa and David continue the family tradition now, teaching Bridge to future generations of players.

Aileen joined Killiney Golf Club in 1981. Twice she won Lady Captain's prize – 1984 and 1988. She also had the honour of being Golfer of the Year in 1984.

This is a great achievement. Aileen had the required temperament for match play. This was shown when she played in Club matches. Her opponent may have outriven her on the fairway, but Aileen's course management, especially her chipping to a single putt, made it extremely difficult for the opposition!

Aileen married John in May 1969. Theirs was a perfect marriage. Lots of love, laughter, music, travel, Bridge and, of course, dancing! They have three children, Rebecca, Vanessa and David and six greatly loved grandchildren; Aisling, Billy, Sam, Jack, Niamh and Libby. Sadly, John became afflicted with Alzheimer's. Aileen's heart was broken as she supported him for over ten years. John moved into St. Joseph's Care Home when, in another blow, Aileen's own health deteriorated. She spent the last year in Leopardstown Care Centre where staff showed great kindness to Aileen during this final year of her life.

Aileen and I met in Dun Laoghaire Bridge Club over 55 years ago. We shared fun, friendship, family holidays and lots of Bridge and golf throughout the years. I will miss her greatly.

May she rest in peace.

Valerie Hand
January 2025



Aileen O'Keeffe, RIP

Interview Daniel O'Donnell

Editor

Hi Daniel,

Many thanks for chatting with the Journal.



Can you describe your history of exposure to card games? Many of us grew up in families playing 45, Whist and the like.

I started playing whist about 50 years ago.

My neighbour Annie Mc Garvey (RIP) was a great whist player and I spent endless evenings just the two of us playing two hands each. Annie taught me how to finesse before I knew what it was called. When she thought I was good enough I went to the whist drive in the parochial hall at home in Kincasslagh. That whist drive is still going every Tuesday evening and when I'm home I still go and play.

How did you first encounter and learn the game of Bridge? What enduring attraction does it hold for you?

I always wanted to learn bridge but for some reason I had it in my head that I needed to have a partner to learn it. Because of this I didn't go to a class until 2016 while Majella and I took an extended cruise with the Seabourn cruise company.

I saw that there was a beginners class, so off I went. We were on the cruise for six weeks and after about two weeks the lovely lady who was teaching the classes [Beth Brown] said I should go to the duplicate game in the afternoon. She found me a partner and off I went. It was a baptism of fire. I certainly wasn't ready for a duplicate game so much - so that when the game finished I had to go to my cabin and take headache tablets! I took another week of lessons and ventured back to the afternoon session. This time I survived and from there I began.

How often do you get to play?

When I'm home I play in the club in Dungloe. I was lucky that a great player, Cass O' Donnell, asked me to be her partner any time I was free. I'm not sure why because she could wipe the floor with me but I have learned a lot from her.

I was also very lucky too to meet Máire O'Keeffe from Rathcoole while on holiday in Tenerife. This was just after I took the cruise. We gathered in The Irish Fiddler Bar and played a few games. Máire and her husband John then arranged house games back in Dublin any time I was free to attend so that I could learn some more. I can't praise Máire enough. She is a brilliant teacher who never makes me feel I'm any less of a player than she is even though I know I'm at the bottom of the hill and she's at the top.

You play both face to face and online. How do you rate the differing experiences? Which if either do you prefer?

Well I like both. I got very used to playing online during Covid - and for me online means I can play wherever I might be.

It's more fun to play live though and even though bridge is a serious game I like a bit of banter. I'd say sometimes people would like me to stay quiet!!

The funniest thing that ever happened at the table was....?

Occasionally if I'm somewhere and have a night off and I can find a bridge club and a partner I'll go. I nearly always get at the arrival - "You look like Daniel O'Donnell !!!"

Out of 10, how would you rate yourself as - Bidder, Declarer, Defender?

Oh gosh, It's hard to rate yourself. Self praise is no praise. I hope Máire or Cass doesn't see this!

Bidder maybe 7

Declarer 6ish

Defender 7

If there was a score for being a dummy I'd be 11 out of 10

Are there any particular bidding conventions or card skills that you wish you were better at?

I find it hard sometimes to remember some of the rarer conventions. I suppose the finishing of Jacoby [major suit raise] and splinter bids I could be better at.

Finally, how is 2025 shaping up for you professionally - touring schedule, new releases?

In Ireland we have shows in May in Armagh, Bundoran, Carrick on Shannon, Wexford and Derry.

Then in August we are at the INEC in Killarney for three nights We will also tour the UK and the USA. With a bit of TV and recording thrown in. I'll be squeezing the bridge in though!

Thanks very much Daniel. Enjoy it all!

You're very welcome. Best of luck to all Irish bridge players.

Master Pairs

Editor



CBAI President Catherine Byrne presenting the Master Pairs Trophy to winners Zrinka Kokot and Pat McDaid, with Tom Quinlan, representing the sponsors, AL Homecare.

A bumper field of 119 pairs fetched up at HQ on December 14th and 15th. Scanning the entries beforehand, and in the absence of Mesbur/FitzGibbon, I could only see two possible winners – Mark Moran and John Carroll [the holders], or Tom Hanlon and Conor Boland. Not for the first time in my life, I was wrong.

The format is Swiss IMP Pairs, over 12 7-board matches. In Match 8, my two fancied pairs clashed and Moran/Carroll prevailed 14-6. This left them with a comfortable-looking lead of 14 VPs going into the last day's four matches. Improbably, they contrived to lose the first three, and only a big win in their final match regained second place. The deserving winners were Zrinka Kokot and Pat McDaid. There were four Regional Master pairings in the top 7 - very well done to Davey/Lawlor, Friel/Robinson, Kilroy/Kilroy and Woulfe/Ronan.

I attended the final session pen in hand, and told Mark Moran I'd appreciate some high-octane bridge for the Journal. The very first hand delivered big-time:

Board 1. Dealer North. Vul None.

<p>♠ 9853 ♥ KQ32 ♦ 1082 ♣ 84</p>	N	<p>♠ K10742 ♥ 1064 ♦ 4 ♣ Q765</p>
<p>♠ - ♥ - ♦ KQJ97653 ♣ AKJ103</p>	W	<p>♠ AQJ6 ♥ AJ9875 ♦ A ♣ 92</p>

W Kokot	N Carroll	E McDaid	S Moran
	P	P	1♥
4NT	P	5♣	X
5♦	P	P	X
All Pass			

A stripe-tailed ape, no less!! [a hand where you double opponents in game to keep them out of a making slam]. Minus 650 gave Moran/Carroll a 5-IMP gain against the eventual winners, who had 920 available for the cold 6♦. 35 pairs got to 6♦, 31 of them doubled. For the four Souths who let it off undoubled – how many Aces do you need before you'd double?? I must admit that once partner shows preference for clubs, wild horses wouldn't keep me out of 6♦.

Board 11. Dealer South. Vul None.

<p>♠ AKQ4 ♥ 86 ♦ AKQJ10 ♣ A4</p>	N	<p>♠ 96 ♥ 74 ♦ 7543 ♣ 98532</p>
<p>♠ J852 ♥ KQ9 ♦ 982 ♣ Q76</p>	W	<p>♠ 1073 ♥ AJ10532 ♦ 6 ♣ KJ10</p>

W Moloney	N Carroll	E Glynn	S Moran
			2♦
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	4NT	P	5♣
P	5♦	P	5♥
All Pass			

Mark Moran showed a good weak 2♥, and later denied ♥Q. Slam in NT is cold. Just 20 of 59 pairs got there, so 5♥ making was a fortunate flat board. One intrepid pair bid and made 7NT – step forward Maureen and Bob Pattinson, valued compilers of the

Bidding Quiz feature!! Another pair played 2♥+3, names available for the right price!

For Match 3 I sat in with my Regent Premier league team-mates, Fred Barry and Paul Porteous. Team bonding and morale, don't'cha know. They had a lively encounter with Diarmuid Reddan/John Phelan.

Board 20. Dealer West. Vul All.

<p>♠ 2 ♥ A873 ♦ K85432 ♣ 106</p>	N	<p>♠ Q1087 ♥ K109 ♦ J7 ♣ AQ42</p>
<p>♠ K6543 ♥ 652 ♦ Q9 ♣ 753</p>	W	<p>♠ AJ9 ♥ QJ4 ♦ A106 ♣ KJ96</p>

W Reddan	N Barry	E Phelan	S Porteous
P	P	1♣	1NT
P	3NT	All Pass	

Exactly one third of the field got to 3NT. I told Fred after the hand that I'd have transferred to diamonds with his hand, and punted 3NT if partner liked them. My skipper airily replied "Oh I could have done that, but I just felt sure he'd have diamonds". Verily, this is leadership writ large. 8 IMPs to the good guys.

For the concluding match I was back with Moran-Carroll. Bless them, they were again anxious to provide me with good copy, this being the first hand of their match against Kevin O'Dea and Breda Synnott:

Board 20. Dealer East. Vul E/W.

		♠ AK32		
		♥ 2		
		♦ K6		
		♣ KQJ872		
♠ J75	N	♠ Q108		
♥ A7	W	♥ J109654		
♦ J92	E	♦ AQ54		
♣ A6543	S	♣ -		
		♠ 964		
		♥ KQ83		
		♦ 10873		
		♣ 109		

W Moran	N O'Dea	E Carroll	S Synnott
P	P	1♥	P
1NT	2♣	2♥	X
4♥	4♠	X	All Pass

Sitting behind John Carroll, I was wondering if the East hand met his criteria for a vulnerable 2♥ opening. I like to have A or K. I was not prepared for 1♥! Asked for an explanation of 2♥, Mark Moran observed "well he won't have as little as 10-11". Quite so. He had 9. I've a lot of sympathy with the 4♠ bid, and would have done the same myself [West has denied spades]. A penalty of 800 delivered 12 IMPs.



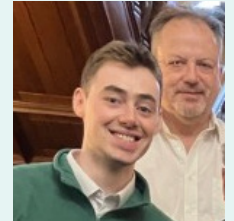
CBAI President Catherine Byrne presenting Master Pairs runners up to John Carroll and Mark Moran, with Tom Quinlan, representing the sponsors, AL Homecare.



CBAI President Catherine Byrne presenting Master Pairs 3rd Place to Frank Davey and Tom Lawlor, with Tom Quinlan, representing the sponsors, AL Homecare.

Wonderful in Copenhagen!

Thanks to Team Ireland NPC Gráinne Barton, who sent me this hand from the WBT Masters tournament in Copenhagen, October 2024.



Conor and Tom

The narrator is Conor Boland, who was playing with Tom Hanlon

Dealer West. Vul N/S.

		♠ 1065		
		♥ 2		
		♦ 10985		
		♣ QJ642		
♠ K	N	♠ 9843		
♥ AQ97	W	♥ J543		
♦ 63	E	♦ KJ74		
♣ AK9873	S	♣ 10		
		♠ AQJ72		
		♥ K1086		
		♦ AQ2		
		♣ 5		

W	N Tom	E	S Conor
1♣	P	1♦	1♠
4♥	4♠	X	All Pass

"1♦ showed hearts. West led ♣A and continued ♠K. I won and played ♥K from hand, forcing West to win. West played a diamond to the 10, K, A. I now ruffed a heart and led ♣Q from the table. East ruffed with the 8, I over-ruffed and ruffed another heart. I then ran the ♦9 from dummy which held, before ruffing another club. East tried to be tricky by throwing ♦J on this. I cashed ♦A, East following with his remaining low diamond, before exiting my last heart. I then had a trump coup holding ♠J7 over East's 84 to take the last two tricks!"

Gráinne recalls that Tom Hanlon was less than ecstatic about his 4♠ bid! "When I tabled my dummy I feared 1,100. As the play went on I downgraded to 800, then 500. Then all of a sudden I went "Hang on - he might be making this!!"

Well played Conor!

Making My Way

Melissa Brady



When one of our friends heard that Anna and I were promoted to Area Master grade this year, he commented, "Great, you were only bullying people at the Intermediate level." I think it's safe to say that the tables have turned, and I have a feeling we're going to get a real education in bridge this year. It's the challenge that draws us back week after week—and after all, who doesn't love a good challenge?

Paddy and I don't often get the chance to play in national events together, but the weekend of the Spiro & Coen has become a regular fixture for us. I particularly enjoyed analysing this board afterwards. Our opponents ended up in 3NT after an auction that went 1♠ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3NT.

Board 7. Dealer South. Vul All.

		♠AQJ65			
		♥K95			
		♦K4			
		♣1092			
♠982		N		♠K1074	
♥Q872		W	E	♥6	
♦A93				♦QJ10862	
♣Q64		S		♣73	
		♠3			
		♥AJ1043			
		♦75			
		♣AKJ85			

Playing as East, I led the ♦Q, which Paddy won with his Ace, and returned his 9. North, with no other option, took the trick with the King, I couldn't help but sympathise with their situation—having to decide which finesse to take and who to finesse against, especially so early in the contract under pressure. What approach would you choose?

I have to admit, I would have probably done what North did: let the ♣10 run, assuming West had no more diamonds after returning

the 9. However, this decision lost control of the board and put the contract down 2. Paddy turned up with the Queen and returned a diamond allowing us to defeat the contract by two tricks. The only winning option, though, is to play low to the ♣A, then play the ♥J. If West doesn't cover, you let it run. When it wins, play low to the 9, cash the King, play low to the ♣K, play the ♥A which allows you to catch the Queen. This way, you would make five heart tricks, one diamond, two clubs, and your ♠A, ultimately securing the contract!

Donegal has always been one of my favorite Congresses to attend. However, this year I found it particularly challenging. Maybe because it was our first time competing at the higher standard of the Congress Pairs but by the end of the weekend, I felt as if I had forgotten how to play bridge and began to question whether I ever really knew how in the first place. Was it self-doubt, burnout, or had just been riding on my partner's coattails? I'm not sure but I left battered and bruised as every time I put my head up I got knocked right back down. The one thing I did take away from the weekend was a piece of advice Gay Keaveney gave the room when discussing the boards on Saturday morning and that was to double contracts instead of bidding on. "Take the money and run" he told us.

We had initially planned to play in the Open Pairs on the Saturday but ended up teaming up with two players from our region to compete in the team event. In this board I believe my partner showed great restraint by only overcalling 2♦. In my opinion, a 3♦ overcall would have allowed North to comfortably make the contract that we managed to defeat.

Second Session. Board 9. Dealer North. Vul E/W.

		♠J102			
		♥A8432			
		♦9			
		♣AK92			
♠965		N		♠AQ873	
♥9		W	E	♥Q1075	
♦AKQ10763				♦J4	
♣87		S		♣104	
		♠K4			
		♥KJ6			
		♦852			
		♣QJ653			

North opened 1♥, and I didn't overcall spades since my previous overcalls had all been disastrous. South bid 2♣, my partner bid 2♦, North bid 3♣, and South, now aware that their partnership had a double fit and extra club length, bid to game in hearts. I led the ♦J, which won, and followed with the 4, which was ruffed by the declarer. She then played the ♥3 to the King and was likely surprised to see my partner out of trumps on her heart lead back. North, winning with the ♥A, then played the Ace, King, and a small club from her hand. I let the small club win, ruffed the next club with the ♥10, played my Queen of trump to clear the trump from the table, took the ♠A, and put the declarer back in dummy with a Spade, delighted to have taken four tricks to defeat the contract.

Here is why I think Anna showed great discipline by not bidding 3♦ over South's 2♣. Doing so would have revealed the location of all her points and North could have safely finessed the ♥J immediately as my ♦J winning the first trick revealed nine points in Anna's hand, and with a preemptive overcall, she was guaranteed not to have the Queen of trump therefore the heart finesse would have worked and enabled North to safely make her contract. At our

teammates' table, their opponents went to 4♠x, going down by one. It was a small bit of good fortune in an otherwise challenging weekend.

However, for Anna and I the poor play continued for another few nights and we came to the conclusion that we needed to change our system again. Although I felt it was an inappropriate time to make changes given the significance of the upcoming competitions, I could not continue on the path I was on. So, we abandoned ACOL and the Polish Club, opting for the non-forcing club and strong no-trump instead. We played 3-4 nights a week until we figured it out and headed to the familiar surroundings of the Cavan Crystal Hotel for the IBU Interregionals.

As a true enthusiast of team bridge and understanding that the opportunity to compete in an event like the Interregionals is rare I crossed my fingers and at the start of September I contacted Michael Coffey of the NIBU to submit a team for the Area Masters, consisting of myself, Anna, Josephine Brady, and Frances Daly. After a few weeks of correspondence, we were eventually asked to play as Interregionals due to Ulster having too many masters for consideration. Since we were newly promoted Area Masters, I was unsure how we'd be able to play as Interregionals. I checked the IBU website, which states, "A player's eligibility for an event is determined by his/her standing on the last day of the playing year prior to that in which the tournament takes place." Once we confirmed that we were eligible to play at that grade, we eagerly accepted the chance to reunite with Mary and Kathleen. I'm not sure who was happier about that, me or Mary! Happily, Josephine and Frances made the Masters team. As usual, we met for breakfast before the event to discuss tactics and I concluded our conversation with, "What's most important is that we stick to our

game plan, we don't let anyone pressure us into overbidding, and above all, enjoy this final hurrah!"

As Ulster 1, we won our first match 20-0. Both Ulster 2 and 3 won their opening matches as well, taking our province to the top of the leaderboard, where we remained for the entire competition. We earned an Interprovincial medal and the Claire Pippet Trophy.

Anna and I got off to a strong start. As I mentioned earlier, we had changed our bidding system the previous week, and while Anna was comfortable with it, I needed a little extra time to consider my bidding as I had been known to ignore my four hearts or spades in my eagerness to rebid no trump. Despite this we quickly found our stride and led the Butler from the first round to the very end. It was a trio of firsts for us: Ulster finishing first, our team achieving the top individual team score, and Anna and I finishing as the top ranked pair on the Butler with Mary and Kathleen right behind us. We must say how much we enjoyed getting to know our Ulster teammates over the weekend. Ulster 2 consisting of John Forsythe, George Harper, Judy Young and Mary Flynn and Ulster 3 made up of Geraldine Mc Namee, Michael McNamee, Lesley Agar and Liz Thomas, some of whom were going home with a second Interprovincial medal.

What struck me most was how busy our phones were after the event had finished. News spread within all of our club WhatsApp groups, with members inundating us with messages of congratulations. Surprisingly, we also received messages from players all across the country who weren't even competing, offering their congratulations. It goes to show the class of the competitors we rose through the ranks with and those we can only aspire to be like. They were all genuinely thrilled for us.

The following weekend, as I reflected on our achievement, I told Anna that I felt it was the

best bridge we had ever played together. We understood every card played, punished and capitalised on every mistake made by our opponents, and were relentless in our play. Mary and Kathleen were on fire too. This board worked out exceptionally well for all four of us.

Board 17. Dealer North. Vul None.

		♠KQ72	
		♥87	
		♦Q9	
		♣Q10932	
♠4		N	♠A105
♥KJ105		W	♥AQ9632
♦J1076		E	♦8532
♣KJ64		S	♣-
			♠J9863
			♥4
			♦AK4
			♣A875

At our table East opened 2♥, Anna doubled, West 3♥ and I bid 3♠, East 4♥ and Anna 4♠. I got the lead of the ♦5 which I won in my hand with the Queen. I played the ♠2 to the Jack which held. Small spade back to Queen and East took with their Ace and played the ♥A before returning a diamond putting me on the table with the King. Jack and a small trump back to the King, and then I play a low club on which East showed out. Winning with the ♣Ac I take the ♦A and play a small club which West takes with their King and plays back a diamond that I ruff in the dummy with the ♠6. I now return a club, West lets it go and I win with the 10, put up the Queen and her Jack falls on it and I win the last trick with the ♠8 in dummy. Mary and Kathleen made 4♥ as East West giving us a huge swing.

[Interesting learning point here. East wants a club ruff, so they can lead ♥2, as suit preference. West wins ♥K, noting partner has underled the Ace. Not hard to figure out why. A club return results in one down. Ed.]

That leads me to Mary and Kathleen and what makes good teammates? For me it's being able to trust them at the other table. We fully trust that they will bring back normal results and also that

if any of us end up in the wrong contract or not making a contract that was made at the other table, we don't criticise each other. They returned with excellent contracts, staying in part-score games while our opponents went for games and went down. They made 5♦ with two overtricks, while our opponents went down one in 3NT as Anna and I rattled off the first five tricks in spades. They also defeated contracts that we made at our table. What an end to our intermediate team days with them. We couldn't have imagined a better finale ourselves!



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Improve Your Game

Peter Pigot



Various ways to show your fit! - RAISES

In the 'ol days, the type and value of raises when we used the voice box rather than a bidding box, whether we intended it or not, were probably aided with a little voice inflection. As the language of bidding developed, various types of raises have found their way into the game. Old ones like the 1970s Swiss Convention of 4♣ and 4♦ over a Major comes to mind, showing a balanced hand, 4+ trumps and 13-15 HCP with a defined number of Aces... innovative in its time, but a poor idea these days as takes up too much space and shows far too good a hand with that all space for further exploration lost.

There is a long list these days and the following are seen being wheeled out with regularity.. Baron, Jacoby, Bergen, Fit Jumps, Splinters, 2/1 delayed raise, 3-card raises, Trump Raise, Courtesy Raises, Support Doubles/Redoubles, balanced 3NT - 3-card 13-15, Value raise, Inverted minor raises, Mixed raises, Constructive raises etc etc...

The more methods you have to show a fit, the better. The fact that you choose a specific raise from your repertoire over another one on your menu means that you don't have the whole other bunch of other hand types, and therefore partner is able to better pinpoint your hand and see if it fits with his for game or better.

Let's have a look at a couple of examples.

Hand 1 - Fit Jump

Dealer South. Vul N/S.

		♠5		
		♥K652		
		♦AJ762		
		♣963		
♠AK763	N		♠Q1098	
♥1094	W	E	♥3	
♦3			♦9854	
♣K1087	S		♣Q542	
		♠J42		
		♥AQJ87		
		♦KQ10		
		♣KQ10		

W	N	E	S
			1♥
1♠	3♦ ¹	1♠ ²	4NT
P	5♥	P	6♥
6♠	X	All Pass	

¹ Fit Jump... a minimum of Hxxx in trumps and KJxxx in the minor
² A trump raise... four of five trumps and a shortage... No defence against Hearts.

South knew that North held trump support and five good diamonds. With decent Hearts and lovely 'fillers' in diamonds South knew he had 10 tricks in the 'reds'. With the ♣A and a near certain spade singleton or better in the North hand, slam beckoned. N/S had method to show two keycards and a working void, so 5♥ was simply two keycards [no ♥Q] and no void. All good so far. What about E/W? In the bidding East made what I have called a trump raise... simply trump support.. very little defence and some play through shortage or the like. When N/S bid 6♥, West knew that his side had probably only one trick in defence against this, a spade trick, so reasonably opted to save in 6♠ which, as you can see, only goes for -300 on anything other than a trump lead. The main thing to notice is NEITHER side is guessing as both sets of 'fit raises' describe the N/S and E/W hands perfectly.

[Note - when South bids 6♥, some partnerships play a double by West is "I have one trick, how are you fixed?" If East has another defensive trick, he/she passes, but with no trick, saves and bids 6♠].

Hand 2 - Splinters

Dealer South. Vul N/S.

		♠K1054		
		♥A96		
		♦3		
		♣Q10632		
♠62	N		♠87	
♥83	W	E	♥J752	
♦AK1095			♦QJ42	
♣J985	S		♣K74	
		♠AQJ93		
		♥KQ104		
		♦876		
		♣A		

W	N	E	S
			1♠
P	4♦ ¹	P	4NT
P	5♥	P	6♠
All Pass			

¹ Splinter

South opened 1♠ and North made a splinter of 4♦ showing a singleton diamond and 8-11 HCP. Why such a weak hand, I hear you say? North is taking up space with his jump to the level of game so the secondary function of a splinter is to take space away from the opposition who still could have the values to bid game themselves. If South just so happens to have the perfect fit opposite a splinter, excellent.

So a direct raise to 4♠ by North is simply trumps, probably a shortage, and 0-7HCP. With trump support, 12+ and a shortage North would use 2NT [Jacoby], which also caters to all the four-card game going trump raises. In the above deal South has poor cards opposite

the shortage in dummy, an excellent sign as these can be ruffed. And all Souths' Hearts are working to 'fill' the idle suit lengths in dummy. When North shows two key cards with 5♥, South knows that North has the ♥A and the ♠K. Five spades, three hearts, two diamond ruffs and a club bring in eleven so the twelfth trick will hopefully come from making a fourth Heart via ruffing or a natural trick, or maybe a club if dummy has the King. All in all, an excellent contract.

In the play West led a trump and declarer won and played the ♣A and led a diamond. East won this and returned a trump, the suit breaking 2-2. When the ♣K dropped in three rounds [on the second ruff], declarer could claim.

Peter Pigot

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How To Lose 15 IMPs Without Really Trying

Editor

[In 1961, "How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" was both a best-selling book and a Broadway musical].

If you were to ask me for my idea of the top Women's pair in the world over the last decade, I would opt for Justyna Zmuda and Katarzyna Dufprat of Poland. It's subjective of course, but they are undeniably excellent. Here's a deal from the 2015 Venice Cup [World Championship] semi-final against China.



Katarzyna Dufprat

Dealer East. Vul E/W.

		♠98743		
		♥-		
		♦AQ1096		
		♣A94		
♠J105		N		♠AKQ6
♥AQ4		W	E	♥J9762
♦KJ6				♦842
♣KQJ3		S		♣5
		♠2		
		♥KQJ873		
		♦73		
		♣108762		

W	N	E	S
Wang	Zmuda	Huang	Dufprat
		P	2♥
2NT	3♣	X	All Pass

2♥ showed 5-5 hearts and a minor, weak. 3♣ was Pass or Correct. East doubled to show values and West converted for penalties. East led a top spade and switched to a trump.

Zmuda played low from dummy, and beat West's ♠Q with ♣A. She ruffed a spade, ruffed a heart and then ruffed another spade and heart. Now Zmuda ruffed her fourth spade. Wang over-ruffed and returned a low diamond. Zmuda successfully finessed ♦10 and now led her winning fifth spade. Huang could ruff low and cash a winning trump, as well as ♥A. But she then had to play a diamond, allowing Zmuda to finesse ♦Q. One down, and very well played indeed.

Minus 100 rated to be a good score, since E/W can make 3NT for 600. There are four spades, two clubs and two hearts. A diamond to the king or jack late on endplays North to concede a diamond for a ninth trick.

The score in the other room? 4♥X-4 for 1100 to N/S. 15 IMPs away. There ain't no justice!!

My Bridge Journey Continues

Nicola O'Dowd



"The more I learn, the more I realise how much I don't know."

Whether it's golfers investing in clubs, equestrians in horses, cyclists in bikes, or photographers in cameras, we all have our own way of committing to our passions. At least that's what I told my husband when I started building up my own collection of bridge equipment – a dealing machine, boards, cards, tables, bridgemates, bidding boxes, tablecloths, and a laptop.

I may not have a detailed plan, but one thing is clear: my love for playing bridge is at the heart of everything I do. While I'm deeply passionate about the game itself, I've also developed a keen interest in Tournament Directing. Although my primary focus will always be playing bridge, I'm eager to build the confidence and skills needed to manage both small and large events at my local clubs. Organizing and running bridge events excites me, and I'm excited to learn more in this area as I continue to grow.

I couldn't believe my luck when an opportunity came up at the Donegal Congress, one of the biggest-attended Congresses, to observe the TDs in action. I had entered the Donegal Congress Pairs with my mum, but when Maria Rusu chose to attend, she and Ena teamed up to play together. This gave me the chance to try something new.

I thought, why not take this opportunity and ask to watch and help Fearghal, Mairead, and Huey as TDs? To my surprise, they agreed, and I couldn't wait to learn what it truly takes to run an event properly.

I arrived Friday expecting to help with setting up tables, but the hotel staff, TDs and committee had already prepared the room down to every detail: seating plans, table numbers, bags, name sheets, hand records, and stacks of boards were all lined up for the weekend ahead. The level of preparation blew me away, and I knew I was in for an eye-opening experience.

When I offered my help, they told me I'd be thrown in at the deep end! I thought they were messing with me. I was told not only would I play in the open pairs with a new partner, but I'd also help manage the boards and setup.

I half-wondered if this was a clever way to keep me out of the way, but as it turned out, it was a perfect way to learn by doing.

I found my partner for the night a lovely woman from Clare, Kitty Quinn. I introduced myself, agreed our system and asked her to bear with me while I moved boards etc.

We had 14 tables, and I greeted everyone to make sure all were seated. Only then could the TD decide the movement, so it was crucial that no players were standing in the corner chatting. Then I was given the boards and instructed on the movement. It was one I had not seen before as an organiser - only as a player - so I was very interested.

As the night progressed, I took on various tasks—handling score adjustments, answering queries, monitoring for slow play, and ensuring things stayed on track. Huey kept a watchful eye, offering guidance when needed, which made me feel well-supported. At the end of the evening, Kitty and

I were thrilled to find ourselves winning East/West. Thank you Kitty!

Later, I gathered all the boards, returned them to the TDs, and helped set up for the next day's event. They told me I'd be running the Gala Pairs on Saturday.

On Saturday as people arrived all at once, I directed them to their seats, allowing the three TDs to focus on the seating plan and any last-minute adjustments for late arrivals, unexpected players, and those seeking a partner. With 26 tables in the Gala pairs, I was kept on my toes but loved every minute of it.

Throughout the event, I learned a tremendous amount from watching Huey handle rulings and resolve misunderstandings. The professionalism, patience, and expertise of our TDs were nothing short of inspiring. Their careful planning and attention to detail, along with the tireless work of the Donegal Congress Committee, ensured the smooth running of every aspect of the event. I'm so grateful to have had this opportunity to see it all in action. This experience has sparked a real interest in me. I truly admire the dedication our TDs and committees bring to the game, and I can't wait to learn more.

As I got to know more members and players in the surrounding clubs through bridge, I noticed that the numbers were steadily growing. As our clubs expand and table numbers increase, it's important that we feel confident in our rulings and decision-making.

Many clubs have a few members who have completed the basic TD course, but as you know, I'm keen on taking the next step with a more advanced one. Some of my new bridge friends, who help

run tournaments in their own clubs, were also interested in this opportunity.

I reached out to Dermot O'Brien to inquire about it, and after discussing it with Fearghal O'Boyle, they agreed to arrange a course—provided I could gather enough interest.

On November 30th, 26 of us attended the Advanced TD course, run by Fearghal O'Boyle. It was an excellent experience; we all learned so much, and it really opened our eyes to the depth of the role. A big thank you to Dermot O'Brien for organising it, and to Fearghal for delivering such an informative course."

"Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success." - Unknown

When I first joined both of our local clubs two years ago, the Captain at the time said I brought a "breath of fresh air." My eagerness to learn and help, along with the energy I brought as a new member, was exactly what the clubs needed.

This experience has highlighted for me the importance of encouraging novices and new members in all clubs across the country. Welcoming them, making them feel valued, and creating an environment they want to return to is vital for the future of our clubs.

Regardless of whether a club is big or small, operates from its own premises or rented spaces, there are essential jobs that must be done: setting up the tables, preparing the room, organising scores, collecting table money, giving out prizes, and managing correspondence.

Many clubs are fortunate to have dedicated committees who handle these responsibilities efficiently. However, in some clubs, it often falls to the same individuals to carry the load, sometimes without much help or gratitude.

What I've seen firsthand is that when people realise the work isn't all on them, but shared, they're happy to help and always willing and offering to pitch in.

Clubs and their games exist for the members, and when everyone pitches in, the effort becomes a shared one. This ensures no single person feels overwhelmed, and it creates an atmosphere where everyone can enjoy themselves. Whether playing, helping organise, or cheering others on, everyone's efforts matter. It's this sense of teamwork and mutual effort that truly makes a club thrive.

Most bridge clubs in Ireland have a tradition of hosting charity nights, and Trim Bridge Club is no exception. These events started long before my time, but I've been helping to coordinate them for the past couple of years. Last year, I took the lead in organising the charity bridge night and was delighted to host 40.5 tables. Building on that experience, this year, I'm excited to introduce something new.

On Sunday, August 24th, 2025, I'll be hosting the One Day Bridge Bash—along with Open Single Sessions there will be a two-session tournament designed to bring bridge players together for a fun and competitive day.



The One Day Bridge Bash is already featured in the CBAI Calendar, Trim is the perfect spot for players near and far to come together and enjoy a great day out. Less than an hour from Dublin. Whether you're an experienced player, beginner or just looking to try something new, don't miss the chance to be part of something exciting—come play, meet new friends, and make lasting memories!" Your participation will make a real difference and help create a truly special day for everyone involved.

The Mid Leinster Region's Cunningham League is an annual highlight, and after not having time to participate last year—and taking part online the year before—I was eager to join in this year. Back in the 22/23 season,

Maria Rusu, Dara Voyles, Paul Dunne, and I scraped a win by a single point as A2s on RealBridge, but this year, the league is back in person, bringing all the energy and excitement that makes team events so much fun.

Team events are different from regular games. It's not just about your score—you're part of a team, and every hand feels more important. You share the highs, the lows, and the excitement with your teammates. It's about working together, trusting each other, and celebrating those moments when it all comes together. Dara Voyles, Paul Dunne, Declan Byrne and I made up the team for this year's league.

One hand, in particular, delivered an exciting swing.

Board 2. Dealer East. Vul N/S.

		♠T3		
		♥AQ842		
		♦5		
		♣AQ763		
♠87652	N		♠KJ94	
♥73	W	E	♥-	
♦A96			♦KQJT8743	
♣K95	S		♣T	
		♠AQ		
		♥KJT965		
		♦2		
		♣J842		

Sitting South, I overcalled 3♥ over a preemptive 3♦, opening. When West responded with 4♦, my partner showed no fear, bidding 4NT. East pushed on to 5♦, but using RKCB, I replied 5♥, showing two key cards without the Queen of trumps. Partner confidently bid 6♥, and to my relief, I made it!

The real twist, though, came at our teammates' table. There, the bidding went 1♦(1♥)1♠(4♥)4♠(X) Ap. With an ♠A lead, Dara managed to make the 4♠ doubled contract!

Moments like these remind us why we love the game of bridge—the challenge, the drama, and the joy of those unforgettable hands that keep us coming back for more, each hand a new adventure, each match a shared journey.

Vintage Mesbur-FitzGibbon

Editor



Here's a hand from the 2015 D'Orsi Bowl [Seniors World Teams Championships] quarterfinal in Chennai, where Ireland faced USA.

Dealer West. Vul All.

♠ Q653		N	♠ AK108
♥ A1054		W	♥ 6
♦ AK97		E	♦ Q52
♣ 5		S	♣ A10864
			♠ 74
			♥ KQJ873
			♦ J10
			♣ KJ9

W Adam	N	E Nick	S
1♦	P	1♠	2♥
4♣	P	4♥	P
4NT	P	5♦	P
5NT	P	6♣	P
6♦	P	7♦	
7♠	All Pass		

4♣ was a splinter, showing shortage and agreeing spades. After Nick showed his heart control, Adam twice used Blackwood before making a grand slam try with 6♦. Nick co-operated with 7♦, showing Qxx and suggesting that as a final contract if Adam had five diamonds. Adam converted to 7♠ and South led ♥K.

Nick won ♥A, cashed ♣A and ruffed a club. He came to hand with ♦Q and ruffed another club. He ruffed a heart to hand and led a fourth round of clubs. South ruffed in with the 7 and Nick over-ruffed with the Queen. He now led a trump and finessed the ten!! 7♠ made.

South was counted for [probably] six hearts and three clubs and a diamond. He therefore had three unknown cards. North had shown up with four clubs and two hearts and a diamond, and thus had six unknown cards. The odds therefore favoured North having more spades than South, and Nick made that insight count.

I ran this narrative by Nick to make sure it was accurate. The response was rapid and to the point. "The details are right. We were down 20imps or so in the later stages of the match, hence our rather optimistic bidding. It was a straightforward line of play because there was only one way it could make, needing that specific layout of the cards. So it didn't take me long."

Aw shucks, it was nothing!



Adam Mesbur and Nick FitzGibbon (out of view) declaring 7♠ at 2015 D'Orsi Bowl

When I was a Boye!

New column from the 2007 Bermuda Bowl winner

Boye's bridge

By **BOYE BROGELAND**, FLEKKEFJORD NORWAY



CASINO COPENHAGEN, the last day of the Hecht Cup with 16 invited pairs. Silla (Erik Sælensminde) and I are battling for victory against the hope of the home crowd, Askgaard and Bjarnarson. The pot contains exactly 6,500 Euro.

At the start of the four matches of this last day we are in the lead by three VPs, ahead of Askgaard-Bjarnarson with the pairing of the Swedish Björn Fallenius and Canadian Geoff Hampson eight VPs adrift. However, both pairs soon overtake us as we are neither given any presents by the Danes Morten Bilde & Jorgen Hansen nor the Bulgarians Dessy Popova & Vasil Batov.

In order to stay in touch with the leaders we now need a big victory. We manage to thrash the Dutch pairing of Jan Jansma & Louk Verhees 67-13. The results in the other matches are also in our favour so before the last match we are in with a chance of winning as the leaderboard shows:

- 1 Michael Askgaard & Gregers Bjarnarson 670
- 2 Boye Brogeland-Erik Sælensminde 649
- 3 Geoff Hampson-Björn Fallenius 634

The format is 10-board IMPs against the datum (which is the average of the six results after removing the highest and lowest scores). The IMPs are converted to Victory points on a scale from 41-39 for a difference of 1 IMP and a win of 80-0 for > 40 IMPs, not easy to achieve in this company.

Our opponents are two burly Hungarian guys, Gabor Winkler and Peter Lakatos.

Although they are lying in the bottom half the table, without chance of any prize money, they appear gentle and jovial.

Silla and I get off to a good start when I, second at unfavourable, decide not to overcall the one diamond opening holding

♠ 74 ♥ - ♦ KQJ62 ♣ AJ10876

Most of the field bid 2♣, which means that there is no stopping partner from driving to 4♥. Instead of paying out anywhere from 100 to 800 we collect 100 which translates to 8imps.

Next it is Silla's turn to restrain himself when he passes second in hand at favourable holding:

♠ J832 ♥ KQJ9 ♦ 752 ♣ A4.

I hold

♠ Q765 ♥ 62 ♦ KQ ♣ KQJ83

and open 1♣ 4th in hand. Left hand opponent has a singleton club and doubles. That is all the help we need to stop in 2♠. We are the only pair our way with a plus score which adds another 5imps. Soon after we misdefend 1♥ and we lose 4imps.

Askgaard - Bjarnarson are perhaps letting their nerves affect them as they are heading for a loss against their lowly placed countrymen. Björn Fallenius and Geoff Hampson don't have a card to frighten anyone either and they are overtaken by the two Nordic pairs. Is it going to be a Danish or a Norwegian victory? It is neck and neck when I pick up these cards for the third last hand (2nd seat, favourable):

♠ QJ862 ♥ AK8 ♦ K ♣ AJ106

East passes. I see no reason not to open 1♠. West comes in with 2♥ at unfavourable, partner supports spades, and East passes again. Almost any hand partner might hold will give play for

game so without giving anything away I jump straight to 4♠ and all pass.

West quickly leads the ♦3 (3/5th). Dummy is short on high cards but the hands fit quite well.

♠ K75
♥ 43
♦ 982
♣ Q9842

♠ QJ862
♥ AK8
♦ K
♣ AJ106

I dream for a moment that West has underled the Ace but East wins. He takes his time before switching to the HJ. Therefore, I don't believe the Jack is singleton and I'm pretty sure the hearts are divided 6-2. East's hesitation is perhaps due to him having four spades and he's considering a forcing game versus playing partner for ♥AQ and a trump promotion. I play the ace but have still not decided which spade to play.

My instincts tell me that West has the singleton ace but in that case it will not help me at all to play a small spade as West can force me in diamonds. Even if he returns a heart there is a danger if a loser in each suit. If, however, I can avoid a club loser it is unlikely to matter whether I lose one or two spade tricks.

If spades are 3-2 I'll use up my only entry to dummy by playing a spade to the King. Then I'll have to guess how to handle the clubs. Top players are averse to guessing – we collect as much information as we can and delay critical decision for as long as possible.

I play a slightly deceptive Jack of spades which might tempt West to duck holding Ace doubleton. West immediately plays the Ace – I knew I should have played a small spade – and continues with the ♥9, five from East and my King. Now it looks like two spade losers and one diamond. I'm planning to play a spade to the King followed by the ♣Q. Should East play an unconcerned small card I intend to play for West to have started with 1-6-5-1 including a stiff ♠K.

West follows to the spade! Now I can guard against a singleton ♣K with West by drawing trumps and playing the ♣A, don't you agree?

I draw a line under my analysis. I'm pleased. No more questions. No more counting. If we don't make a mess of hands 149 and 150, we may well repeat our victory in the Hecht Cup from two years ago. This should also silence our critics who say we don't play enough together and that our automatic selection for the national team should be a thing of the past.

I feel my face flushing when West throws a red card on the ♣A. Of course he is void. It's only in theory that he has ♠ A75 ♥ Q109762 ♦ Q103 ♣ K.

In the real world he is void and probably 6-5 in the reds. Why else would he overcall at unfavourable opposite a passed partner? Why does he have such an easy lead of the ♦3? Why does he play the ♠A on the first round? Why does he return his smallest of three equal hearts (Suit preference in case partner gets the lead)? Wake up man! East has no problem following low to ace and another two clubs and I'm left hanging with a heart loser to go with one in each of the other suits. I shake my head and apologise to partner for my line of play. That will have cost us the victory and a good few Euro.

Even when I was in hand after three rounds of trumps I could have made. Do you see how?

I just need to play any club other than the Ace, and overtake in dummy. Whatever East does I can pick up the club suit for four or five tricks.

This was the complete deal:

♠ K 7 5	
♥ 4 3	
♦ 9 8 2	
♣ Q 9 8 4 2	
♠ A 4	♠ 10 9 3
♥ Q 10 9 7 6 2	♥ J 5
♦ Q 10 5 4 3	♦ A J 7 6
♣ —	♣ K 7 5 3
♠ Q J 8 6 2	
♥ A K 8	
♦ K	
♣ A J 10 6	

We finish 9 VPs behind Askgaard - Gregersen. The records show that going off in 4♠ cost us 12 VPs. That hurts. Particularly as this hand came so close to the end and because I neglected to take notice of obvious clues in the bidding and play.

A mis-scoring is soon announced when instead of 4♠ making ten, the score had been entered as 4♣ making one trick! The new Bridgemates had caused a few hiccups. After the correction we are now 11 VP behind the Danes.

How would the score have been affected if I'd made the contract? The 'datum' would have been higher and

the swing smaller than originally. I don't have the stomach to work it out and ask the tournament organizer Jens Ulrik Fougst if he'll work out the hypothetical final scores. It turns out, luckily, that we would have still have finished 3 VP behind the Danes. En route to the banquet in the penthouse apartment of Peter Hecht-Johansen I feel much better.

Tip: From the bidding and defenders' play you can gather important pieces to solve the puzzle. Try to put yourself in their shoes and analyse what they're doing. They're probably doing much the same as you would have done! ♦♦

The Last Trump by Banjo Paterson

"You led the trump," the old man said
with fury in his eye,
"And yet you hope my girl to wed!
Young man! your hopes of love are fled
'Twere better she should die!"

"My sweet young daughter sitting there,
So innocent and plump!
You don't suppose that she would care
To wed an outlawed man who'd dare
to lead the thirteenth trump!"

"If you had drawn their leading spade
it meant a certain win!
But no! By Pembroke's mighty shade
The 13th trump you went and played
And let their diamonds in!"

"My girl, return at my command
his presents in a lump!
Return his ring! For understand,
No man is fit to hold your hand
who leads a thirteenth trump!"

"But hold! Give every man his due
and every dog his day.
Speak up and say what made you do
This dreadful thing – that is, if you
have anything to say!"

He spoke. "I meant at first," said he,
"To give their spades a bump,
Or lead the hearts; but then you see
I thought against us there might be,
Perhaps, a fourteenth trump!"

They buried him at dawn of day,
Beside a ruined stump;
And there he sleeps the hours away
And waits for Gabriel to play
The last – the fourteenth trump.

Peggy Bayer / Junior Camrose 2025

Luca Crone



This year our teams travelled to Newport for the Peggy Bayer and Junior Camrose Trophies. They were as follows:

Junior Camrose:

Luca Crone & Matthew O'Farrell, Denise Walsh, Leah Finnegan & Isabel Burke

NPC: Martin Brady

Peggy Bayer:

David Hoyne & Bence Orosz, Eve Connell & Marc Campbell

NPC: Margaret Murphy

Martin was naively hopeful of the chance to bring the trophy home as Matthew was on a hot streak, having won the Holmes Wilson the weekend before. On Friday, the JC team started well with a double 20-0 against NI and WBU. Then it was England on Saturday morning. It was a heavy loss despite Luca and Matthew bidding two cold grands, missed by the other table. At this stage, England was comfortably ahead, and a miracle would be needed to stop them. One lesson that has been drilled into me is to never give up as declarer. No matter if the dummy comes down with a ridiculous hand, you must try to make your contract. This hand was a prime example of that. 6♦ is cold, but assume you had an unimpressive auction to land in 5♣, doubled by W. It is the first round of the event. You are jet lagged, having missed a night's sleep while travelling back from the US, nonetheless now you have to make it on the ♥K lead from E.

♠ K63
♥ A7
♦ 973
♣ AKJ64

♠ AQ5
♥ 82
♦ AKQ652
♣ 82

It seems the X helps you. You now gather trying to finesse a C and playing for C 3-3 will not be best. They sound like they are splitting pretty badly. You can only deal with 5-1 at worst so try to play for that. You play a C to the J, which holds. You eventually get down to this position, having guessed W hand exactly to remove their exit cards. You have not lost any tricks. The hand is now an open book, can you see the 100% line?



Well done if you did. You need to exit with a H. On the H return from E, W does best to discard his S. You then ruff and endplay W by forcing them to ruff a D. He then has to return a C from Q5 into your A6. Perfection! The cherry on top is you find you gained on the board as the other table was in 3NT+3

Saturday ended with speedball, where all hell broke loose. After seeing his team going wild all weekend, Martin was able to have his own fun with a number of psyches. Thankfully, Isabel, as his

partner, was always there to catch his fall and bid 3NT. Penalties were handed out for slow play country by country. It is no surprise England came out as the biggest perpetrators.

The last glimmer of hope for a win was to dominate in the second match against England and for them to lose another match or two.

The bidding has gone as follows:

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♦	X	P
1♥	?		

Hopefully you agree with 1♦. The opponents are playing transfers over 1♣ meaning X showed hearts and 1♥ showed a weak NT(12-14) without four hearts.

You are North NV vs V with the following hand, what do you bid now?

♠ KJ54
♥ 93
♦ AKQ652
♣ 2

Those who bid 1♠ are off to a good start. Partner raises to 2♠, what now?

You don't need much to make game with your solid Ds. AxxxS might be enough, given the ♠Q rates to be with the opening bidder. You might invite via 3♦, showing long diamonds and a game try, or blast 4♠. If you did either of these things, you flattened the board and are on the way to beating England; well done!

Alas, this match turned out to be a slaughtering as well. In the end, both Irish teams finished just behind England but convincingly ahead of the rest of the field. We are very grateful to Northern Ireland for lending us Marc for the weekend, we only wish we could keep him.

National Championships

Gordon Lessells



The Westgrove Hotel Clane hosted the Men's and Women's events in January. Although the numbers did not match the record numbers in 2020, 76 Women's Pairs, 53 Men's Pairs, 55 Women's Teams and 30 Men's Teams kept the tournament directors busy over the two days.

In the Women's Pairs, quite a few pairs who played in 2020 also played this year. The biggest improvement was recorded by Ailbhe Mealy and Breda Kelly - from a disappointing 96th in 2020 to champions in 2025! Other notable improvers were Mairead Haugh and Roisin de Jong who moved from 43rd to 7th and Mary Brady and Mary Timoney [50th to 10th]. Ann O'Connell and Valerie Burke-Moran made a more modest move from 7th to 4th. Keep going, the top spot is there for you! Melissa Brady and Anna Shalvey were the best of the newcomers ending up as runners-up after leading the first session.

In the Men's Pairs, it was quite a different story. Only three pairs in the top 10 in 2020 had survived as partnerships and the only pair to have a comparable performance was Gay Keaveney and Martin Jones [2nd in 2020 and 4th in 2025]. The big improvers were Tony Ward and Bill O'Hanlon who came from nowhere in 2020 to second place in 2025. Two players with different partners did emerge in the top spots. Conor Boland and Peter Goodman stayed in the top five with their new partners, viz Tom Hanlon and Dan MacIntosh respectively. It was all to play for in the last round as these two pairs played each other with Tom and Conor just doing enough to win the trophy.

With Bridgewebs one can find out lots of information about events. For example, you can find out the average points you had in a session. In the first session of the Men's Pairs, Bill O'Hanlon and Tony Ward averaged 11.3 points per hand, with Tom Hanlon and

Conor Boland averaged 9.1 points per hand. With aggregate scoring Tom and Conor scored -2000 while Bill and Tony scored 6,200. It is probably advantageous to have the cards but you can still do well without them.

In Clane, the same boards were played by the Women as the Men. I decided to see how the two populations compared on the Slam Hands.

In the first session of the teams, there were six reasonable slams [hands appear below]:

Board 2 was the hardest to bid. 6♦ was bid by Mairead Haugh and Roisin de Jong who ended in the winners' enclosure in the Women's. Tom Gilligan and Dave Terry and Bill O'Hanlon and Tony Ward (using Precision) were the successful pairs in the Men's.

On Board 8, 6♥ was bid 14 times in the women's and 12 in the men's, two of which were unsuccessful.

On board 9, 23 pairs in the Women's bid a small slam and two bid 7♠ while in the Men's the comparable numbers were 13 and one.

On board 14, 39 pairs in the Women's were successful at the 6-level and five unsuccessful. In the Men's 24 were successful at the 6-level and three unsuccessful at the 7-level.

On board 15, three men made 6♦ and one went down. None of the ladies ventured to the 6-level.

On board 17, eight Ladies made 6♥ as did nine Men.

Let us look at these hands.

Board 2:

North	
♠	J32
♥	A10954
♦	J4
♣	AQ2

South	
♠	AK4
♥	7
♦	KQ109863
♣	KJ

The bidding by Mairead and Roisin was: 1♦-1♥-3♦-4NT-6♦. As you see there is no problem in the play. 4NT was quantitative.

Board 8:

West	
♠	AQJ
♥	AJ83
♦	Q2
♣	J1098

East	
♠	8
♥	KQ1064
♦	K953
♣	AQ2

West is the opener and it should not take long to find a heart fit. East should smell a slam once West opens and they have established a heart fit. The ♠K is with south which is fortunate for those playing in NT.

The key to the hand is that North has to have the ♣K for 6♥ to make, so you must place that card with him/her. Once that has been determined the hand is straightforward. Nearly everyone made 12 tricks.

Board 9:

West	
♠	K1086
♥	J6
♦	AQ9
♣	AK74

East	
♠	A
♥	AK97
♦	K8432
♣	J106

The intrepid pairs to bid a grand on this hand were Josephine Brady and Frances Daly, Linda O’Riordan and Kay Clement (7NT) in the Women’s and Michael Gowie and Philip Robinson in the Men’s.

Board 14:

		♠ Q8		
		♥ KJ104		
		♦ 109872		
		♣ 84		
♠ A73	N	♠ K2		
♥ 9	W	♥ AQ86	E	
♦ AJ654		♦ KQ3		
♣ QJ105	S	♣ AK93		
		♠ J109654		
		♥ 7532		
		♦ -		
		♣ 762		

A slam was bid at most tables. The most popular contract was 6NT. When the diamonds don’t break you need to finesse the heart and North gets squeezed in hearts and diamonds for a 13th trick. The pair that bid 7♦ were unfortunate as 6NT and 7NT can be made but not 7♦. 7♣ by East is on but not by West [diamond ruff].

Board 15:

North	
♠ AK	
♥ 9	
♦ AJ8732	
♣ K962	
South	
♠ 65	
♥ AQ8754	
♦ Q5	
♣ A83	

This was the last board of our match and we had plenty of spare time. South opened 1♥ and West bid 2♠. I doubled as North and East bid 4♠. South passed and West passed. When I asked someone what should you now bid, I was given the reply “I would not be in that situation as I would have bid 3♦ (forcing) on the previous round instead of double”. The simplest thing now was to double 4♠.

However, I felt we were being kept out of a slam. After a bit of thought I decided to bid 6♦. If partner’s hearts had been good enough he could have bid 5♥ or if he had clubs or diamonds he might have bid that suit. Thus 6♦ seemed the best spot. I was not overjoyed when dummy went down but I recalled a book by Erik Jannersten called *The Only Chance* (definitely worth a read). It was clear that the heart finesse had to work and then there was the chance of establishing a long heart. There was no way to avoid a diamond loser and I needed the ♦K to be with East. Eventually, I worked out my action plan, thankful that I had the time to spare after playing the other hands promptly.

I won the club lead in hand and finessed the heart. ♥A, ruff a heart, West showing out. Now a diamond to the Q. East took the K and returned a spade. Now I have time to ruff out the last heart, draw trumps and claim my 12 tricks. West’s kind words of “well played” were much appreciated.

Board 17:

The problem is which slam to bid. As it turned out, 6♥ makes but 6♠ has no chance on a diamond lead [North has ♥Q102 and four spades].

West	East
♠ AKQJ2	♠ 84
♥ AK73	♥ J9864
♦ A943	♦ 107
♣ -	♣ AJ62

The winners of the Women’s Teams were Mairead Haugh, Roisin de Jong, Anna Carr and Margaret Farren, the slam on board 2 getting them on their way.

The Men’s Teams was won by Peter Goodman, Dan MacIntosh, Padraig and Micheál O’Briain after Dan and Peter bid and made 7♠ on board 12 of the second session against the runners-up. Two other pairs bid 7♠ but were unsuccessful.

Here is that crucial hand.

Board 12:

North	
♠ AKQJ	
♥ 74	
♦ 10	
♣ AQJ643	
South	
♠ 109532	
♥ A96	
♦ A973	
♣ 7	

The ruffing finesse in clubs does the trick [East has K985].

What is the lesson from these hands? At Teams, look after the slams and the victory points will look after themselves.



Elaine O’Kelly & Ailbhe Mealy winners of the Jackson Cup (Women’s Pairs) 2025.



Padraig O’Briain, Dan McIntosh, Peter Goodman and Micheal O’Briain, Geraldine Trophy (Men’s Teams) 2025.

Making It Real

Shireen Mohandes

Co-founder Shireen Mohandes tells us how RealBridge went from lockdown project to platform used all around the world by national event organisers, clubs, and teachers.

Lockdown project

In April 2020, Graham Hazel, an English bridge player and software developer, found himself, like many of us, at home with children to teach and a day job, but nevertheless some time on his hands. Like others, he was trying to play more online bridge, and finding that it was OK, but not quite like the real thing. What do you do when the software doesn't do what you want? If you're Graham, you write your own.

Two months later, he had the core of what you see at the table today – an interface for playing bridge, with built-in audio and video. He showed it to me, and I went "Wow!"

A long hot summer

There was still a huge amount to do. We spent the summer designing and building the rest of the system, testing exhaustively on different types of hardware, and spreading the word about the new platform. When everyone else was gingerly edging out of lockdown, we were still at home, staring at a screen with 12 RealBridge windows open, trying to test some new feature or track down a problem.

We wanted a platform that was good for everybody, so we consulted everybody: players, tournament directors, teachers, club owners, and major-event organisers. Everybody had ideas: mostly good; some quite challenging; some rather impractical.

Many hands make light work, especially when you're testing a multi-person game. A group of about 30 people from around the world rallied round and joined in the testing

sessions. We are eternally grateful to them for all their help.

Clubs in England, Norway, Germany, Australia and India started running their games on the beta version. National bridge organisations got interested, starting with the English Bridge Union and the US Bridge Federation. Both of these organisations were very supportive, and started running events on RealBridge in the early autumn.

Launch

In November 2020 we launched the platform commercially. By now we had a solid core of clubs and teachers using the platform. It had already been used successfully for two national events and one international one (that was a nervous moment!).

The first few years

Four years on, and RealBridge has been adopted by more than 500 clubs and teachers, about 35 national bridge organisations, several zonal organisations, and the WBF. In Ireland there are a number of clubs and teachers that use RealBridge regularly, and teams from Ireland often take part in RealBridge-hosted international events.

On the technological side, we've added lots of useful functionality for teaching, high-level bridge, everyday club bridge, and vugraph.

We want everybody in the world to be able to play on RealBridge, and we want every event played on RealBridge to be a success. As adoption of our platform has grown, that has turned out to be quite a big commitment – if someone has a problem or question in the middle of a bridge session, they need help



Shireen Mohandes Co-founder of RealBridge

now, not tomorrow. We used to tell people "If we're awake we'll answer the phone", but that has morphed into just "We'll answer the phone."

Not all of what we do is commercial – all of our team are bridge players, and we care about bridge. We use our platform to run free international junior events, and organise games that bring together people from different countries (including the famous or infamous "Up Over versus Down Under" competition, where players from the UK and Ireland took on players from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in an 800-player extravaganza). If someone runs an online fundraiser for junior bridge, you'll probably find us in the background helping out with the technical side.

We also sponsor other bridge technology developers, by helping them with IT resources and financial support.

What's next?

Online bridge will never replace face-to-face bridge, but it doesn't have to be a poor relation. We're determined that RealBridge will be a big part of the future of bridge. RealBridge is there for a small club to run their 3-table pairs without having to go out in the cold, for the WBF to run championship events with teams from all over the world, and for everything in between.

We are continuously working on new features. It's hard to write about these without sounding like a sales brochure, so I won't.

Who has helped to shape RealBridge?

We have had huge amounts of advice and support from players, directors and organisers at every level.

Amongst NBOs and major event-organisers, our greatest helpers have been the EBU led by Gordon Rainsford, Jan Martel at the USBF, Marianne Harding from Norway, Pierre Schmidt from France, Sukrit Vijayakar's Bridge from Home team in India, Sus Vang from Denmark, Linnea Edlund from Sweden, Gary Barwick and Matt McManus in Australia, and many others.

It's never too late

Finally, here's our favourite RealBridge story, from the TV news in the UK: In 2021 Bessie Hyder, from the North of England, had her 106th birthday. She celebrated in style, by eating some cake, then joining a game on RealBridge.

[Editor's Footnote: Shireen is too modest to mention that the RealBridge team of herself, Andy Hazel, and Graham Bowles recently won the International Bridge Press Association's "Bridge Personalities of the Year" Award, for their services to bridge. CEO Dermot O'Brien reports that the CBAI has used RealBridge quite a bit, now mainly for the transmission of the home international series events, and that the RealBridge team has been conscientious and helpful to a fault. They are clearly motivated by a love of bridge more than anything else and have introduced enhancements and added services both at their own initiative and in response to requests, and have kept their charges at a level that seems extraordinarily low to all who use their platform. Very well done to the RealBridge team!]

Bric-A-Brock

Sally Brock



This was an interesting deal from the qualifying stages of the round robin in the world championships.

Dealer North. Vul All.

		♠J73		
		♥9		
		♦KQ652		
		♣QJ104		
♠K95		N		♠Q6
♥AJ1053	W		E	♥KQ8742
♦987				♦AJ
♣72		S		♣K93
		♠A10862		
		♥6		
		♦1043		
		♣A865		

In our match, against Argentina, East/West bid to 4♥. After a diamond lead this went the obvious one down. At the other table everybody was feeling much more optimistic and North/South bid 4♠ over 4♥, and East/West took the push to 5♥. After the ♠A lead and rather panicky ♣A switch this contract made for a 13IMP swing to us.

In the top-of-the table battle between Norway and Switzerland, at one table the bidding was quiet when East chose to open a strong no-trump. West showed hearts, East broke the transfer and West pressed on to game. This was the same one down as at our table.

The bidding at the other table was somewhat different, however:

W	N	E	S
	P	1♥	1♠
4♥	4♠	P	P
X	All Pass		

West led the ♣7, covered in dummy and ducked. Declarer played a spade to his ten and the king. West led another club, again won in dummy, drew trumps, crossed back to hand with a club and led a diamond. When the ♦J dropped he had ten tricks. Can you see where the defence went wrong? It looks natural for East to play on the first club, but actually playing the king works much better. Declarer needs to get to dummy to play trumps and whichever minor he plays on allows the defenders to manoeuvre a ruff.

Simultaneous Pairs

Anna and Mark Newton



[Editor's Note: You may well have played in one of the Irish Simultaneous Pairs ("Sims") events. The CBAI runs three weeks of Sims every season – one to raise funds for the CBAI itself (in the first week in March), one to raise funds for the IBU (in the first week in November), and a more recent one, as a participant in the Celtic Nations Sims, to raise funds for junior bridge, which has moved around the calendar a bit (it's in mid-May this year). Participating clubs and members generally report that they are great fun, and a useful learning tool as each set of hands is accompanied by a commentary prepared by an expert ... including every now and again your esteemed Editor himself! We thought our readers might be interested in reading about how the Simultaneous Pairs is run, so we asked Anna Newton of ECats, the firm that manages our Sims for us, to write a brief article on the process and how it has developed over the years. Last season 8,884 people played in the CBAI Sims, 7,378 in the IBU Sims, and 2,504 in the Celtic Sims, so if you won a prize, you must have played very well! If your club doesn't play in the Sims, but would like to, just contact Head Office on (01) 4929666 and it can be arranged.]

Do you play in the any of the Simultaneous Pairs managed by ECats? Ever wondered about when it all began and how it works? Well, let's see if we can enlighten you a bit!

Mark Newton, now my husband, who was the IT manager for the World Bridge Federation (WBF) at the time, was talking to the WBF President about Simultaneous Pairs back in 1999. At that time, the Sims

competitions weren't scored across the field, but the results were merged according to the percentages gained at the club, which wasn't ideal to say the least. Along with this, the World Wide Pairs was taking up to three months to score and produce a result. Mark said he felt he could design software that would take results from the club as files and re-score across the field within a very short time of each club uploading, and I agreed to help him with the project. "Off you go then" said the President!

Not being a bridge player Mark, after some consideration, decided to treat the problem like a database program, which meant that the software did not need to know anything about which movements had been used, thus giving it a degree of flexibility when rescoring a variety of club results all playing different movements. Several months of code writing and development ensued – and remember this is just over 25 years ago when programming was considerably more complicated. It has to be said that a lot of grey hairs were grown in that period, but with the help of various bridge experts some of whom are no longer with us, clarifying the maths – and myths – of bridge scoring, the end result was a usable program, version 1 shall we say, of the scoring program.

It required the club to use our own club scorer program on their machine, and to have someone to upload the files through the internet. All this being very new to the clubs it caused a lot of head-scratching at first among the club organisers with some saying it would never take off. But the players loved it as they found they could see their results online as soon as the club sent them

in – both the local result and the re-scored overall result.

The first event ever scored this way was the Portland Pairs, a mixed pairs, multi-session event run by the British Bridge League. It was a truly scary moment as we went live. At that time we lived in an old Railway Station in Suffolk, living on Platform 1 and working on Platform 2, and our servers were actually in our office, with a (very expensive) leased line connecting them to the rest of the world – a connection with a speed of a massive 256kps. Nowadays we feel hard done by with less than 10MBs and even in our current office in remote Orkney we have 900MBs fibre to the building!

As time went by the system developed and became more sophisticated but still with the basic premise of scoring the local result and displaying that and scoring over the whole field. Many people wondered why there was a difference and so we developed web pages to explain how all the numbers work. (The answer of course is that an "outlier" result within the club, good or bad, may become less so as it is scored across the entire field.) Our servers were moved out of our office, initially to a machine room in Canary Wharf and from there to special air-conditioned server rooms in Huntingdon where they currently reside. We never went with the "server 1", "server2" naming convention and each one of them has a name, either the name of a cat (well the company is called ECats after all) or a character from Winnie the Pooh – though I admit I can't remember why we decided on that!

15 years after it all began we made the decision to uproot from Suffolk and move to our "rock in the

North Sea”, Orkney. The advance of internet communication simply meant that for the first few years we had to manage with a satellite dish, then 4G for a while and now – even here – we have fibre to the premises and a 1G connection. Amazing. Our servers and all the scoring are still in Huntingdon – Microsoft tried a server farm under the sea here to keep their servers cool, but we are more than happy with the Huntingdon solution and go to visit the office there whenever we head south for family gatherings.

Since we started scoring Bridge events in this way, many other organisations have copied us in various ways. So now we run quite a number of Simultaneous Pairs for different organisations – the IBU, the CBAI, the NIBU, the SBU, and WBU, as well as some local county events. We also have our charity Sims events – there are basically four of those each year, starting in January with one to raise funds for UNICEF, and ending with our Children in Need event in November. Over the years we have raised over £1,400,000 for Children in Need, plus considerable sums for other charities through the years.

Each event starts with dealing some boards using a random deal generator – we typically deal about three times as many sets as are needed for each event and these are sent to the organisers to decide which sets to use and generate commentaries for. In accordance with the Laws of Duplicate Bridge we never change a hand or swap hands around, and nor do the organisers – they are all just straight computer deals as they come from the machine. Once the organisers select the sets they want, we create a Word file for them to type their words of wisdom into. Ultimately, this is typeset into a format that can be read online or printed out as A4 pages, including the suit symbols. The deal files are provided by the organisers to the participating clubs so that they can set up the boards and our website at www.ecatsbridge.com

ecatsbridge.com is set up to show the results. The commentary, and other files are put in a hidden directory on a separate computer unconnected to the internet, ready to be uploaded at the same time that the frequencies go live.

The clubs can now email their results files in both the original ECats format of the c, r, e and p test files or alternatively in the designated standard XML format after play. Our system gets the email, reads it (the system reads it – we do not!) and drops the files into the scoring engine which churns through them and generates the end result, displaying the “local” ranking which will be the same as on the club’s own website, plus the overall ranking when it has been rescored over the whole field. The rescore happens each time a new club sends in their results, so for a while it’s constantly changing. This explains why you may see yourself in the leading position in the country at one point, but then down the ranks a bit as new clubs upload their scores. At 10 p.m. in the evening on the set day the frequencies go live, the commentary is uploaded to the website and the individual scorecards are displayed for each participating pair. The scorecards show their local score, board by board, together with the overall score on each board which is, of course, different as the local score is just versus the other pairs participating at the club whereas the overall score shows the pairs’ achievements against the entire field which may be well over 1,000 other pairs instead of the 10 or 20 locally. Quite a difference! Of

course there are some unexpected results and sometimes boards that are scored incorrectly or pairs that have forgotten to switch but these can be dealt with.

One thing we have learned over the years is that if it’s possible to find a way to confuse the system, someone will find it, so we have to be on our toes when an event is running “just in case” but in reality the basis of the ECatsBridge simultaneous scoring hasn’t changed since it was first used in 2001 which is something we are very proud of ... consider this, not even Microsoft can design software that lasts 25 years!! Though to be fair it has been, shall we say, tweaked a bit over the years and a new version is in the pipeline though the general idea is that you won’t notice the difference when it goes online, as it is really being done to keep up with the latest software versions required by Microsoft support.

So next time you sit down to play a Simultaneous Pairs, think of us up north in Orkney keeping an eye on things as the servers whirr away in their cabinets in Huntingdon, and maybe raise a glass to having fun by playing bridge and joining others from all over Ireland to enjoy this amazing game.

Anna & Mark Newton
ECatsBridge

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[Editor’s Footnote: I’m sure we all envy Anna and Mark’s view from their office. Dermot tells me that there are currently no plans to relocate the CBAI offices to the Aran Islands!]



Anna and Mark’s view of the Stones of Stenness

Answers to Test your Declarer Play

You are West as declarer, playing teams. What is your play strategy on each board?

Board 1 Dealer North. Vul None.

	♠ Q96 ♥ QJ7 ♦ 54 ♣ Q10853		
♠ 4	N	♠ AJ852	
♥ 10	W	♥ K842	E
♦ AKQJ108	S	♦ 976	
♣ AKJ75		♣ 2	
	♠ K1073 ♥ A9653 ♦ 32 ♣ 94		

W	N	E	S
	P	P	P
2♣	P	2♠	P
3♦	P	3♥	P
4♣	P	4♦	P
4NT ¹	P	5♣ ²	P
6♦	All Pass		

¹3♦=RKCB for D; ²1 or 4 key cards

Lead:

North leads the ♦5 against 6♦. How do you plan the play?

The Play

The contract is safe if clubs are 4-3 or the club queen is doubleton. But there are extra chances to combine. Declarer should try and establish a spade trick. At trick two play a spade to the ace and ruff a spade. The ♠A is followed by a club ruff, spade ruff, club ruff. A third spade ruff establishes a spade winner as the suit breaks 4-3. Declarer now plays two more round of trumps so that his last three cards are ♥10, ♠K and ♠J. When the club suit splits 5-2, declarer exits on a heart allowing (if possible) the opponent with ♠Q-x to win the trick. In the layout above, even if North discards the ♥Q and ♥J, South on winning the heart ace must return a heart to the king and the established spade winner is the twelfth trick.

Board 2 Dealer East. Vul N/S.

	♠ KQ9843 ♥ 752 ♦ K5 ♣ AK		
♠ 762	N	♠ AJ10	
♥ J108	W	♥ AK	E
♦ A	S	♦ QJ107643	
♣ QJ9842		♣ 6	
	♠ 5 ♥ Q9643 ♦ 982 ♣ 10753		

W	N	E	S
		1♦	P
1NT	2♠	3NT	All Pass

Lead:

North leads the ♠K against 3NT. How do you plan the play?

The Play

It seems straightforward for declarer to win the ♠A, unblock the ♦A, enter dummy with a heart and concede a trick to the ♦K. This line of play establishes six diamond winners along with ♠A, ♥A and ♥K for nine tricks. But on winning the ♦K, the defence will play two top clubs forcing dummy to discard a diamond winner. Now declarer will go down if North has three or four cards in hearts.

The solution is to duck the ♠K at trick one. North can exit with a heart but declarer enters his hand with the ♦A, finesses the ♠J and concedes the ♦K.

Board 3 Dealer South. Vul E/W .

		♠ J86		
		♥ 7		
		♦ 10953		
		♣ QJ652		
♠ 2	N		E	♠ K953
♥ AQJ10652	W			♥ K943
♦ 963				♦ AQ7
♣ 107	S			♣ A8
		♠ AQ1074		
		♥ 8		
		♦ KJ8		
		♣ K943		

W	N	E	S
			1♠ ¹
3♥ ²	P	4♥	All Pass

¹1♠=5-card-major; ²Weak Jump Overcall

Lead:

North leads the ♠6. How do you plan the play?

The Play

Declarer should cover the spade lead with the nine. South will win with the queen and switch to a small club. Winning in dummy with the ace, declarer plays the ♠K and discards the ♣10 in hand when South covers with the ace. South's best play now is to switch a trump. West follows with the five and wins in dummy with the nine. After ruffing a club high, declarer leads the trump queen and overtakes with the king in dummy to ruff a spade in hand. Now the carefully preserved two of trumps is led and overtaken in dummy. Declarer exits on a spade and discards a diamond from hand, leaving South end-played.

Board 4 Dealer West. Vul All.

		♠ 1052		
		♥ 95		
		♦ 7		
		♣ Q976542		
♠ AK	N		E	♠ QJ964
♥ Q87	W			♥ 1063
♦ AKJ106				♦ 9842
♣ AK10	S			♣ 8
		♠ 873		
		♥ AKJ42		
		♦ Q53		
		♣ J3		

W	N	E	S
2♣	P	2♦	P
2NT ¹	P	3♥	X
P	P	XX	P
3♣	P	3♠	All Pass

¹3♦=23-24 HCP; ²Transfer to spades; ³Lead Directing; ⁴Asks partner to complete the transfer

Lead:

North leads the ♥9 against 4♣. South takes the ace and king and continues with a third heart. After ruffing this trick, North exits with a trump. How do you plan the play?

The Play

When both defenders follow to the second round of trumps, declarer knew the contract would depend on playing the diamond suit without loss. While the a priori odds favoured cashing the ♦A and ♦K, declarer should try and obtain more information. Despite the very slight risk of suffering an adverse ruff, cash the ♦A, followed by the ♣A, ♠K and a club ruffed high. In dummy, play trumps from the top. When South discards a heart on the third round of clubs and followed to the third round of trumps, declarer knows South's original distribution was 3=5=3=2 and will bring home the contract by finessing the ♦J.

An Infamous Deal

Editor



“Infamy, infamy – they’ve all got it infamy”! [Kenneth Williams, Carry On Cleo]

It’s gut-wrenching when a hero or heroine of yours turns out to have feet of clay. Former fans of Lance Armstrong, Michelle Smith, Charles Haughey and the like experienced a deep sense of betrayal when the truth was exposed. In my own case, it was the Squadra Azzura, Italy’s all-conquering Blue Team which won sixteen world titles from 1957 to 1975. When I started out in Bridge, these guys were Godlike. I dismissed the persistent rumblings from beaten American opponents as sour grapes and good old-fashioned begrudgery.

Then in 2018 everything changed when Avon Wilsmore published “Under the Table – the case against the Blue Team”. It’s a forensic dissection, based on over a hundred “strange” bids and plays over the years. The late great Eric Kokish [for years a stalwart panellist on this Journal’s Bidding Quiz], commented “not until now has the full extent of the Blue Team’s collusive cheating been catalogued and revealed”. Having read the book, I was forced to put cognitive dissonance to one side and, with a heavy heart, to agree.

The single most egregious deal, I thought, was this. At Game All, LHO deals and opens 3♦. Partner doubles, and you [South] hold:

♠ 94
♥ AQ109743
♦ 10743
♣ -

What’s your poison?

This was from the 1972 Olympiad round 3 match between Germany and Italy. Right after the match, US player Bobby Wolff and Canadian expert Eric Murray bumped into the great Italian Benito Garozzo, who had not been playing that match, at the elevator. They asked him what he’d bid. “4♥”, replied Garozzo. Asked for his second choice, he replied “I don’t have one, but if you force me to choose I will say 5♥”.

Here’s what happened.

Dealer West. Vul All.

♠ AQ853			
♥ K8			
♦ 952			
♣ AKQ			
♠ 76	N	♠ KJ102	
♥ J65	W	♥ 2	
♦ AKQJ86	E	♦ -	
♣ 76	S	♣ J10985432	
♠ 94			
♥ AQ109743			
♦ 10743			
♣ -			

W	N <i>Belladonna</i>	E	S <i>Avarelli</i>
3♦	X	P	P(!)
P			

You can choose your own adjective to describe Avarelli’s pass, but by any “normal” standards it is beyond extraordinary. What if partner has:

♠ Axxx
♥ Kxxx
♦ -
♣ Axxxx

6♥ is excellent and 3♦ may well make!

As it turned out, passing was a big winner. N/S extracted a penalty of 800. In the other room, South bid the “normal” 4♥. The defence started with four rounds of diamonds. Declarer made the logical inference that East was more likely to have heart length. He therefore ruffed with ♥K rather than ♥8, and West’s ♥J became the setting trick.

Back to our elevator conversation. Wolff and Murray told Garozzo that South had passed. He responded “That’s not Bridge!!” They now revealed that the Passer was Garozzo’s own team-mate. Benito asked about the penalty, and they told him 1100 rather than 800. Garozzo replied “You know, after thinking about it, he is probably right”.

Just to complete the narrative, Avarelli never played for Italy again [I’m not suggesting cause and effect here]. His fulltime occupation? A judge. As the quote from House of Cards goes, “you might think that, I couldn’t possibly comment”.



Walter Avarelli - member of the famous Blue Team

Bidding Quiz 8 - Results - Bob Pattinson

All hands from live events.

Question 1

Dealer West. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ 96
- ♥ K107
- ♦ KQ98
- ♣ AQ65

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	X	3♠ ¹
?			

¹ 3♠=6-9; 4 spades

Votes: Pass=8; X=5

Opener has a six-loser hand with three hearts opposite likely four hearts in partner's hand. South's jump raise will be a weak blocking raise. Partner has shown only 6+ points and four hearts at this stage, and can show more if the bidding is left round to allow a further bid.

Joe Pass: If I had the same hand with a singleton and 14 points I would double.

Micheál Pass: No reason to do nothing other than pass as we have a minimum opening, do not hold four hearts, and hold two spades.

George Pass: I wasn't invited to this particular party and have nothing whatsoever to show that would be considered remotely extras. Sometimes we play defence.

Rory Pass: Not strong enough to compete at this level. Partner is still there.

Adrian Pass: 12-14 opening so nothing extra, and partner has shown four hearts and 6+ points. If partner holds more they are still there and then I might have a decision to make.

Peter P Pass: I have a weak NT hand with some nice values in the minor suits. If partner is unable to take action we still should make a PLUS in defence with this balanced collection. If Partner doubles again I might pass for penalty, assuming

partner hasn't been foolish and made the negative double on a distributional hand.

Sally Pass: I am 12-14 balanced and that is what pass says. Partner only doubled 1♠, so doesn't say very much.

Ciaran Pass: What is the problem? Minimum and balanced.

Karl X: This is the sort of hand where 3♠ "scares off" the opener. What I have learned is at the higher levels they just plunge in and ignore the pre-emptive jump with an optimistic viewpoint. Here 3NT, 4♥, 4♣, 4♦ may all make. If they don't the opponents won't be able to double or 3♠ is making. So a clear cut double for me. With a weak hand I pass.

Peter G X: Not a great hand but any hand without a Jack or unsupported Queen is worth upgrading.

Luca X: It is aggressive but I don't need to make much here. I don't want to put too much pressure on partner.

Anna X: I have a nice hand. My partner might decide to pass.

Dealer West. Vul All. Teams.

♠ 96 ♥ KT7 ♦ KQ98 ♣ AQ65	♠ AQT852 ♥ 63 ♦ AJ7 ♣ 43
♠ 4 ♥ AQ92 ♦ T6543 ♣ KT2	♠ KJ73 ♥ J854 ♦ 2 ♣ J987

	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT
N				3	
S				3	
E	3	4	3		
W	3	4	3		

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	X	3♠ ¹
?			

¹ 3♠=6-9; 4 spades

Summary

This is a tight competitive bidding situation which occurs a lot when playing teams. This is reflected in the closeness of the voting by the panel, with pass rather than double being narrowly favoured.

By passing, West is providing relevant information about the strength and shape of the hand, 12-14 balanced and less than four hearts, and therefore probably four cards in both minor suits. As partner has a further bid this information should be helpful to them in deciding to either pass or bid their five-card minor.

As the opponents have found a strong fit in the spade suit it is unlikely that partner would be passing for penalties should we double.

Marks: Pass=10; Double=9

Bidding Tip

With a minimum opening hand it helps to confirm this at the earliest opportunity by passing, and to show extras by making a further bid. Especially when partner still has a further chance to make a bid.

Question 2

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ 7
- ♥ 102
- ♦ AJ1086
- ♣ AK1098

W	N	E	S
	1♣	3♠ ¹	?

¹ 3♠=6-9; 7 spades

Votes: 4♠=7; X=4; 4♦=1; 5♣=1

Another six loser hand but this time only two cards in the unbid major. The challenge is how best to express the potential strength of this hand. The 1♣ opening confirms 3+ clubs and denies a balanced 15-17 hand.

Adrian X: Tempting to bid 5♣ but double keeps all options open in case partner wants to convert to penalties (so far they have shown a weak 1NT). If partner removes to 4♥ I can then bid 5♣ which ought to show this type of hand, but doubt many partnerships have discussed this type of hand due to being hung up with an initial double suggesting a 4♥ contract.

Peter P X: The higher we go the less likely that my double is of perfect shape. I have the values for game and if my partner has KJx in spades, I expect to see 3NT on the table. If partner bids hearts I pull to 5♣.

Karel X: Stuck between double and 4♠. Double allows for the possibility of 3NT which should always be explored. 4♠ shows a great hand for clubs, with a spade control. This will be a disaster if partner is 4432 shape but could well pave the road to a nice slam auction. I think I'll double, it seems to keep the most doors open. If partner does not bid 3NT or right hand opponent bids 4♠ this is great news as now partner's values are likely where we want them. If partner bids 4♥ I obviously bid 5♣.

Anna 4♠: I really like my hand. I think slam is very possible.

Joe 4♠: I want to show a big club fit and a good hand, with a likely shortness in spades or the ♠A.

Ciaran 4♠: Showing a good 5♣ fit.

Rory 4♠: Club fit, good hand, good controls. Not specifically a spade control.

Sally 4♠: I have to confess I am not entirely sure of our system regarding minor suit openings. Of course, we might want to play in 3NT, but how can I tell? Even if I played that double asked for a spade stopper I wouldn't know how good the stopper was and whether 3NT was right.

Luca 4♠: Not a lot of choice at this level. This seems the most likely to get us to 6♣ if we belong there.

George 4♠: You have only one bid to get a lot of information across. Huge club support, forcing to game, and perhaps spade shortage, but this is tenuous. I pity the folks who make a negative double and then have to bid 5♣ over 4♥, and then perhaps hear 5♥. Double is the only way to get to 3NT, but this is a hand to be played in a suit. If you only bid 4♣ please turn in your LM [Life Master] card.

Micheál 4♦: Follow up with 5♣.

Peter G 5♣: Must be worth a punt and may even be too low.

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

		♠AQT9 ♥KQ84 ♦Q7 ♣732	
♠2	N	♠KJ87654	
♥J953	W	E	♥A64
♦K9753			♦2
♣Q54	S	♣J6	
		♠7 ♥102 ♦AJT86 ♣AKT98	

W	N	E	S
	1♣	3♠ ¹	?

¹ 3♠=6-9: 7 spades

Summary

Strong arguments made for the main choice of 4♠, and the second choice of double. The double edges this debate - as with hand 1, partner is informed of the strength of your hand with this bid and will have a second opportunity to decide which direction to take. 4♠ is most effective in highlighting the power of the hand with regard to the strong club fit, but consumes more bidding space, and eliminates 3NT or a conversion to a penalty double.

Marks: X=10; 4♠=9; 5♣=8; 4♦=8

Bidding Tip

As in hand 1 showing the respective strength of your hand (this time bidding to show power) works best when partner still has a further bid and is now more informed about the strength of your hand, especially when there are several possible routes available.

Question 3

Dealer East. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ AK3
- ♥ AQ107
- ♦ A6
- ♣ J1082

W	N	E	S
		2♠ ¹	P
2NT ²	P	3♥ ³	P
?			

Notes: 1 2♠=6-10: 6 spades
2 2NT=16+: enquiry
3 3♥=8-10: heart honour

Votes: 4♠=7; 4♦=4; 3NT=1; 3♠=1

A six loser hand with 18 points facing 8-10 suggests a certain game contract, but is there any possibility of a slam?

Luca 4♦: Cue bid and let partner evaluate clubs. I tend to be pessimistic opposite weak twos given past experiences, but I suppose I can cue bid diamonds and then bid 4♠. At least partner will have some blame if we miss a slam here.

Karel 4♦: So partner has presumably QJ to six spades, with ♥K makes six points, and if they also have ♦K and a singleton club we bid a slam. Bidding 4♦ denies a club control and must show first round control in diamonds (who would explore a slam with two minor losers?). So if partner has 2+ clubs an easy 4♠. If partner has ♦K and club singleton they can bid 5♦, or if a club void, 5♣. If club singleton and ♦QJ and four hearts the slam is on a finesse.

Rory 4♦: Cue bid. Worth a slam try. SQJxxx HKxx ♦Kxx x will do fine.

Peter P 4♦: If 3♠ was forcing since partner has shown a maximum this would suit as it leaves bidding space, but I doubt we are playing this. My bid is therefore 4♦. We have six spade tricks, possibly four hearts, and an Ace, 11 tricks. If partner has QJxxxx Kxx Kxx x, I need to be playing in a slam. Hopefully skipping past clubs will start to get the message across that I need a club control.

Adrian 3♠: This must be forcing now that partner has shown a maximum.

Micheál 3♠: The value bid.

Joe 4♠: I would have run to 4♠ directly. I still bid 4♠ now.

Anna 4♠: The hand is massive, but it looks like my partner has no honours in the minors. This could leave us wide open in clubs. We are not making slam as I can only count six spades, four hearts and one diamond, which is only 11 tricks.

Peter G 4♠: I suspect 3♠ is forcing after 3♥ and invites partner to show a singleton club but is that enough? Expecting ♦K, ♥K, ♠Q and singleton club is a bit rich for me.

Ciaran 4♠: Even if we have six spades and four heart tricks, it is hard to see where the 12th trick is coming from, so 4♠ for me.

George 4♠: The bid you should have made the first time. Give partner the worst eight count in history (QJTxxx K xxxx QJ) and you can still make 4♠. With the best 10 count ever (QJxxxx KJx Kx xx) you will not make slam. But wait you say. What if partner has a stiff club? Then the hand would be QJxxxx KJx Kxx x and would be opened 1♠ and not 2♠. Plus it is impossible to find all this out. The moral of the story is to bid what you can make, 4♠.

Sally 3NT: Looks our safest game.

Dealer East. Vul All. Teams.

		♠52		
		♥T43		
		♦JT2		
		♣KQ963		
♠AK3	N		♠Q109864	
♥AQ72	W	E	♥KJ9	
♦A6			♦Q87	
♣J1087	S		♣4	
		♠J7		
		♥865		
		♦K9543		
		♣A75		

W	N	E	S
		2♠ ¹	P
2NT ²	P	3♥ ³	P
?			

¹ 2♠=6-10: 6 spades
² 2NT=16+: enquiry
³ 3♥=8-10: heart honour

Summary

Strong analysis shown by the panel in dissecting the finer details of opener's likely shape and points distribution. Would partner if holding the perfect 10 count with seven losers open 1♠ or 2♠? If partner has the perfect hand for slam can you collect all the relevant information in time?

The 4♦ camp make a suitable cue bid showing a first round control in diamonds and denying a club control. This may well produce 4♥ as a second round cue bid and indicating the singleton club, and slam can now be reached.

The 4♠ camp take a less optimistic view and sign off in 4♠, expecting opener not to have the perfect hand. As this avoids ending in slam it gains over 4♦ where slam may or not be pursued further over a 4♥ cue bid. (A second cue of 5♦ would allow a stop in 5♠).

Adrian raises an interesting point – is 3♠ forcing (saves space for lower level cue bids) or is it a sign off? If the latter, why bid 2NT if you can't play in at least game? 3NT is certainly a safe berth on this hand.

A most frustrating hand in terms of a makeable slam being the 4-3 heart fit, whilst the 6-3 spades make 11 tricks. As Anna noted the weakness was in the minor suits. [If your partnership can bid to 6♥ by East, please contact Fred Barry, tell him I sent you, and ask about joining our League team!! Ed]

Marks: 4♠=10; 4♦=9; 3NT=9; 3♠=9

Bidding Tips

1. Weak two openings create problems for the opponents, but can also make life difficult for responder with a strong hand. Agreeing the top margin of a 10 count and number of losers versus a one level opening can clarify this potential issue. For example, opening at one level has seven losers, whereas opening a weak two has eight losers.

2. Responder's rebid of the opening major [3♠ here] following the 2NT enquiry needs to be defined. Making it a slam enquiry rather than sign off seems most logical.

Question 4

Dealer East. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ AJ53
- ♥ 10
- ♦ KJ2
- ♣ AQ1074

W	N	E	S
		1♣	P
1♦	2♣ ¹	2♦	2♥
3♣	3♦ ²	?	

¹ 2♣=majors: 5-5+
² 3♦=short in both minors

Votes: 3♠=6; 4♥=3; 4♠=2; 3♥=1; 5♠=1

A competitive bidding battle between the minor and major suits. The 2♦ rebid with only three card trump support may have created this current dilemma, rather than showing the four card spade suit, but this is what happened at the table.

Anna 3♠: I want to show that I have a spade stopper, so if my partner has hearts they can bid 3NT.

Joe 3♠: I would have started with a double of 2♣, but now I have got to show partner extras.

Sally 3♠: Natural(ish) game try.

George 3♠: You have some extra and partner has shown a little life. Show the spade stopper and see if partner can bid 3NT. You can always retreat to four of a minor. Pre-empts work.

Ciaran 3♠: Not perfect as I am a diamond short but suggests roughly this shape.

Karel 3♥: With both vulnerable North clearly has a good hand. 3♦ almost certainly shows a singleton or void diamond trying to include partner in the final high level decision. South's 2♥ was a free bid so will have four hearts plus extras. Partner's bid was also free. Partner

doesn't need a lot for a minor slam. 3♥ seems to be the bid - telling partner you are happy to go on to five of a minor with interest in more.

Peter G 4♥: A splinter with slam interest. Sounds like North is 6511 shape and I am both good and bad in some ways. If partner has ♣K and ♦AQ on a good day the importance of these top cards in the minors may lead to 5♣ or even 6♣.

Luca 4♥: Oddly specific meaning for 3♦, but it sounds like we have a double fit. 2♦ was also a strange bid. Partner won't believe we have such a nice hand now. I will try to show my hand as best I can by confirming heart shortage and agreeing clubs so partner can judge if they bid 5♥.

Rory 4♣: Competing. (Why bid 2♦ when support double is in the system?).

Micheál 4♣: Natural and competing.

Adrian 5♣: I had better stress I have good clubs and hope 5♣ is enough.

Peter P 4♥: I expect partner to have 2254 shape and whatever minor cards we are missing are likely to be with South. However, I do expect 4♥ to probably be a make. I'll splinter in hearts to help partner to judge what to do if 5♥ is bid over partner's choice of either 5♣ or 5♦.

Dealer East. Vul All. Teams.

			♠KQT962		
			♥Q6543		
			♦T		
			♣9		
♠74		N		♠AJ53	
♥A2				♥T	
♦Q8543	W	E		♦KJ2	
♣KJ53		S		♣AQT74	
			♠8		
			♥KJ987		
			♦A976		
			♣863		

W	N	E	S
		1♣	P
1♦	2♣ ¹	2♦	2♥
3♣	3♦ ²	?	

¹ 2♣=majors: 5-5+
² 3♦=short in both minors

Summary

Another close call. Is the difference between 3♥ and 4♥ that the former is first round control and the latter a splinter, or is 3♥ first or second round control? The advantage of 3♥ is that it offers space for partner to cue 3♠ with shortage.

As opponents have found a strong heart fit 3♠ is a better control showing bid as partner will be aware already that you have a heart shortage.

Both 4♣ and 5♣ confirm holding a second minor suit, with 5♣ preventing a 4♥ bid by opponents. The potential problem with suggesting clubs as trumps is that opponents have already indicated a shortage in diamonds so there is a risk of a diamond ruff.

Marks: 3♠=10; 3♥=9; 4♥=9; 5♣=8; 4♣=7

Bidding Tips

The bidding system for the quiz suggests cue bids show first and second controls up the line, which help to keep the bidding space more open. Partnerships need to agree their own rules on this key method of checking game or slam potential.

Question 5

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

♠ 2
♥ A9
♦ AJ10874
♣ AK108

W	N	E	S
	3♣	?	

Votes: 4♦=8; X=4; 5♦=1

Strong enough for action but which is the best bid, with two strong minor suits and only two hearts?

Rory 4♦: Don't like double without four hearts. Second choice is 5♦ but this doesn't leave room to compete over 4♠.

Karel 4♦: Usually I double trying to keep 3NT in the picture. Problem here is partner with almost any four hearts and no spade stop will bid 4♥, or even 5♥ over 4♠ by South. Even if they have a spade stop, we may not be able to cash nine tricks before the opponents get back in. We have a good hand but not enough to potentially bid 5♦ on our own. So I bid 4♦. If partner can bid great. If South bids 4♠ I double on the way to show clubs (if I had hearts I'd double first time). It's a heavy 4♦ I'll admit, but seems about right and passes the "I don't have hearts" message. I don't play four of a minor here as hearts plus the minor with opening values. It never comes up, and even when it does, I'm reluctant to bid it.

Luca 4♦: I would be tempted to double at match points but at teams just bid where I think we will be.

George 4♦: Pre-empts work.

Sally 4♦: I usually play non-leaping Michaels, and so far, although there have been plenty of hands that I wanted to bid but I couldn't, I haven't regretted my action. Here, playing non-leaping Michaels, I would have to bid 5♦ or pass, and see what happens, so I am glad to be able to bid only 4♦.

Anna 4♦: Does not feel like a good bid, but I don't see many other options.

Ciaran 4♦: Glad I don't play non-leaping Michaels.

Joe X: It's awkward. I don't like over calling with a six-card minor here at the four-level. So I'm going to double and hope partner either passes or bids 3NT. Obviously if partner bids 4♥ I'm passing and hoping they have long hearts.

Peter P X: The same sort of problem as hand 2. I want to play in 3NT or maybe even defend if partner has two spades and a king elsewhere. I'm not expected to be perfect shape as this is my last ditch for 3NT. If partner decides to defend I should provide four tricks to hopefully go with partner's two or three tricks to score 500 or 800. It would be a shame with such a good

hand to commit our side to five of a minor and write a plus score for the opponents.

Adrian X: I play non-leaping Michaels here so can't bid 4♦ as that shows the red suits. So I'm left between an unsatisfactory double, again hung up about not having four in the other major, or a unilateral 5♦ when 5♣ or 3♠X could easily be the right spot. So as in hand 2 double feels more flexible.

Peter G 5♦: Not good enough for double and then 5♦. Can't risk a pass but do accept 5♣ or 4♥ might be better some days.

Dealer North. Vul All. Teams.

♠AKJ8753			
♥82			
♦53			
♣Q6			
♠T64	N	♠2	
♥KJT53	W	♥A9	E
♦962		♦AJT874	
♣43	S	♣AKT8	
		♠Q9	
		♥Q754	
		♦KQ	
		♣J9752	

W	N	E	S
	3♠	?	

Summary

A clear majority of the panel opt for 4♦ as double may create problems due to the poor heart holding of just two cards, and 4♦ should show a strong suit. Double does keep the bidding lower and caters for 3NT, but the singleton spade tends to suggest that 3NT is not our spot, plus the worry about holding only two hearts. If partner calls 4♥ over the double do you pass or bid 5♦? 5♦ hits the winning spot, possibly at the cost of taking up bidding space if partner held a stronger hand, but on the other hand it may be a step too far if partner holds a less friendly fit. A difficult problem and perhaps 4♦ is the safest bid, leaving partner to decide whether to proceed further. The doubleton diamond honours in the South hand allows 5♦ to make.

Marks: 4♦=10; 5♦=9; X=9

Bidding Tip

Non-leaping Michaels cue bids over three-level pre-emptive openings confirm two five-card suits comprising the bid minor and the unbid major. This works well for these holdings but then prevents a natural overcall in a minor suit.

Question 6

Dealer West. Vul None. Teams

- ♠ K97543
- ♥ A1073
- ♦ Q7
- ♣ 9

W	N	E	S
1♦ ¹	P	1♠	P
1NT ²	P	?	

¹ 1♦ = 4+
² 1NT = 12-14

Votes: 2♣=6; 2♥=5; 2♠=2

A seven-loser responding hand with a six-card major, and despite the limited points prospects look worthy of an invitation, so how best to proceed?

Adrian 2♣: Popular now is a two-way check back where 2♣ forces 2♦ after which bids are invitational. An immediate 2♦ is then game forcing check back. First question playing these methods is whether this is worth a game forcing check back. Playing teams I think you must give it a go but if pairs maybe I should be more cautious and invite only. Assuming the latter I will bid 2♣ and over partner's 2♦ bid 2♥ showing invitational values with five+ spades and four hearts.

Anna 2♣: Intending as a check back.

Rory 2♣: Check back for both majors. Game may be on with a good fit.

Sally 2♣: Assuming this is some sort of relay asking for majors. Over 2♦ I would bid 2♠, and over 2♥ raise to 3♥, non-forcing.

Micheál 2♣: Check back.

Peter G 2♥: Expect partner to correct to 2♠ with two spades and three hearts.

Luca 2♥: Give partner the option opposite a weak 1NT. I wouldn't bid Texas, so that hand type is not here.

Karel 2♥: Great hand with no wastage at all. I'd like to bid 2♣ check back but the subsequent responses would indicate a stronger hand than I have. For example, 2♣ : 2♦ : 2♠ is invitational, and 2♣:2♥ is an underbid but if partner bids we now are well placed. If not were are probably OK.

Joe 2♥: Not quite good enough for 2♣, but I wouldn't criticise partner if they chose to bid 2♣ with this hand. I just feel I'm not good enough.

Peter P 2♥: every day of the week. That is the only game try you have. 2443 shape with a 12 count with Ax AJxx Kxxx xx and you are possibly making an overtrick in 4♥.

George 2♠: If I bid 1NT with 1444 go to the partner store and get a new partner.

Ciaran 2♠: Suits are poor. I'd show an invite if they were better.

Dealer West. Vul None. Teams

♠J2			
♥65			
♦KJ5			
♣QJT863			
♠QT	N	♠K97543	
♥KJ82	W	♥AT73	E
♦T982		♦Q7	
♣AK5	S	♣9	
		♠A86	
		♥Q94	
		♦A643	
		♣753	

W	N	E	S
1♦ ¹	P	1♠	P
1NT ²	P	?	

¹ 1♦ = 4+
² 1NT = 12-14

Summary

A tight decision but there is a clear majority for making an invitational bid, with an equal number choosing either 2♣ or 2♥ to do so. Interesting to note that

a number of panellists see 2♣ as slightly stronger than 2♥, and therefore were more comfortable with showing shape with this hand rather than taking the 2♣ route. Certainly the ♦Q could well be a wasted value but the 10 major suit cards suggest letting partner know you have some interest in game. If partner shows no game interest it is unlikely that a part score contract will fail, so 2♠ looks too pessimistic.

Marks: 2♣=10; 2♥=9; 2♠=8

Bidding Tip

Partnerships need to clarify the hierarchy of the strengths of the responder's rebids in this common situation. The panel's direction here is helpful, with 2♠ the lowest strength, 2♥ offering encouragement, and 2♣ the strongest invitational bid.

Question 7

Dealer West. Vul All. Teams.

- ♠ J
- ♥ Q75
- ♦ KJ10865
- ♣ AJ5

W	N	E	S
4♠	X	P	?

Votes: 5♦=9; 6♦=3; Pass=1

The key to this hand is to have an agreement about the double. Is it for takeout or penalty whereby 4NT is now the takeout bid?

Sally 5♦: According to my rules I need a six-card suit (or two five-card suits) to remove the double. 5♦ or 6♦? Close, but 5D shows some values - I only remove the double if I think I have good chances of making what I bid.

George 5♦: You will probably beat 4♠ 200-500, but you have a decent hand, a good suit, and a stiff spade. Pre-empts work.

Joe 5♦: I'm conservative towards bidding slams in general.

Luca 5♦: I only pull these doubles with values where I'm certain I will make. Hopefully partner can raise with the right hand.

Peter G 5♦: I can remove the double to a probable making contract.

Micheál 5♦: You bid this only as you expect to make the contract.

Ciaran 5♦: Might make more but partner knows this is bid to make.

Adrian 5♦: Tricky particularly as double of 4♠ tends to be played as cards and not an outright take out double. One only removes the double if one expects to make. 5♦ is probably about right, with values and not averse to partner bidding 6♦.

Karel 6♦: Tough one. We are going to bid 5♦ for sure. What about 6♦? A vulnerable double of 4♠ has to be a good hand. So I think 6♦ is reasonable. 7♦ needs partner to have the ♠A (they can bid 7 if they have a rock). 5♠ would indicate first round spade control, 5NT asks to pick a slam, and 4NT shows both minors and not key card. I bid 6♦.

Rory 6♦: I sometimes play Lebensohl here, with 5♦ stronger than 4NT followed by 5♦. Even then this hand is too strong for 5♦.

Anna 6♦: If my partner found a double, I think I can make a slam.

Peter P Pass: I like to play double as a strong no trump, and on this hand probably with a trump trick since I hold a singleton. I expect partner has four tricks so I will pass anticipating to get plus 500 or 800. I'd like to be the hero and punt 6♦ but I'd need all partner's cards to be working for that to be an option. 5♦ is probably making but there is no need to risk anything. Take my plus.

Dealer West. Vul All. Teams.

				♠ Q87																												
				♥ AKJ96																												
				♦ A2																												
				♣ Q72																												
♠ AKT96432	N	♠ 5																														
♥ 843	W	E	♥ T2																													
♦ 3			♦ Q974																													
♣ 3		S	♣ K98643																													
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♠	♥	♦	♣	NT																												
N	5	6	3																													
S	5	6	3																													
E			1																													
W			1																													
W	N	E	S																													
4♠	X	P	?																													

Summary

Difficult hand, as 5♦ seems a slight underbid but 6♦ could be an overbid. Both Adrian and Peter P suggest that the double shows a strong more balanced hand, with the latter trusting that partner is playing this method and taking the money by passing.

5♦ is the safe option this time, but how can the partnership reach the heart slam? As George states "pre-empts work".

Marks: Pass=10; 5♦=9; 6♦=8

Bidding Tip

Over 4♠ pre-empts, double to show strong no trump balanced hands has two advantages, one being able to pass with this type of hand, and the other being able to take out into a long suit knowing partner will have some support for the suit. Using 4NT to show two places to play with 5-5 or better shapes works too. Partner bids the lowest playable suit and if that is the 4NT bidder's short suit, the next suit up shows the two playable suits.

Question 8

Dealer North. Vul N/S. Teams

- ♠ 987
- ♥ 863
- ♦ AK104
- ♣ KJ10

W	N	E	S
	P	1♥	P
2♥	X	3♥	?

Votes: Pass=7; X=4; 4♦=2

North's re-entry into the auction suggests shortage in hearts and four spades, with at least eight cards in the minors, so what is the best shot?

Peter P Pass: Partner has doubled on pure shape, so I expect a 4441 hand. I can't see 4♦ making, and putting pressure on by doubling 3♥ for plus 100 is not my idea of a nice night out. Declarer with AJx Kxxx xx Axx might make 3♥ opposite AQx and doubleton club. I'll pass and hope partner's spades are better than KQ10x to beat 3♥ by one.

Micheál Pass: Automatic as partner and I passed initially.

Peter G Pass: There is a time to fold, even in the modern game, and this looks like it to me.

Anna Pass: I can't think of what else I would like to bid.

Ciaran Pass: The double pushed them up a level. I lead a trump.

Luca Pass: At match points I might double assuming this is penalty oriented, I won't risk anything here.

Adrian X: Another tricky problem given partner is a passed hand with ideally 1444 or 1435 shape. I think a responsive double might be the answer, and partner can bid 3NT.

George X: If you do not go for a number once in a while, you are not bidding enough. While you are two passed hands and they have 9-10 trumps, both of you are maximum. Partner has the spades and you have good tickets in the other suits. Lead a trump, but be careful to help partner by playing the trumps in the order of 8, 7, and 9.

Sally X: Values without four spades.

Karel X: Happy to defend this hand. Lead a heart. ♥3 is blocking. If partner doesn't fancy it we can play in a 4-3 spade fit or a 4-4 diamond fit. Holding four spades I think I would bid 3♠, so double strongly implies only three spades.

Rory 4♦: Partner probably has a three-suiter. We don't want to play in a 4-3 fit in a black suit, as a forcing defence will quickly make our trump position tenuous.

Dealer North. Vul N/S. Teams

		♠AQ62			
		♥T			
		♦QJ52			
		♣8765			
♠K52		N		♠JT4	
♥AJ5		W	E	♥KQ9742	
♦8763				♦9	
♣973		S		♣AQ2	
		♠987			
		♥863			
		♦AKT4			
		♣KJT			

W	N	E	S
	P	1♥	P
2♥	X	3♥	?

Summary

Another close call with each of the three panel bids producing a plus score which is important in teams. The majority decision to pass produces a small plus but some may argue this is a safer bid on a poor balanced hand containing nine losers. 4♦ finds a marked 4-4 fit but would this always work out so well? Double allows for partner to make the final choice, implying only three hearts but values close to an opening bid.

Marks: Pass=10; X=9; 4♦=9

Bidding Tip

When the rewards of a double are marginal and you hold a poor hand it is best to take the safe action and pass, As we have seen on other hands in this quiz doubles work well with stronger hands seeking to consult with partner on how best to proceed.

Summary of the Expert Panel Results

Well done to Roy Welland, topping the table with 78.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Sally Brock	10	9	9	10	10	10	9	9	76
Ciaran Coyne	10	9	10	10	10	8	9	10	76
Luca Crone	9	9	9	9	10	9	9	10	74
Karel De Raeymaker	9	10	9	9	10	9	8	9	74
Peter Goodman	9	8	10	9	9	9	9	10	73
Joe Grue	10	9	10	10	9	9	9	10	76
George Jacobs	10	9	10	10	10	8	9	9	75
Peter Pigot	9	10	9	9	9	9	10	10	75
Micheál O'Briain	10	8	10	7	10	10	9	10	74
Anna Onishuk	9	9	10	10	10	10	8	10	76
Adrian Thomas	10	10	9	8	9	10	9	9	75
Rory Timlin	10	9	9	7	10	10	8	9	72
Roy Welland	10	10	10	10	9	10	10	9	78



TRALEE INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE CONGRESS 2025

Dates: April 4th - 6th 2025 (Fri-Sun)
Venue: The Rose Hotel Tralee, Co. Kerry



PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

FRIDAY 4TH APRIL 2025

- 7:15pm: Official Opening
- 7:30pm: Gala Pairs - €15 Per Person
- 7:30pm: Intermediate B & Novice Pairs -€10 Per Person

SATURDAY 5TH APRIL 2025

11:00am: Grand Master Donal Garvey will hold a discussion about the previous night's hands.

- 1:30pm: Open Pairs - €12.50 Per Person
- 1:45pm: Congress Pairs (2 Sessions) - €25 Per Person
- Intermediate Pairs (2 Sessions) - €25 Per Person
- 7:15pm: Novice Pairs - €10 Per Person
- 7:30pm: Open Pairs - €12.50 Per Person

SUNDAY 6TH APRIL 2025

- 11:00am: Congress Teams (Extended Session) - €25 Per Person
- Intermediate Teams (Extended Session) - €25 Per Person
- 1:00pm: Open Pairs - €12.50 Per Person
- 1:00pm: Novice Teams - €12.50 Per Person

CONGRESS CONTACT DETAILS & ENTRIES:

 **0872126040 Nicky Fitzgibbon**

 **tralee@bridgeireland.com**

For further programme and information visit: Bridgelreland.com
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