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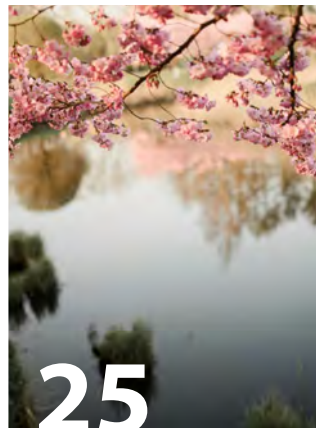
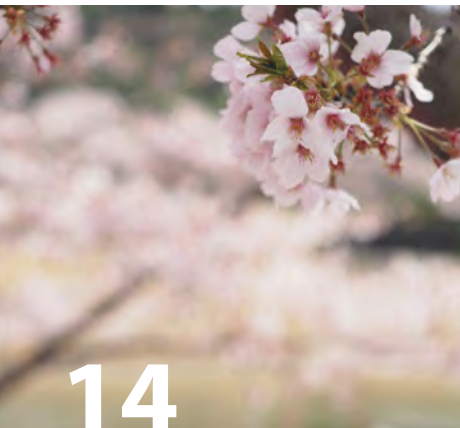
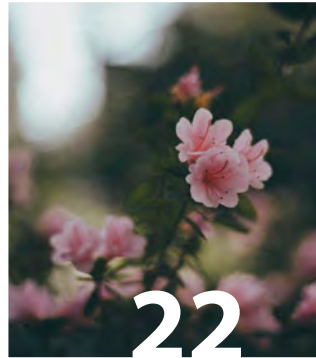
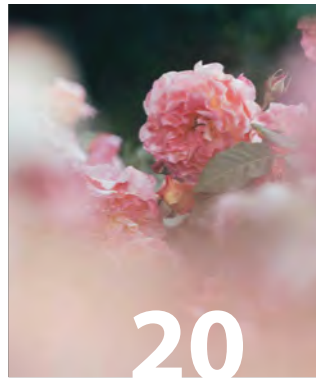


YOUTH BRIDGE TEACHER TONG CHEN

SEE PAGE 14 FOR FULL ARTICLE.

THE CANADIAN BRIDGE FEDERATION

The mission of the Canadian Bridge Federation is to promote bridge within Canada and protect and advance the national interests of Canadian bridge, including the selection and support of Canadian bridge teams and players for international bridge competition.



MEMBERSHIP

Bridge Canada is available to members and non-members alike.

If you know of anyone who wishes to become a member of the Canadian Bridge Federation, please share with them these options:

1. Be sure to include CBF dues when renewing your ACBL membership.
2. Visit cbf.ca and click **JOIN THE CBF**.
3. Email info@cbf.ca for more information.

Membership Rates:

1 Year - \$25 | 2 Years - \$50 | 3 Years - \$65

Juniors (players 25 years of age and under)
\$10/year (use promo code **JUNIOR**)

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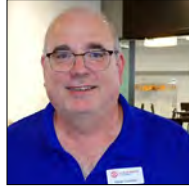
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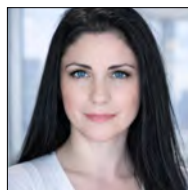
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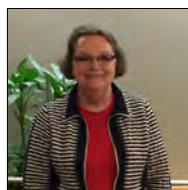
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THE CANADIAN BRIDGE FEDERATION PRESENTS



MAPLE LEAF BRIDGE NIGHTS

ACBL Sanctioned Duplicate Games on RealBridge

The Canadian Bridge Federation is proud to present an exciting opportunity for bridge players everywhere to take part in the new **MAPLE LEAF** online games, earn masterpoints, and support their home clubs in Canada.

We have formed a special partnership with **RealBridge**

RealBridge features a modern, user-friendly interface with built-in video and sound, delivering an authentic face-to-face bridge experience. It's entirely web-based—there's nothing to install—and it's incredibly easy to use. Even if you've never played online before!



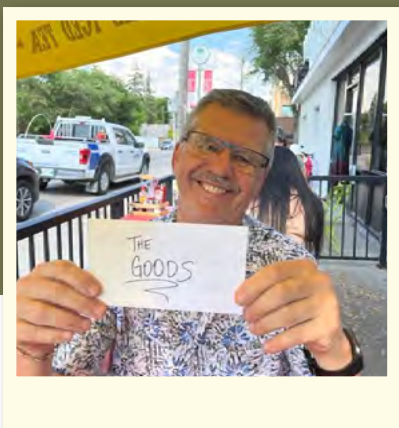
- A RealBridge account is required. Visit www.realbridge.online to set up your account and deposit funds.
- Free practice games on RealBridge. Visit www.realbridge.online and click on the "Where Can I Play?" dropdown menu and selecting "Try RealBridge."

Weekly **Maple Leaf** Games Every Friday

- 16-board pairs game: \$5 Cdn or \$4 US; 24-board pairs game: \$8 Cdn or \$6 US.
- 499er: 7 pm ET - 16 boards; Open 7:10 pm ET - 24 boards.
- Non-ACBL members can set up an ACBL Guest Account.

Since 1966, the Canadian Bridge Federation (CBF) has proudly represented the interests of all Canadian bridge players. To learn more about our work and how we support the bridge community, please visit our website at www.cbf.ca. When you sign up or renew your membership with the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL), don't forget to check the box to also join the CBF. For only **C\$25 per year**, your membership helps support the activities of your Canadian National Bridge Organization. You can also join the CBF directly through our website.

Be sure to check out our **Bridge Canada eMagazine**, available to the public and filled with news, stories, and insights for all bridge enthusiasts.



EDITOR'S MESSAGE

The Goods

WHAT'S NEW?

Lots in the Canadian Bridge Federation world!

2026 MAPLE LEAF CELEBRITY CLASSIC

\$CA 25,000+ RAISED!!

The Board successfully held a Celebrity Auction on February 23rd. Who would not want to play with Zia or Bob Hamman?? Besides this opportunity of a lifetime, money was raised to help subsidize Canadian bridge activities. More on this gala event in the June issue of Bridge Canada.

JUNIOR BRIDGE IN CANADA

Inside you will find two articles from Casper Gu, the BC Assistant Editor, focusing on Junior and Youth Bridge in Canada. Take a look!

CANADIAN BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS TEAM TRIALS

The qualifiers to represent Canada have been set. See list of teams and players later in this issue! The playoffs for all four major events will be held in Penticton, BC, June 15-21, 2026, in conjunction with the Penticton Regional.

CANADIAN 2025-26 ONLINE TEAMS CHAMPIONSHIPS

The playoffs are currently under way! An article on the final standings will be published in the June Bridge Canada.

See you in June!

Neil Kimelman

Bridge Canada Managing Editor





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"2026 MAPLE LEAF CELEBRITY CLASSIC... BUILDING COMMUNITY WORLDWIDE"

This inaugural **"2026 Maple Leaf Celebrity Classic"** is more than a fundraiser – it is a worldwide community-building event, involving world class players from all over the globe who donated their time to offer an online lesson, or to play in the Celebrity Classic online game on RealBridge which took place on **February 23rd**. The game time of 1:00 ET was chosen carefully so that European and other International players could also participate.

I would like to thank the over 100 generous donors who engaged with enthusiastic players to help build community across Countries, and all those who supported this initiative, including our Expert panel, those who spread the word to players, and all those who bid and participated. I hope that you had a great time!

These funds will help to ensure the sustainability of the CBF in supporting our Clubs, mentoring our developing players, running our Team trials for world competition, and running our Junior program.

MAPLE LEAF FRIDAY ONLINE GAMES ON REALBRIDGE – 8:00 ET OPEN, 7:50 ET 0-499

These Friday online games were initiated as a **profit sharing** incentive for **Canadian Clubs**. We are striving to build up these games in an effort to strengthen community and financially support our Clubs. **Please set up an account on RealBridge** and join us any Friday!

UPCOMING EVENTS – SEE CBF.CA

1. B (<3,500 MPs) and C (<1,000 MPs) Team Championships – Round Robins online **March 21/22** – encourage your friends to sign up!

2. All CBF Team Championships Live Playoffs – during **Penticton Regional June 15-21**

- Open, Women's, Mixed, Seniors, B and C

3. Canadian Open and B Pairs Championships – online **April 25/26**

4. Spring League – Thursdays 8:00 ET; including **non-CBF members**

- Open and Limited category

WELCOME BOARD MEMBERS

I would like to thank **Deb Harper** and **Mike Hargreaves** for their service on our CBF Board. Deb was always a calm voice of reason. Mike's legal background and eloquence were invaluable in many areas, and we very much appreciate his thoughtful contributions.

Xavier Combey took over from Deb as Zone 2 representative, and his immediate contributions in helping us implement our **"Expert coaching on Team strategy for 0-1,500"** developing players, and working on plans for our **2027 Championships in Quebec** have already kept him busier than he anticipated...welcome Xavier!

I would also like to welcome **Paul Janicki** as our newest Director at Large. Paul has extensive experience on the ACBL Board of Directors and on the World Bridge Federation Executive Council. Paul has accepted the position of CBF designate to the WBF Executive Council, starting in 2026.

Your participation matters. Help us to continue to grow this game that we all love.

Sincerely,

Shelley Burns

CBF President

"Building community, one card at a time..."



CBF 2026 CANADIAN BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS UPDATE: RESULTS OF THE ROUND ROBIN

The following teams have qualified for the Knockout Phase of the various 2026 Canadian Championships. These will be held June 15-21, 2026 in Penticton, BC. Below is the order of finish.

CNTC - CANADIAN OPEN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

1. **Gartaganis** - Nicholas Gartaganis, Judith Gartaganis, Jeffrey Smith, David Sabourin
2. **Willis** - David Willis, Nicolas L'Écuyer, Marc-André Fourcaudot, Jeff Blond, Brad Bart
3. **Todd** - Bob Todd, Doug Fisher, Neil Kimelman, Ray Hornby
4. **Shi Yan** - Rock Shi Yan, Alex Hong, Yan Wang, Edward Xu, Zheng Zhang, Jianfeng Luo
5. **Brentnall** - Marielle Decelles-Brentnall, Rasim Sari, Ganesan Sekhar, Mike Shaw
6. **Bates** - Steve Bates, Bernie Lambert, Yi Peng Mai, Xiao Dong Zhao
7. **Buchanan** - Chris Buchanan, Allan Terplawy, Vincent Lambert, Peter Jones
8. **Roche** - Michael Roche, Daniel Lyder, James Galand, Gerry McCully, Sandra Fraser, Doug Fraser

CMTC - CANADIAN MIXED TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

1. **Kersey** - Don Kersey, Paddy Allan, William Koski, Kim Koski, Miro Kovacevic, Ana Kovacevic
2. **Xu** - Edward Xu, Yimei Cao, Yan Wang, Cindy He, Wenmin Chen, Junhui Zhu
3. **Gartaganis** - Nicholas Gartaganis, Judith Gartaganis, Kismet Fung, Jeffrey Smith
4. **Lin** - Jessica Lin, Peter Wong, Jianfeng Luo, Lisa Chen, Shigang Liang
5. **Spier** - Sheldon Spier, Barb Stewart, Mike Ainsley, Judy Harris, Michael Roche, Karen Cumpstone
6. **Fourcaudot** - Marc-André Fourcaudot, Pascale Gaudreault, Brenda Bryant, Jeff Blond, Candice Huang, Michael Wang
7. **Chen** - Yuan Chen, Zhang Zheng, Terry Du, Mingmin Zhu, Mike Xiao-Fang Xue, Sheila Xieyi Xu
8. **Hargreaves** - Mike Hargreaves, Debbie Hargreaves, Cindy Oishi, Gord McOrmond, Ernie Tradewell

CWTC - CANADIAN WOMEN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

1. **Galbraith** - Janet Galbraith, Cindy Oishi, Debbie Hargreaves, Ann-Marie Crabbe
2. **Smith** - Julie Smith, Judy Harris, Lesley Thomson, Ina Demme, Hazel Wolpert, Pamela Nisbet
3. **Connell** - Linda Connell, Deb Harper, Cydney Hayes, Curley Anderson
4. **Blank** - Sondra Blank, Susan Culham, Marielle Decelles-Brentnall, Brenda Bryant

CSTC CANADIAN SENIOR TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

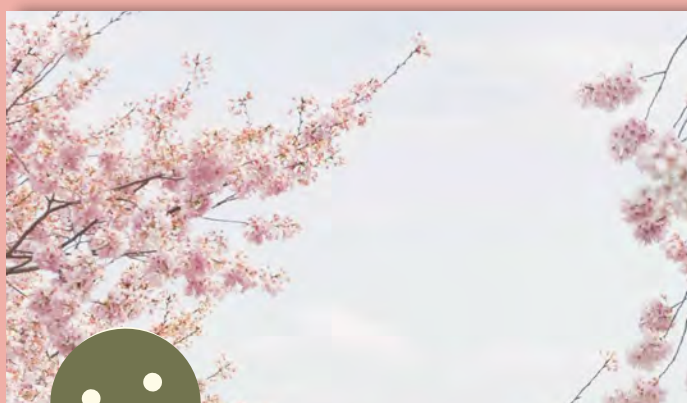
(note : No qualifying round was held)

Todd - Bob Todd, Doug Fisher, Neil Kimelman, Ray Hornby

Jacob - Dan Jacob, Bryan Maksymetz, Zygmunt Marcinski, Michel Lorber, Sandra Fraser, Doug Fraser

Findlay - Ian Findlay, Paul Janicki, Gordon Campbell, Dan Bertrand

Andrews - Doug Andrews, John Laskin, Steve Mackay, Lew Richardson, John Stevens, Mel Norton



My newest hobby is bridge, but I am not sure the other players like me a lot. The duplicate club is on the 3rd floor of a local building. In that way I get to still participate in my other hobby - trying to close the elevator doors before anyone else gets on.



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THREE HANDS FROM SCRATCH TO NOW

By Casper Gu



Editor's note: It is my pleasure to introduce Casper Gu. His article shares his experiences as, one of many, young promising Canadian Bridge Players. In addition, as of this Bridge Canada issue, Casper will be serving as **Assistant BC Editor**, taking the lead in all things from the **youth/Junior bridge world**.

THE YEAR: 2025 YOUTH NABC PAIRS GAME - A GOOD RISK TO TAKE

It was a warm sunny day on August 1st 2025, at the Pennsylvania Convention Centre, in downtown Philadelphia. I was holding in lots of emotion after our most recent boards, I could tell my partner had the same feeling. Playing at a table, I picked up my next cards. Sitting East, this was my hand: ♠-♥AJ102 ♦108542 ♣A1097. Dealer West, neither vul.

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	2♣	3♠
Pass	Pass	?	

My partner opened 1NT as West. I decided on Stayman, and 3♠ was bid by my left hand opponent. This was passed back to me.

I wondered if there was anything I could bid. I then evaluated the prospect of 4♥. Based on how my opponent had bid 3♠ after my partner's 1NT, it greatly boosts his chances of holding four or more hearts as well as showing zero wasted value in the spade suit. At the time, my hand looked solid for 4♥. With my opponent bidding 3♠, the chances for my partner to hold spades is quite low. Judging by how he is unlikely to have spades, partner might have the heart suit. Looking at my promising spade void and our combined minimum of 24 HCP, I decided to take a calculated risk, and bid 4♥. Of course, there was a chance that my partner might not have the hearts, but it was a risk I was willing to take.

The opponents bid 4♠, which my partner doubled for down two. After the game, the opponents called the director on me, saying that my 4♥ bid was illegal and could not be made with four hearts. They further explained that the bid was a psyche meant to push them into an unmakeable contract. The director ruled in my favor, saying, "He can bid what he wants. Score it up." It turns out a judgmental bid can look like a psyche until the director rules otherwise.

The full deal:

♠ J87	♠ -
♥ 9873	♥ AJ102
♦ QJ963	♦ 108542
♣ 2	♣ A1097
♠ KQ5	
♥ 654	
♦ AK	
♣ K8654	
♠ A1096432	
♥ KQ	
♦ 7	
♣ QJ3	

I also later found out that the best bid in that situation was to double, showing game going values.

This hand would later prove to be the catalyst of my success at the 2025 Philadelphia Youth North American Bridge Championships. While I did not make the most elegant bid, I can certainly say it was a bid in my own style. I flew back home to Canada the next week with a few more trophies for my bookcase.

THE YEAR: 2019

Before I could make such confident bids on the world stage, I was just a confused kid in a classroom.

When I was in grade four, living in Barrie, Ontario, almost no one in my class knew about cards. Despite my previous experience watching my grandparents play cards, no one really taught me playing competitively. It was only when I entered the gifted program, and took the mandatory bridge lessons, taught by Frank Mustoe and Ginny McKay, that I finally got introduced to the game.

Not surprisingly, being the naive fourth grader I was, I only took the class because we had to. Like most of my classmates at the time, I didn't want to sit at a table every Thursday for 50 minutes just to pick up a pile of cards for maybe 20 minutes. Soon after the school year ended, Frank and Ginny did not return until three years later as a result of the pandemic.

2014 TO PRESENT

I came to Canada at five, the first person in my family to attend school here. There was no map for anything I tried to do. No one in my family plays cards beyond the simple games my grandparents once played in China. In a game so often passed down through generations, I had no inheritance to rely on; everything had to be built from the outside.

That was my first introduction to bridge. It would have been short and forgettable for most people; however, I had just no idea how much meeting Frank and Ginny would impact my life.

Around two years later, after my father connected with his old university teacher, I started to learn how to play bridge from him. Having learned the basics from Frank and Ginny, I was able to quickly grasp the basics.

After around six months of learning with the coach, I built up the courage to visit the Barrie Bridge Club; here, I was able to meet the following people: Becky Dziurda, the club president; Jane Foster, the usual director; and Paul Campbell, Bill Koski and Kim Koski, three very skilled players. Other prominent figures at the club were Ross, Peter, Doug, and Michelle.

I still remember my first day at the club; everyone was surprised that I was there due to my age. That day, I played with Becky and surprisingly scored higher than Ross; this obviously made an impression as Becky even called my parents to inform them about this achievement.

From that point on, the club eventually became my second home. Whenever there was a PA day at school, or the holidays like March break, I would always visit the Barrie Bridge Club and play with someone there, usually with Paul Campbell. I was learning lots with everyone at the club, and I reviewed all of the content played with my coach later on.

Of course, in the beginning, my skills were quite rudimentary. This was one of the first hands I played at the club.

First Club Game with Becky - When I Misjudged the Numbers

Dealer South, neither vul.

	♠ K10862	
	♥ 98	
	♦ A42	
(me)	♣ KJ6	
♠ 9		♠ AJ4
♥ Q3		♥ K642
♦ J1053		♦ Q96
♣ A98752		♣ Q43
	♠ Q753	
	♥ AJ1075	
	♦ K87	
	♣ 10	

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
Pass	Dbf	All Pass	

Sitting West, I can only guess how my younger self blasted into 4♣ doubled down two. It must have been my past self, opening 3♣ and making my partner raise subsequently, which led to me playing an unmakeable contract.

Badly might I add! 4♣ should only be down one at most, not two. A possible reason could be me attempting to finesse the jack of spades.

After a mere month at the club, I decided to enter the 2023 Easter Toronto Regional for the last day; this would be my first tournament. The first tournament was chaotic as I joined in on the final day. I had a limited amount of time to find a partner, as I did not come with one. I eventually started playing with the woman at the partnership desk, Laurie Miller.

So, imagine my surprise when we got first in our section!

I remember being so proud and excited that I rushed into class to tell my teacher Mrs. Eisses the day after the tournament. Although most of the students in my class

understood Bridge, they had forgotten a lot of it over the years, but I could still tell they were happy for my success. This incident reminds me of something my dad said—the way to being successful is either doing things others can't, or doing things no one wants to do.

A month later, I was introduced to my long-time partner, who I still mainly play with today, William Liu. Meeting up online through coach, Michael Yang, our partnership was very successful. Being the same age, we were able to grow and adapt together.

From then until the late summer of 2024, I participated in many tournaments across southern Ontario from Orillia to Downtown Toronto, from Markham to Tillsonburg, usually with William Liu. It was also during this time that I was interviewed by the Toronto Star.

All of this built up to the 2024 Toronto NABC in the summer. One thing I did to raise money for the tournament was to start up a lemonade stand in my area. Playing at the tournament was an experience, with how many players and other youths I saw. Although I entered with high hopes, I unfortunately was not able to score as high as I wanted. After this, I made friends with two other junior players, Rudy Cheng, and Nina Ke. Both were just starting out as bridge players, and I was more than happy to help them out and practice with them.

Shortly after the tournament, I started playing with another junior called Zachariah Willie, nicknamed Zach at the Barrie Bridge Club. He seemed to show a great interest in Bridge, and judging by how fast he has learned with me and Paul Campbell, I can confidently say his passion for bridge is about the same as mine.

After all of that, I tried out for the Canadian Under 16 Bridge Team, and was successful along with William, Rudy, and Nina. I also met two other juniors, Aydan and Honwell. William and I made many friends in the Canadian Junior Bridge teams, namely Quan Chen, Max Cheng, and Cindy He as well as Olivia.

We trained and practiced for seven months under the careful guidance of our coaches, Terrence Rego and Terry Du. I even hosted a March break Bridge camp for some of my classmates and other juniors during this

time. We eventually headed off to Italy to play in the 19th World Youth Teams Championships.



An image taken with the U16 Thailand team. From left to right, William Liu, Ngarm-ek Punyisa, Bunaersa Anurak, Casper Gu, Thongnam Chantima, Rodhuab Panpreeya, at Salsomaggiore Terme, Italy.

THIRD HAND 2025 WORLD YOUTH TEAMS CHAMPIONSHIPS GAME - THE DECISION THAT NEEDED TRUST

As I was playing in Italy, I picked up one of my most noteworthy hands of all time.

It was the second day of the Championships, and the Canada U16 team faced off against the USA1 U16 team. I try my best to not flatter myself, but with Mexico not attending the championships for U16, this match really felt like it was deciding who the better U16 team in North America was.

Dealer East, E/W vul.

(me)	
♠ A982	
♥ -	
♦ AKJ94	
♣ Q872	
♠ 6	♠ J10
♥ Q10873	♥ AJ9654
♦ Q82	♦ 10753
♣ A943	♣ 5
♠ KQ7543	
♥ K2	
♦ 6	
♣ KJ106	

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
		2♥	2♠
4♥	5♥ ¹	Pass	6♠
All Pass			

1.Slam interest

When faced with a hand like this sitting North, my turn to bid only came up after a harrowing auction with East's 2♥, my partner William's 2♠, and West's aggressive 4♥ preempt.

With no chance of passing, I considered bidding a simple game in spades. 4♠ seemed promising. However, with my knowledge I've gained over the years, I can re-evaluate my hand a bit. Offensive voids are worth more in competitive auctions. With confidence, I bid 5♥, signaling slam interest. William accepted and bid 6♠, successfully making the contract and leading to our victory against the USA1 U16 team.

I remember that night; I wrote this board up for the World Bridge Federation daily bulletin for this event. The hand really shows how far I've come as a player. 5♥ is a difficult bid to make, for not only do you have to have the confidence to bid it, but you also need a partner who will understand it. I am really proud of everyone I've met along the way here.

A week later, I left Italy and traveled straight to Philadelphia to compete in its Youth NABC. However my main purpose while there was to achieve another milestone: earning my official teaching certificate so I can help educate other juniors. After getting said certificate, I played for the entire NABC and YNABC, Getting spectacular scores in my seven days there. Although not winning anything significant, me and my partner Aydan were still able to win many awards like one of the Baron Barclay National Youth Open Pairs events.

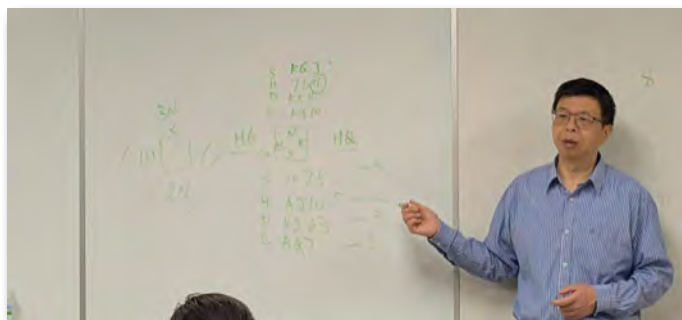
In the end, bridge has never been a game one person can conquer alone. Every step forward came from partners, teammates, mentors—people who taught a first-generation immigrant how to belong. Diversity is our strength, and only by finding ourselves with our peers can we grow.

Editor's note: Let Casper or Andy Stark know, if you are aware of any young Canadians in your community who may be interested in playing bridge.



INTERVIEW WITH TONG CHEN

By Casper Gu



Editor's note: This interview was conducted by email in January 2026. Responses are presented as direct quotes where indicated; otherwise they are paraphrased for clarity and length.

Tong Chen (陈通) is a bridge teacher based in Waterloo, Ontario. I reached out to him for an email interview in January 2026, and he kindly responded. I know Tong Chen personally because he coaches Aydan Jia, who is my fellow CBF U16 team member. It was a pleasure to learn more about Youth Bridge and bridge education from his perspective. Even though we could not meet in person, I enjoyed reading his thoughtful answers and learning far more than I expected. With that, I present this Q&A with Tong Chen. CG

Q. What is your job, and how do you fit bridge around it?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): I am a computer programmer. Since 2013, I've been the director of the

Waterloo Chinese Bridge Club, and I oversee the weekly bridge sessions and the technical side, such as scoring and contacting members. I've dedicated my evenings, weekends, and holidays to teaching youth bridge for free, both online and in schools.

I accomplish this by arranging for the juniors to play regularly in club sessions to gain experience. I also find great fulfillment in bringing junior students to ACBL tournaments to foster their competitive spirit. Alongside teaching, I also play in these tournaments.

Q. What brought you to Waterloo?

Tong Chen (direct quote): I came in pursuit of new opportunities and to create a better future for my family.

Q. When and where did you first learn bridge? How?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): I was introduced to the bridge community in high school. However, my bridge journey truly began during my freshman year of university. With the help of a few of my classmates, some bridge books, and hard practice, I was able to form a team to compete in university tournaments and other events.

Q. What was so appealing about the game?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): I guess you can say I was attracted to the rigorous logic of bridge. Its rigorous logic, paired with a pinch of luck. I follow contextual bidding clues and the play to deduce what's happening. This kind of logic gives me a great sense of achievement, whether I'm working out the card distribution or locating important cards in other players' hands.

Q. How do you teach bridge? What do you teach?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): I teach not only youth but also adults. My teaching methods cover basic bridge fundamentals like bidding, defence, declarer play, and common conventions (Stayman, transfers, etc.). We begin with theory before moving on to practice. What makes me unique, however, is that I diagnose each student's mistakes and bad habits, then adjust my teaching style for each student.

Q. How do you attract youth to bridge over technology and social media?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): I mostly attract people in my community, connecting with students through the local Saturday language school, along with any personal connections I may have.

Q. How would you introduce bridge to a new player in the first hour?

Tong Chen (direct quote): I would start with a "play first, bid later" approach. During the first hour, we focus on the mechanics of taking tricks and the importance of partnership. This allows new players to immediately experience the thrill of winning tricks, understanding HCPs, and basic strategy. By getting them to play a hand within the first fifteen minutes, they feel the joy of the game before being introduced to the formal logic of bidding and more advanced strategies.

Q. Roughly how many students have you taught?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): I have taught over 200 students since 2013, which is about 13 years.

Q. What keeps your students from coming back?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): The learning curve is steep. One issue is that many students are overwhelmed by complex bidding systems and various conventions before they get to the fun part of playing the hands. Memory is also an issue, with counting cards and remembering what's been played. All of these are hard to teach to kids.

However, what has to be the biggest issue is the sense of frustration. Bridge as a game takes a long time to learn without many rewarding factors, and students feel a deep sense of frustration or doubt in themselves when they make mistakes.

Most of my students range from seven to eighteen. The younger ones, in particular, struggle with the conceptual depth and are more likely to give up learning. At the end of the day, they're kids. They also have a wide range of interests, so scheduling conflicts are almost unavoidable.

Q. How do you help your students overcome mistakes or when they lose?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): I have a very strict rule: Students don't blame each other. Instead, I explain that a particular hand is difficult and prone to making errors. Even the most basic mistakes are easy to make at a table, and that is the thing I always teach my students first. I also prioritize affirming what students do correctly, and I point out only one or two specific areas of improvement to reduce the burden on students in an already complicated game.

Q. Why do you think bridge is good for youth?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): Bridge helps because of the thinking that is demanded from it. Counting and remembering cards help train a young person's memory and data-processing skills. Learning the bidding and conventions develops complex thinking and improves skill execution.

You see this not only in the auction, but also in the play. Coordinating defensive signals requires efficient

team communication and collaboration. Because the game demands probability thinking, students learn to estimate the odds and distributions, which can be used in real life. This cultivates the habit of making optimal decisions, and more importantly, making decisions quickly, a skill most card games cannot help improve.

Finally, it all comes together in the card play itself. Deducing hidden cards from the opponents' bidding and using that information during the play is vital for bridge and trains the logic and reasoning skills you use. Since a tournament can last for hours, it requires intense focus throughout. Even after a tough loss, students must immediately reset and face the next hand calmly, making it exceptional training for emotional control. That's why I strongly recommend bridge to young people.

Q. Aside from bridge skills, what other skills can your students take away from your lessons?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): When I teach, students are meeting local youth and their own community in clubs and tournament games. It helps them learn and experience social etiquette, sportsmanship, how to conduct post-game analysis, and communication in a crowded, higher-pressure setting.

Also, I mentor two to four student teaching assistants, providing hands-on opportunities to organize tournaments, including the technical parts like scoring and logistics management. They also get chances to lead workshops where they can teach bridge to their own peers and juniors, giving them valuable experience in the future that can be used in any situation involving teaching.

Q. Have you seen academic improvement in your students?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): Personally, I haven't tracked any specific statistics. However, I do believe bridge strengthens applications when students are able to explain what they've learned from it. The traits students learn from bridge can help them improve academically and prepare for future jobs. While we may not see direct academic improvement right away, some of my

students have gone on to very competitive programs, including the University of Waterloo for Computer Science, Harvard, and NYU Stern.

Q. What is your favourite moment, and most challenging moment in teaching bridge?

Tong Chen (direct quote): In my bridge teaching, my favourite moment is seeing a student's eyes suddenly light up with clarity after they truly understand the logic behind a great hand they have just played. It's in moments like those that they grasp the underlying strategy of the game and begin to approach it with more rigor and composure.

The most challenging part is maintaining the children's interest—especially when they are overwhelmed by the vast systems of bidding conventions, or when I need to manage conflicts between partners.

Q. How do you motivate yourself to keep teaching bridge?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): I persist in teaching bridge not because it's easy, but because it brings a sense of reward and fulfillment, cognitively and socially. My most direct motivation comes from seeing students transform, from how introverted children find confidence in themselves, and when restless, distracted teens become calm and deliberate through the game. I myself also learn from the game; I keep up with it to explain the complex probabilities and logic. I also need to constantly refine my own communication and analytical skills. This self-improvement is fulfilling as well in its own way.

Bridge fits naturally into highly academic communities, and it provides me with an opportunity to stay in touch and meet exceptional parents, and even brighter students. The high-quality social environment that the game creates is another sense of joy for me.

Q. What insight can you provide for juniors trying to learn the game?

Tong Chen (paraphrased): Always ask yourself why. Understanding the underlying logic of the game

instead of memorizing is the key. When you evaluate hands, you should judge them not by the convention or the result, rather by whether the decision was correct. Accepting that a correct decision can still lead to a bad result is a crucial mindset if you want to become an expert.

Bridge is also not a single-player game. A strong partnership is essential to success. I also think it's very important to find a partner of a similar skill level so you can both learn and improve together.

Q. You have successfully taught several students on the Canadian National team. How does it feel to see your students compete on the world stage?

Tong Chen (direct quote): Seeing my students compete on the world stage against top young players from around the globe, holding their own under pressure and making calm decisions at critical moments, gives me a profound sense of pride.

Since I only started playing in high school, seeing them master such a complex game at a young age makes me very hopeful for the future of bridge.

Interviewing Tong Chen strengthened my perspective and reshaped how I see junior bridge. As a teacher, progress doesn't come from piles upon piles of conventions. It comes from helping students handle the early pressure and gain the vital experience. No single mistake can define someone as a player, and you need to encourage an easygoing environment without blame.

When learning, bridge is not just a game, but a gateway to new opportunities in life and self-betterment. Tong Chen explains the changes he sees in his students and the benefits of the game very clearly, in a method that is easy to follow. Writing this article has left me optimistic about the future of Youth Bridge, especially with teachers like Tong Chen and his simple yet powerful coaching methods.

*If you would like to contact Tong Chen, his email is **grcsstudentbridgeclub@gmail.com**. If you would like to start a similar program or ask for any tips, he is quite happy to help.*



"Bridge is a game where teamwork and partnership trust are essential."



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DECLARER PLAY PROBLEM

SOLUTION PAGE 39

Contract: 6♠. IMPs. The bidding:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	6♠
All Pass			

♠ AQ874

♥ Q8

♦ A4

♣ AK62

♠ KJ1065

♥ A42

♦ QJ10

♣ Q7

Lead: ♥J. Trumps are 2-1. Plan the play.



Overheard at a duplicate game:

'Sorry for zoning out, partner. It's just, I've been having a bad day for several years.'



THE IBPA FILES: DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

SOLUTION PAGE 40

Editor's note: Here is a real life lead problem, adapted from an article in the November issue of the IBPA magazine. With the title, it would have been more apt for the December issue of Bridge Canada, but you can't have everything.

"There is no such thing as a blind opening lead, just deaf opening leaders."

Terrence Reese

Neither vul, playing Board-a-match scoring. N-S and partner are expert, or world class calibre players. N-S is not a regular partnership. As East you hold ♠J10984 ♥K ♦10985 ♣Q87, and hear this auction:

West	North	East	South
			3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♣
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♥
Pass	6NT	Pass	Pass
Dbl	7♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All Pass		

What do you lead?



MEET... SONDRA BLANK

Editor's note: *It is my pleasure to introduce Sondra Blank to BC readers. Sondra has recently take over as the Executive Administrator for the Canadian Bridge Federation. Although this is not a full time position, I know it to be very demanding, and we are fortunate to have Sondra supporting Canadian Bridge in this capacity. Let's learn more about Sondra...*

Q: How did you first learn to play bridge?

I had always loved card games, but it took some persistent encouragement from my grandmother before I finally gave bridge a try. At the time, I remember thinking, *why would I play a game where you bid a suit you don't actually have?* Once I started, though, I was completely hooked.

I was fortunate to take lessons from Barbara Seagram, which had a profound impact on my development as a player. Although I was too old to play juniors myself, there were always Canadian, and U.S. juniors willing and eager to play with me. Playing with them was humbling, but it did wonders for my bridge game.

Q: Do you have a bidding convention you can't live without?

I definitely couldn't live without Two Way New Minor Forcing. I have played it since I learned to play bridge, and it's so ingrained that I probably would not know how bid without it.

That said, one of my favourite conventions are transfers, and not just the basic ones. Transfers over 1♣, transfer Lebensohl, transfer advances, and transfers in competitive auctions. I love anything that improves hand placement, preserves space, and makes life just a little more uncomfortable for the opponents.

Q. Do you prefer structured system or more natural bidding?

I definitely prefer a structured system. Anyone who knows me knows that I love system. I find real comfort in structure and in knowing that bids have clear, defined meanings. I think that probably comes from the fact that I never really learned how to play "standard" bridge. Once I learned system, there was no going back.

Q. What's your most memorable bridge moment?

One of my most memorable bridge moments was very early in my bridge life. I probably had about two masterpoints when Barbara Seagram paired me with a player who had just won the CNTCs. It was my first time playing upstairs at Kate Buckman's in an Open game, so I was already a little terrified.

A few boards in, I confidently made a Michaels cue bid. My partner looked at me and said, very sternly, *"I always have 5-5 for that bid."*

I smiled back, looked down at my hand and of course I was 5-4. At that point, my main goal became making

sure I didn't end up as dummy. I honestly don't remember whether I declared or we defended, but my partner never said another word about it. So, either I got away with it... or he chose mercy.

That night was memorable for two reasons: we came in first and I doubled my masterpoint total. And I have never again bid Michaels without five cards in both suits.

Q: Your thoughts on bridge and the CBF today?

Bridge is evolving, and that's a good thing. Online platforms, better education tools, and broader outreach give us opportunities to grow the game in ways that weren't possible before.

For the CBF, the challenge is finding the right balance between modernizing and holding on to what makes bridge special. If we keep investing in education, youth, and making the game welcoming, I'm very optimistic about the future of bridge in Canada.

Q: What do you do outside of bridge?

Outside of bridge, life is busy. I am a mother of four, so balancing family life with competitive bridge is an ongoing and occasionally chaotic challenge. Professionally, I founded and ran a business in the personalized and promotional manufacturing space, which I launched in 2012 and closed in 2024. I now work part time for the Canadian Bridge Federation, so bridge has officially followed me home.

I am very committed to fitness and spend much of my free time doing CrossFit, weightlifting, and cycling. It keeps me grounded, calm, and is basically my therapy and stress relief. I also love animals. At home I have a dog, a cat, chickens, ducks, quails, and a pig named Pancetta. Despite all evidence to the contrary, I do not live on a farm.

Final message

Before the World Championships in 2022, I began experiencing some serious health issues. When I returned home from Poland, I was diagnosed with colon cancer.

The message I want to share is simple: get screened when you turn 50, even if you feel healthy and believe you are not at risk. Screening is preventive care, and early detection truly saves lives.

If sharing my experience encourages even one person to get checked, then it is worth talking about.



Playing in a local IMP game match, we played the first three boards, and passed them to the other table. A few minutes later the Director asked my partner and myself about Board 1:

Director: Do your hands look the same as when you played?

We looked it over carefully and agreed that these were our hands.

Director: That is interesting, as North has 14 cards and South 12.

Names withheld to avoid further embarrassment

WAITING FOR.... GODOT? A BRIDGE MOVIE

By Neil Kimelman

Note: A bridge movie is intended to give the reader bidding and play decision as the hand develops. For maximum enjoyment answer the bolded questions, before reading the suggested answers.

Playing IMPs, N-S vul, you pick up as South: ♠AQ ♥2
♦K109764 ♣J754. E-w are two strong, aggressive players. The bidding starts:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	?

What do you bid?

You have a good 10 HCPs, a solid six card suit, and good playing strength. A hand with which I would open the bidding. Despite all of these plusses, the best bid in my opinion is pass. Why? Because vulnerable vs not, an overcall should show a full opening bid. This sounds illogical, I know, as I said this is an opening bid. However, I would want at least 13 HCPs to overcall in this specific situation.

Besides, it's not the end of the world if you pass! Partner is a passed hand so the chances of making a game are very slim. Plus, you don't give the opponents info about your hand, which may be a big help if they end up declaring! Pass, and wait to see what happens. The bidding continues:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
Pass	2♣	3♥	?

Vulnerable, partner is not fooling around. They likely have at least five good clubs, 8-11 HCPs. North also has a good playing strength hand, jumping to 3♥ opposite a partner who likely has very little in points, and who knows how many hearts.

Anything else?

Yes! You need to ask yourself who can make what? The answer is that you are a favourite to make 5♣! Give partner ♠976 ♥87 ♦32 ♣AK10976, and five clubs is cold. What about the opponents? It wouldn't surprise me if they can make 3♥, or even 4♥.

So what do you bid?

5♣ seems obvious. You are bidding for a make. But the opponents also know that. They may bid 5♥ at this vulnerability, hoping to go for -100 instead of -600. I think the best bid is 4♣. +130 may still be a good score, and win IMPs. Maybe at the other table North opened 4♥, which would likely end the bidding. Making or down one on the above estimation. In these cases, +130 would result in winning either 2 or 11 IMPs.

However, the main reason to bid 4♣ is to buy the hand, preferably in 5♣. And that is what actually happened at the table:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
Pass	2♣	3♥	4♣
Pass	Pass	4♥	5♣
Pass	Pass	DbI	All Pass

Dummy
 ♠ AQ
 ♥ 2
 ♦ K109764
 ♣ J754

Declarer
 ♠ J953
 ♥ 105
 ♦ Q8
 ♣ AK862

East leads the ♥A (West follows with the ♥7, upside down count and attitude), and shifts to the ♠6.

What are your prospects and what is your plan?

First you need to take spade finesse at trick two. The ♠Q wins. So far so good.

It looks like you can make the hand if you can avoid a club loser, and set up your diamond suit. You can avoid a club loser if:

- the suit is 2-2, or
- East has a singleton Queen.
- East has a singleton 9 or 10, and you run the Jack of clubs at trick two.

What else?

It is not 100%, but I think you want to play the ♦8 from your own hand, on the first round of the suit. Therefore, you need to play a club to your hand, in order to achieve this goal.

What is your club play from dummy at trick 3?

Lead the ♣J and if it goes low, run it. Why? Clubs may well be 4-0, but rate to be at least 3-1. East has 7 or 8 hearts, and has some spade length with the play from trick two. If you lose to a stiff ♣Q or ♣Qx, that is life. This club play protects you against going down two, for -200, against expected bad splits. Plus, West might make a mistake.

When you lead the club jack, West covers with the queen, and East follows with the nine.

Now what?

You are just about there. It looks like West has ♣Q103. Win the ♣A, and play the ♦8 as planned. East plays the ace (West the two), and returns another spade, which you win, West following with the ♠4. Here is the position, with the lead in dummy:

Dummy
 ♠ -
 ♥ -
 ♦ K10976
 ♣ 754

Declarer (North)
 ♠ J9
 ♥ 10
 ♦ Q
 ♣ K862

Now what?

East is known to have 3 spades, 7 hearts, 1 diamond, and 1 club. They have two unknown cards. Lead the ♦K! If both players follow, ruff a diamond, ruff a heart and play diamonds. When West ruffs in, overruff, pull their last trump, and ruff a major card, and dummy is good. However, East shows out on the ♦K, discarding a heart.

What do you play from dummy?

Lead the ♦10, and take a ruffing finesse in diamonds. Assume West covers with the ♦J, ruff with the two, ruff a spade in dummy to reach this ending:

♠ -
 ♥ -
 ♦ 976
 ♣ 75

Immaterial

♠ -
 ♥ J7
 ♦ 5
 ♣ 103
 ♠ J
 ♥ 10
 ♦ -
 ♣ K86

Lead winning diamonds, planning on throwing your two major suit losers. If West discards, repeat the club finesse. If instead, West ruffs, overruff, pull their last trump, and ruff a spade to dummy, which is now high. The full deal:

♠ J953	
♥ 105	
♦ Q8	
♣ AK862	
♠ 742	♠ K1086
♥ J74	♥ AKQ9863
♦ J532	♦ A
♣ Q103	♣ 9
♠ AQ	
♥ 2	
♦ K109764	
♣ J754	

Lessons to Learn

1. Your expectations of a hand can turn on a dime. Here, it was wise not to enter the auction prematurely, and reevaluate when new information was made available. You were not waiting for Godot, but waiting for more information.

2. East should have opened 4♥ opposite a passed hand. Waiting for Godot, and opening 1♥, was the wrong strategy. East knows the opponents do not have a spade fit, so if they want to enter the auction, they have to bid at the five level. Hard to do, especially vulnerable!

3. East would have done better had they led the ♦A. Looking at dummy, it looks like their best chance, is for partner to hold the ♥J, and underlead their hearts and get a diamond ruff.

4. West should have been thinking about the trump suit as soon as dummy hit, and should have played small smoothly!! Maybe they were thinking, 'why did I name this article 'Waiting for Godot'? In any case, West needs to be ready!! Actually playing the ten on the first round of auction would have worked too!

5. Running the ♣J at trick two is probably the right play, but close. It is a hard play to make, because if it is wrong you look silly. But making the right play, even if it doesn't work is in itself its own reward! Maybe partner will also reward you for making the right play....maybe tickets to a good play by Samuel Beckett!



'Don't be afraid to fail. It's not the end of the world, and in many ways, it's the first step toward learning something and getting better at it.'

the GREAT CANADIAN BIDDING CONTEST



March 2026 TGCBC

Host: Neil Kimelman

For panelists, and their bids, see page 37

David Johnson was the reader with the best score. Way to go David! Bill Treble and Nick L'Ecuyer tied for the top panelist with 49, with an honourable mention to Stephen Cooper, with a score of 47. Bill will be the June TGCBC host. His bidding problems can be found after this article.

1. As South, you hold ♠53 ♥64 ♦AKQJ53 ♣AK5. Both vul, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♦
Pass	1♥	Pass	?

Bid	Score	Votes
3♣	10	15
3NT	8	1
2♣	7	2
3♦	7	5
2NT	6	0

This is a deal that is included, and analyzed comprehensively, in my new book, which I hope to publish later this year. The panel did a nice job on this problem, captured nicely by the following two panelists' comments:

L'Ecuyer: 3♣. Too good for 3♦ to me. I will force to game and hope partner can bid 3NT. Looks normal with 8 tricks.

Grainger: 3♣. I want to be in game and to make it as likely as possible for partner to declare 3NT.

Several panelists noted they were hoping to find 3NT:

Deng: 3♣. I would like to force to game with this hand... I would be happy to pass if my partner bids 3NT, otherwise, we need to figure out where to go.

Chen: 3♣. This hand is worth jump-shifting to 3♣. Opponents didn't bid spades. Partner can easily have a spade stopper and bid 3NT.

Lorber: 3♣. Prefer not to jump to 3NT without so much as a 1/2 stopper in Spades.

Du: 3♣. The hand is so rich in tricks that you do not want to stop below a game. Ideally, partner should bid 3NT if he has a minimum hand with a spade stopper. If the partner bids something above 3NT, you can always bid some number of diamonds.

For the mathematicians in the crowd:

Lebi: 3♣, I can provide 88.88% of the tricks for 3NT.

Thurston: 3♣. Sure hope partner can bid 3NT (a rare attempt to "right side" the likely game).

And a man with a plan (I like it):

Turner: 3♣. No guarantees of a perfect outcome but anything else would be craven. I'll pass 3NT; bid 5♦ over 3♦ or 4♣; bid 3NT over 3♠; and 4♦ over 3♥.

Cooper: 3♣. You need one trick for 3NT, before they can take five major suit winners. Although a 3NT rebid by South would show diamond tricks, partner's spades may need the protection of the lead. If you simply rebid 3♦, you may miss a worthwhile (or cold) vulnerable game facing as little as Kxxx, J109xx, x, xxx.

Miles: 3C. The ♦J makes the hand too strong for 3♦ or 2NT (and wrong sides it to boot). How was partner supposed to know to bid game with J10xx KQxx x xxxx? Let's hope we don't get raised. Over 3♦ I'll bid 3♥.

Jacob: 3♣ and over a possible 3♦/3♥, by partner I would try 3♠. I think that the hand is a tad too strong for a 3♦, rebid.

I guess 3♠ would be a punt, giving partner maximum space to make a descriptive bid. One panelist took a quicker route to 3NT:

Xu: 3NT. Maybe others like 3♦. But you can't blame your partner for passing 3♦ when he only has ♥A and 4-4 spades outside.

Completely agree about passing 3♦ Edward, although I think 3NT is premature, when many other contracts may be much better, and can be found over 3♣.

Balcombe: 3♣. We have an eight trick hand, so is too strong for a mere 3♦. Hopefully partner will rebid something other than 3♦ which will bring 3NT into focus. If my esteemed partner raises clubs, I will bid 5♦, which should show solid diamonds and no Major suit control. I expect not to make 5♦, but you never know.

Good plan Keith. Some panelists were not as confident:

Treble: 3♣, reluctantly. I'm actually a closet 3♦ bidder, but vul at IMPs with an eight-trick hand, I have to grit my teeth and go with the jump shift.

Lindop: 3♣. Can't bring myself to bid only 2♣. Partner usually understands that 3♣ can sometimes be a non-suit when we want to make a forcing bid but have no other choice. We just need a spade stopper from partner ... to go with the assumed heart stopper ... for 3NT to be the best contract. I don't want to jump in notrump and risk wrong-siding the contract.

What about 2♣?

Yes, our expert partner will recognize that our shape could be 5-4, 6-4, 6-3 or 7-3, to name a few. A rebid in the original suit implies three clubs.

Cimon: 2♣. More flexible than 3♦. Over a response of 2♦ or 2♥, I will rebid 3♦.

Marcinski: 2♣. I judge this hand as too strong for 3♦ (frightened by the absence of a diamond fit, responder may conservatively pass) yet too weak for a GF (and fraught with subsequent ambiguity) 3♣ so, fortified by the opponents' silence (which suggests to me that responder has some values and hence won't pass) channeling the late Eric Kokish (whose unequivocal advocacy for wide-ranging simple rebids in a lower-ranking suit, particularly clubs, when faced with the alternative of misdescriptive stronger rebids continues to influence my generation of fellow Montrealers) I opt to for the "road less travelled" of 2♣ and give responder as much leeway as possible (and hence "surviving this round of the auction") without either mis-describing the strength of my hand or wrong-siding notrump.

I sort of get 2♣, and am myself, a Kokish-follower in wide reaching non-jump new suits. But, for me, the problem with 2♣ on this hand, is that you cannot catch up, and get partner's full cooperation when you can make a slam. The 3♦ minority:

Todd: 3♦ - No need to take control. We could be cold for slam or only a part score.

Kuz: 3♦. No need to overstate my values as my partners strain to bid with bad hands and short diamonds.

I disagree with Bob. First, this hand is fully worth a jump shift. Plus, why would partner want to bid more with a poor hand, and a misfit?

Smith: 3♦. I think 3♦ is a fairly accurate description of this hand. I have great diamonds, but five losers. Of course, I would be pleased if partner were to take another call.

Stark: 3♦. Heavy, yes, but I don't want to mess around with a 3♣ bid. 2NT is tempting but a notrump contract

could be down off the top with a spade lead through the dummy. My aggressive partner will surely bid again if they have something.

Maybe, but it will not help finding the best spot, on most deals.

This was a hand that originally came up in an online competition. North held ♠A74 ♥A1032 ♦9 ♣QJ873. Over South's 3♦ bid, North bid 3NT, +720. A 13 IMP loss when the opponents played in 6♣.

2. As South, you hold ♠4 ♥64 ♦A943 ♣KQ7632. Neither vul, teams.

West	North	East	South
	2♠	Pass	3♣
Dbl	4♣	4♥	?

What do you bid?

Bid	Score	Votes
5♣	10	13
Pass	9	10
4♠	7	0

Partner has shown constructive hand with club support, with likely red suit shortness. You seem to have a good fit and clubs should play well. However, you do not want to go minus when 4♥ is not making, with a lively chance for a spade ruff. Is it making? Let's see what the panel thinks. First the fairly confident 5♣ bidders:

Thurston: 5♣. Unlikely to make but maybe show a profit one of the other two possible ways: 1) Cheap save or, 2) push them one higher.

Thurston raises a good point that is sometimes missed when making a competition decision, the opponents might bid one more, which may be too high.

Xu: 5♣. Between -100 or -300 vs -420. Obvious choice.

Deng: 5♣: 6-4 bid more?

Smith: 5♣. I picture partner with 6 Spades and 4 Clubs. I don't have a crystal ball, but I think it is reasonably

likely that we have no more than 3 tricks on defense. 5♣ shouldn't be too costly.

Agree, and it may make, either cold or by the opponents making a defensive error. Two panelist were worried about E-W having a slam, but made different choices:

Stark: 5♣. Passing might be right but that leaves 4NT available to sort out their keycards. Let's bid one more and make them guess.

Hornby: Don't think we can beat 4♥ on most layouts with 5♣ doubled likely off one or two.

Kuz: Pass. Hope we have done enough. Slam by E-W is still possible. A save doesn't rate to save much, as partner can't have two aces. Don't poke the bear anymore.

Contrast this with the next panelist who wasn't even sure that the opponents can make game.

Jacob: Pass. Not clear that 4♥ makes, or if the price of the penalty is worth another bid (unless we push the opps to 5 level). I have the minimum number of clubs for the auction. Unknown factors: number of clubs in partner's hand and how much wastage partner has in the spade suit. Partner is allowed to bid again.

How about the law of total tricks?

Du: 5♣. For his 4♣ bid, partners should have three or four clubs, likely indicating a shortage of hearts. This would result in a total of 19 or more tricks, making a 5♣ save a more advantageous option. In a rare scenario where the total number of tricks is 18, the pass has a greater likelihood of securing a plus score. However, a 5♣ bid would only incur a minor loss.

Miles: 5♣. Grateful our methods let us get involved and find a fit. Pass can't be the winner. We either need to double or bid on. If partner has 4 card club support then all hinges on whether they hold the spade ace. We may be able to cash and cross ruff the first six tricks. On the flip side, if partner has poor spades the opponents may be on for *six* hearts (Kxxxxx x xx Jxxx - though

partner may have bid 5♣ over double). I'll happily pass 5♥, hoping they make 10 or 12 tricks.

Cimon: 5♣. I have a defensive trick. Does my partner have A♠ and A♣? If so, we will defeat 4♥, but also make 5♣. Is my partner's support an invitation to sacrifice? He knows I'm short in spades, so those spades may not be good for defence. They may bid 5♥.

A panelist with a firm view of partner's hand:

Cooper: 5♣. I like non-forcing responses to weak twos. The key is whether North shows four card support. I think he does, so I press on to 5♣. If he has Axxxxx, xx, x, Axxx we might make it! It also could be a decent save, or push them up one. If he only has three clubs, we'll have a discussion, which will explore the meanings of the **FIVE** other bidding options he had, apart from Pass: Redouble, and all four bids at the three level! Since he chose to **RAISE**, I take that as emphasizing the length of the support.

Another panelist with a comprehensive analysis:

Marcinski: 5♣. Opener declined to rebid either 3♦ or 3♥ (which on general principles I would expect to show a club fit suggesting a red suit lead (typically shortness). I'm less sure as to the possible distinction to be drawn from his failure to rebid 3NT: perhaps one should show four clubs and the other 6223?). Should I take advantage of my serendipitous choice of 3♣ (with such poor club texture I would have guessed to pass) and try to bully the opponents into an indiscretion? Prospects are poor for four tricks defending 4♥, though possible (my guess would be ♦A opening lead hoping that opener holds a singleton diamond and ♣A with two hearts) ... If Opener has four clubs and either black ace then 5♣ rates to be -500 (possibly -200) and even -800 is not a disaster when compared to -620. OK – so I'll take the plunge ... but should I bid something other than 5♣? Since I'm on opening lead versus 5♥, I see no point to pussyfooting around with a murky 4NT.

Lindop: 5♣. While we do have potential on defense if partner holds the ♠A and/or a singleton diamond, we aren't likely to get too badly hurt in 5♣ and it may push the opponents one level higher. Maybe partner has a hand like ♠A109753 ♥82 ♦5 ♣A984. We are likely to make 5♣!

Yes 5♣ could make. Disagreeing with the bid and sentiment:

L'Ecuyer: Pass. Interesting treatment to have 3♣ as NF over a weak 2♠ bid. Not sure this hand qualifies for that (relatively bad suit and only a 6-card suit). I am not bidding again with spade shortness, a doubleton heart and only a 6-card suit. Partner knows about spade shortness and should do what is right if bidding further is right.

Lorber: Pass. The non-forcing 3♣ bid is not a method I have played. It seems that I have as small a difference in my spade and club lengths as possible for this bid and therefore I will not bid 5♣ at equal vulnerability.

Nice way to express this Michel. David G. makes a valid inference (as does Balcombe), and makes him not in favour of 5♣.

Grainger: Pass. They haven't made it, but 5♣ is definitely going down. Partner could have (or could still) bid more than 4♣.

Balcombe: Pass. I would not have bid 3♣, look at those horrible club spots. Give my partner good spades and a stiff club and I could be going a few down, maybe even doubled. I pass because I have already shown my hand. If partner has four card club support, they should have already bid 5♣.

Lebi: Pass and hope to beat it, I am leading a spade.

Chen: Pass. If my partner has the ♠A, 4♥ will be likely going down with a possible spade ruff. My partner could be also short in diamonds and we might get a ruff. Our 5♣ will be probably going down, losing the first two heart tricks.

Todd: 5♣ – who knows!

Treble: Pass. I'm willing to hear 5♣ from my partner (and I probably will if he has four of them) but not to bid it. Both white, I don't want to take unilateral action. My hand is more or less known to have a singleton spade, as I bid the non-forcing 3♣, so it's up to my cohort to evaluate his hand and make the decision.

Turner: Pass. We could beat 4♥ with two aces and two ruffs, and still go set in 5♣. Three things (other than vulnerability) incline me to defend:

- I have more defence (only 6 clubs) than expected
- Partner expects me to be very short in spades, so is more likely to hold ace empty than KQ say
- My LHO was under the gun over 3♣ and is more likely to be 2452 than 1561.

One of the things I have learned is to temper my taking a sacrifice when the opponents may not make their contract. This one is close, and I thank the panel for their thoughtful discussion. What happened at the table? This hand came up in a 2010 Rosenblum round of 16 match. The full deal:

Hamman	
♠ AJ10985	
♥ 8	
♦ K105	
♣ J94	
♠ K6	♠ Q732
♥ KJ95	♥ AQ10732
♦ QJ862	♦ 7
♣ A5	♣ 108
Zia	
♠ 4	
♥ 64	
♦ A943	
♣ KQ7632	

Zia sold out to 4♥ which could not be beaten. 5♣ is makeable, with less than perfect defence. At the other table, Nickell chose to pass the West cards (this could have been the subject of a bidding contest all by itself), and sold out to 2♠, making three. An 11 IMP game for the Martens team.

3. As South, you hold ♠AJ853 ♥64 ♦AQ10 ♣986. N-S vul, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
1♥	3♣	4♥	?
Bid	Score	Votes	
5♣	10	7	
Dbl	8	1	
Pass	7	12	
4♠	6	3	

Compared to problem #1, I am not in agreement with the panel's consensus, as represented by the scoring. I may be wrong, but will try and convince you to the merit of 5♣. But first, let's hear from the passers, all of whom are Canadian and/or NABC Champions:

Lebi: Pass, hope to beat this one also.

Smith: Pass. We may not have enough defense to beat 4♥, but it is easy to imagine that 5♣ will fail by at least two tricks, or more.

Lindop: Pass. Too much defense to bid any higher, especially at unfavorable vulnerability. I have no idea how many tricks we have on defense, but we could easily have four or five. If the cards lie unfavorably for us on defense, they probably lie equally unfavorably if we play the deal doubled.

I agree, that the defensive prospects are promising, and should be a factor in our decision-making.

Turner: Pass (again). Once again we could possibly beat it with spade ruffs into a minus score our way in 5♣. Or ♣A, two diamonds, and a spade.

Cooper: Pass. If he has a "book" bid = xx, xx, xx, KQJ10xxx, our "save" will go down 500 or 800. But they may not make! One of the guidelines to making a sacrifice bid is the faint hope that it might make. I don't see that here. Partner preempted, and they may be bidding aggressively. I would prefer to have 1 or 3 hearts as with 2, there is little evidence that partner is short.

Stephen says this is a book 3♣ bid. Is it? At other colours, yes. Or maybe even in 1st seat. But why would

you bid 3♣ here? You are giving the opponents a no lose, two-way option of bidding or penalizing, and giving a blueprint to the bidding and playing of the hand, which the opponents will do when right! To me, passing with this hand is clear over a 1♥ opener, at these colours.

Todd: Pass. I think I know this hand. 5♣ works I believe, but I passed then and I still pass.

Kuz: Pass. Why go minus when we may go plus?

Grainger: Pass. Vul vs not sacrifices are not big payers at IMPs, and if partner has the club ace, we could easily take four tricks, and still go for -500 in 5♣.

Agreed, but who says we are sacrificing? We often get the mindset that two bidding opponents and a pre-empting partner, makes it their hand. However, vulnerability should always be considered in your evaluation.

Xu: Pass. At unfavourable vulnerability I don't want take the risk.

But partner has already taken a risk, offering themselves up at three level, red vs white. They can see the colours, and obviously, to my way of thinking, have a pretty good, or very good playing strength hand, for their action, and think the benefits of bidding outweigh the minuses.

Yes, you have a very good chance to beat this contract, especially if partner has spade shortness. As in problem 2, we have to evaluate beating the contract against us making our game. Unlike problem 2, I think there is a much better chance for our side to make game. Is that game 4♠?

Deng: 4♠. It is obvious we have a fit on our side. We might make 4♠ if we have a double fit. 4♠ is a bid on the way to 5♣. If partner has a short spade, he/she could bid 5♣.

I agree, and play this treatment when South is a passed hand. But this is not a pass or correct situation here, because you might easily have had a hand where they want to play in 4♠, period. As South, what would do with something like ♠AQJxxxx ♥Ax ♦xx ♣x?

Balcombe: 4♠. Partner might hold something like ♠Kxx ♥x ♦xx ♣KQJxxxx since we are Red vs White. That probably allows us to make 4♠. Partner also might have 1-3-2-7 shape which could lead us to go down a zillion, with 4♥ also likely to go down. Isn't bridge fun! My instinct is to bid 4♠ but not play there if the opps vigorously doubled.

Miles: 4♠. Depending on how loud opener doubles, I'll decide whether to pull to 5♣. If the opponents are law-abiding citizens (not clear at favourable, responder could have some 3-4-5-1 or the like) partner should deliver short hearts. The disaster is when partner has AQxxxx of clubs with Kx offside; they can't make and we go down 1 or 2.

Now the argument for 5♣:

L'Ecuyer: 5♣ (and a fast 5♣). Tough hand. It seems it is often right to bid because they don't know who is bidding what to make. Chances are they will bid again at these colors. The alternatives are less appealing. Pass will end the auction and cannot be right with so much. 4♠ is dangerous with this hand, may start a doubling rhythm and could be going down when 5♣ is making (2137 per example on a non-top heart lead – who knows?). Double is cute but is not cooperative and will also end the auction. Anything could be right. I will bid 5♣ fast and hope to defend 5♥. Unless lefty can double 5♣, I expect righty to bid 5♥.

Good point Nick. Similar to problem #2, the opponents will sometimes bid too much. How about a scientific analysis:

Lorber: 5♣. While it is possible that 5♣ can be doubled and result in -500 while defending 4♥ could result in +50, it is also possible that 5♣ could make or go down one while 4♥ could also be making. Therefore I bid one more. It is hard to assign specific probabilities

to each outcome in order to assess the Imp odds of bidding versus passing.

For example, if I assume that 5♣ would result in +6imps for -200 vs -420 50% of the time, 600 vs -420 +14 Imps 10% of time, -200 vs +50 for -6 Imps 10% of the time, -500 into -420 for -2 Imps 10% of time and finally -500 vs +50 for -11 Imps 20% of time. The total would be 3+1.4-.6-.2-2.2 for an expected gain of 1.4 Imps by bidding. The suggested total is an incomplete illustration in that 5♣ could lead to 5♥ (which I would double yielding -650/+100/+300) or even +750 in 5♣ doubled.

Stark: 5♣. We might be an onside diamond king away from making this! Will double 5♥ if they bid on.

Close guess Andy...but the onside diamond king was for 6♣, not 5♣! I guess Ray doesn't remember holding the North hand:

Hornby: Pass. 5♣ isn't making and 4♥ could easily go down.

Treble: 5♣. This is not a certainty to make but I expect to be one trick short at worst and since I am bidding game at unfavorable colors, one of the non-vulnerable opponents might take the push to 5♥.

Thurston: 5♣ – again! (See options 1 and 2 above).

Only one panelist commented on the difference between a 3♣ bid at these colours versus other vulnerability combinations. In addition to a very good 7 (or 8) card suit, they could easily have 7-4 shape, or the like.

Cimon: 5♣. Partner bids 3♣ vul. I have a small chance to make five. Anyway, I have a good chance they will bid 5♥, which I will double.

Marcinski: Pass. Prospects for defeating 4♥ are far too good to warrant the certainty of not inexpensive defeat in 5♣ doubled.

Chen: Pass. Our 5♣ will be likely going down with the big hand sitting behind me. Opponent's 4♥ most likely

will be down too with losing probably 1 club, 2 aces and 1 or 2 more in spades and diamonds.

Jacob: Pass; Partner should have a decent club suit for the bid Vul. Vs Not, but the spade suit is not good or long enough to step in. Partner may have ♠Qx, and a singleton heart, in which case 5♣ could make, but all these are long shots. The hand has good defensive cards.

Du: Double: It doesn't seem either side can make a game. Partner's preempt at vulnerable side should have some values, which helps the defense against 4♥.

Passing is a license for non vul opponents to walk all over you. I would rather double. This is a hand that I actually held. I bid 5♣, expecting to have a good play for game. The full deal:

♠ 2			
♥ -			
♦ J8763			
♣ AQJ10752			
♠ K1094		♠ Q76	
♥ AQJ952		♥ K10873	
♦ 54		♦ K92	
♣ 3		♣ K4	
	♠ AJ853		
	♥ 64		
	♦ AQ10		
	♣ 986		

What happened at the table?

West	North	East	South
1♥	3♣	4♥	5♣
5♥	Pass	Pass	6♣
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass

5♥ convinced me partner was likely void, so I bid 6♣, realizing that it might be a very silly bid (and I am sure many of you agree 😊). It wasn't. +1540, when one of the two finesses worked.

4. As South you hold ♠102 ♥10976 ♦1052 ♣AKQ10. Neither vul, matchpoints.

West 1♦ **North** Pass **East** Pass **South** ?

What do you bid?

Bid	Score	Votes
Pass	10	19
2♣	8	1
1NT	7	2
1♥	6	1
Dbl	7	0

The Panel gave a strong consensus that passing is right. I agree. Paul, didn't:

Thurston: Spades? Whither goest thou spades? But I teach not to sell out at the One level at matchpoints, so I'll bid 2♣ just in case a student reads this feature. At least I'll get a club lead against their (possible, maybe even, cold) game.

The vast majority of the panel chose passing:

Lorber: Pass. Partner didn't overcall at the one level which he might have done with a decent 4 card major or many 5 card majors.

He is also unlikely to be short in diamonds as he would have been more likely to act. Therefore, it is likely that the opponents have a better place to play and could likely outbid us.

I would happily overcall in a strong 4 Card Major at the one level, but a lead directing 2C on a 4 Card suit with short Spades could lead directly to several bad outcomes,

Or more succinctly:

Grainger: Pass. Where am I going?

Du: Pass. Partner did not act. His hand may be weak or he has long diamonds but insufficient to overcall 1NT. If you bid here, opponents will either find a suitable fit in spades or end up playing 1NT, or penalizing your side.

Treble: Pass. Although I despise selling out to the one-level at pairs, bidding is more likely to be wrong than right. Where are the spades? If my partner has them along with heart shortness, he could have stretched to overcall or make a takeout double. We don't have the values for a balancing 1NT or the shape for 2♣.

L'Ecuyer: Pass. Short spades and 3 cards in their suit are always a pass to me. I would not understand anyone bidding here – matchpoints or not. If ever someone would bid and it is right to bid, partner will not let you off the hook (expecting more of a hand). Bidding would be “uncivilized”. 😊

Todd: This is a coin toss. Which hand does partner have? If partner is trapping or similar, I should bid 1NT. If RHO is weak and shapely I should pass. My coin says Pass.

Cooper: Pass. Weird. Partner is either very light, or has diamond length. They are more likely to find a spade fit than we are to improve this contract for our side.

Smith: Pass. I have nothing to bid, so I guess we will defend against 1 Diamond.

Kuz: Pass. 100%. Don't care what happens next.

Turner: Pass (again). It's possible they can make 2 or 3 spades and not 1♦. Not only that, it's quite difficult bidding after a reopening double since the reopener has an even wider range than an opening bid. My second choice is 2♣, since if partner has a good hand he won't overbid lacking a club honour, and a club lead might be worth lots of match points if they do grab the contract. Last time this auction occurred at my table (albeit at IMPs) the opener could make 1♦, but also 2NT. 😊

Xu: Pass Balancing could be very dangerous to push the opponents to the better major contract.

A very important principle at matchpoints. 2♦ making is only -90, better than -110 or -120.

Lindop: Pass. Yes, I'm supposed to balance to keep the auction alive for our side, but I don't have support for spades, don't have a stopper for notrump, am unwilling to bid that heart suit at the one level, and don't want to go to the two level to bid clubs. If partner couldn't act,

this is probably their hand, and they may have a better spot if I don't keep quiet.

Cimon: Pass. The partner could not double 1♦ or overbid. Bid now may push E-W into a better contract.

Stark: Pass. If partner can't overcall a major or 1NT, then the opps are more likely to have missed something and not us.

Jacob: Pass; 4 hearts, 2 spades, all 9 HCP in clubs, partner couldn't overcall anything, not much to say....

Chen: Pass. My partner should have some points outside of clubs. If he has a major suit with length, he would likely have overcalled it. Therefore he has probably a flat hand or with good diamonds. West might have a huge hand and opponent could have a better contract than diamonds. I don't want to push them to find that better contract.

The other good reason, the opponents could well have a game in spades. The only other panelists that chose to bid was Miles, and Thurston's long-time partner Balcombe. But they took a different action:

Balcombe: 1NT. I have four 10-spots for a reason. I chose not to believe that reason was not to pass out a one level contract.

Miles: 1NT. Can't bring myself to pass all white at matchpoints where it pays to compete most aggressively.

Hornby: 1♥. Reluctantly.

Speaking for the panel:

Marcinski: Pass. An old chestnut: (a) I may have precious little defence vs. the opponents' 4M contract; and (b) partner's failure to overcall reduces the odds that we have a worthwhile part score while increasing the odds that the opponents have a worthwhile major fit. This reasoning holds true even at Pairs.

A (very) distant 2nd choice would be 2♣, both for lead-directing purposes and as a feeble attempt to impede the opponents' ability to find the extent of their major fit and its prospects.

The full deal:

♠ K974	♠ 102
♥ 843	♥ 10976
♦ 983	♦ 1052
♣ 973	♣ AKQ10
♠ J65	♠ AQ83
♥ AJ5	♥ KQ2
♦ K	♦ AQJ764
♣ J86542	♣ -

At the table East balanced and N-S got to the spade game.

5. Pairs, neither vulnerable, north dealer. As South you hold ♠1072 ♥J5 ♦AKQ103 ♣A83

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	?

Bid	Score	Votes
2NT	10	5
3♣	8	14
3♥	8	4
3♦	5	0

What do you bid?

Not an uncommon situation. You are in a game forcing auction, but have yet to determine in which denomination to play, and how high to bid. Here most experts play that the 2♥ rebid can be made on a five card suit, so that should help guide our decision-making.

However, before we get to the meat of the actual problem I would like to examine this practice more closely. The argument for rebidding 2♥ is that a 'high reverse' should have extra values. On this auction 2♠ and 3♣ would be high reverses.

I disagree with this approach. I always want to show my shape first. We can then determine if we have extra

values. Plus, just because you have extra high cards, does not mean that you have a good fitting hand. And vice versa. That is why strong jump shifts have gone the way of the dodo bird, as too much room is taken up initially, making it harder to determine where to play. Miles was the only panelist to mention they agreed with this approach.

Ok, I feel better... back to the problem at hand. There are two main choices, 2NT and 3♣. Let's hear from the latter's advocates:

Thurston: 3♣. Next month can I please be dealt hands that might bid something other than clubs? (Hmm – did Mr. K set a trap baited with clubs?)

No Paul, just the way things turned out.

Xu: 3♣. My hand is not suitable declaring notrump. 3♣, then see what happens.

Cooper: 3♣. The best “natural” bid I can make, allowing partner room to rebid hearts, bid notrump, or show a diamond preference. If he raises clubs I will bid a non-forcing 4♥, showing a doubleton.

Lorber: 3♣. Forced by symmetry of previous answers - (3C P 5C P 3C)...

An unorthodox way of making a bidding decision, but hey....

Lorber... I could bid 2NT or 3NT, but I have no stoppers to “protect”. Hopefully, we won’t bypass 3NT with six spades between us. My plan is to raise 3♥ to 4♥, bid 3♥ over 3♦ (and then bid/pass 3NT next), bid 3NT over 3♠ and pass a direct 3NT over 3♣. Partner should be aware of the fact that I could be bidding a stopper and therefore not raise clubs unless 3NT is out of the question (over which I will try 4♥).

Lebi: 3♣, if pard doesn’t bid notrump, hearts it is.

Cimon: 3♣. If 2♥ promises 6, I bid 3♥. On 4♣ I bid 4♥.

Jacob: 3♣; 2♥, doesn’t promise 6. Over 3♦ I can support hearts.

Du: 3♣. This bid provides room for the partner to explore alternative landing spots. If the partner bids 3♦, you can bid 3♥ for tolerant support. If the partner bids 3♥, you can raise to 4♥. Alternatively, the partner may bid 3NT, which guarantees the contract is right-sided.

Turner: 3♣. My partner could be 4-5-1-3 with poorish hearts, so it’s premature to raise hearts. If 3♣ buys a raise, my 4♥ will show this kind of holding. No big objection to 3♦ or 3♥ either, but I think 3♣ is a little more flexible.

Smith: 3♣. I want to hear partner’s next bid. I will pass 3NT, raise 3♥ to four, and bid 3♥ if partner bids 3♦.

Miles: 3♣. I wrestled with this one for a while and hate every choice. I expect 2NT to win the poll. This is why I have a strong preference for 2M rebid promising 6. Note that over 2♣, which may be as short as two over a 1♠ opening, pairs should consider using 2♦ as the catch all waiting bid which saves room and allows 2♥ by responder (after 1S-2C-2D) to be an asking relay. 2NT likely wrong sides notrump by exposing either black suit (♠AJ, ♣Qxx as examples) and we could be off the whole spade suit. I’ll aim to temporize with the least evil and allow partner to bid notrump or for us to show modest heart support over 3♦.

Kuz: 3♣. A distortion. Most partnerships play that 2♥ does not guarantee 6. Let us fumble around to try to determine proper strain to go minus. LOL.

Chen: If my partner’s 2♥ guarantees 6+ hearts, I bid 3♥; If he can have only 5 hearts, I bid 3♣.

There were three heart supporters:

Lindop: 3♥. Slam is possible if partner has something like: ♠AQ3 ♥KQ10863 ♦62 ♣K3. Let’s see if partner is interested. I suppose partner could have only five hearts and an awkward rebid, in which case we may belong in 3NT. However, 4♥ could still be the best contract if partner has something like: ♠63 ♥AQ1073 ♦62 ♣KQ42.

Stark: 3♥. Jack and one is not horrible. There might be votes for 2♠. If partner raises spades, you can hopefully recover with 3NT. 2NT is right on shape but wrong on lack of a spade stopper. 3♣ has merit. But supporting with support trumps all! If partner bids 3♠ next we have an easy 4♣ bid and we make slam when partner has ♠ Kx ♥ AKQxxx ♦ Jx(x) ♣ xx(x). As Kantar would say, "You bid so beautifully."

Hornby: 3♥. A bit too good for 4♥.

I would say a lot too good. 4♥ should be reserved for a bare minimum not suitable for slam. Maybe ♠Qx ♥Jx ♦KJ874 ♣A43. Contrast this with the actual hand.

Todd: I have a lot of controls. I raise to 3♥.

At least they have simplified the auction by agreeing hearts as trumps. The downside is that diamonds (or another suit) might be the better denomination to play in. A different treatment is presented by this panelist.

Marcinski: 3♣. I prefer the agreement that the cheapest bid (here 2♠) is a default or waiting bid, which would afford natural integrity to a 3♣ rebid. Absent such express agreement however, I prefer to "bid where I live" since all continuations following the 2♠ alternative are fraught with difficulties (which is not to say that 3♣ necessarily will lead to a walk in the park). The other candidates are also-rans in my book: 2NT is distasteful for reasons of "siding" (though I wouldn't mind it if my ♠10 were swapped for the J); 3♦ overstates the diamonds while taking away room required to come to grips with the adequacy of our black suit stoppers for the most likely game of 3NT; bearing in mind that Opener's 2♥ rebid was a "default" and did not promise a 6th heart.

I am disappointed that all of the above panelists did not address, to what I see, as the main issue. How about the 2NT bidders?

Grainger: 2NT. Can't do anything else, if 2♥ promises six, or partner makes a call suggesting six over 2NT, will support hearts later. Partner can, and should expect three if you raise hearts now.

Deng: If 2♥ promised a six card suit I would bid 3♥. If 2♥ is a catch-up bid, then there is no perfect choice. I would bid 2NT.

Getting closer...Keith partly contrasts the difference between 3♣ and 2NT...

Balcombe: 2NT. I don't like bidding suits that I don't really have. I don't know if partner is guaranteeing a six card suit. I like to rebid 2♥ with 5 card suits with "stopperless" 5332 hands and minimum openers with side Clubs. Hopefully my own stopperless won't cause an issue.

And Bill brings us closer...

Treble: Good problem. 2NT is my choice, as I want to preserve the maximum bidding space for our side. I can now bid 3♥ over 3♣ or 3♦ by opener. If he instead raises to 3NT, I will convert to 4♥. That should be a mild slam try with a doubleton honor in hearts.

3♣ paints a different hand type than 2NT. Why should we make up a suit, instead of showing our hand type, albeit without a stopper in an unbid suit? And Nick is spot on (as usual):

L'Ecuyer: 2NT. Maybe a style thing? Is 2♥ promising six? To me, it does not. In that case, I would just bid 2NT, spade stopper or not. A 2NT bid is practical and leaves room for partner to bid 3♥ with 6♥ and something else with some shape. 3♣ would be tortuous for no reason and maybe mislead partner as to the nature of my hand. I also dearly want to bid 3♥ after my 2NT and 3♣ or 3♦ by partner.

Yes, thank you Nick! 2NT is much better than 3♣, in my view. First the latter distorts your hand type. Partner can reasonably think you have a minor two suiter, even 6-5 or so.

2NT shows your hand type and gives partner maximum space to further describe their hand. Yes, there are hands where consideration is needed to consider right siding the contract, and would be correct with spade shortness. But you have a useful

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fragment if you end up in 3NT, making it more unlikely that the defenders can take five tricks in that suit.

This is a hand from a bidding contest. Partner held ♠A ♦AKQ92 ♦987 ♣J1094. Over 2NT, North will be 3♦, and you have unimpeded auction to 6♦, or even 7♦. Over 3♣, partner faces a tough bid, and may well choose 4♣. Now it is almost impossible to get back to diamonds. Despite no spade stopper, 2NT saved space, and led to a good auction, to a cold slam:

North	South
1♥	2♦
2♥	2NT
3♦	4♣
4NT	5♦
5♥	6♦

Thanks for participating, and putting up with my passionate rants and biases, towards bidding excellence! See you in June. Summer.



Remember, partner is trying to make the best decisions at the table, the same as you. Be kind! Always try to look at things from partner's point of view.

Neil Kimelman



PANELIST ANSWERS

March 2026 Bidding Contest

		Hand 1		Hand 2		Hand 3		Hand 4		Hand 5		
	Name	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Total
	Keith Balcombe	3♣	10	Pass	9	4♠	6	1NT	7	2NT	10	42
	Fengming Chen	3♣	10	Pass	9	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♣	8	44
	Francine Cimon	2♣	7	5♣	10	5♣	10	Pass	10	3♣	8	45
	Stephen Cooper	3♣	10	5♣	10	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♣	10	47
	Eve Deng	3♣	10	5♣	10	4♠	6	Pass	10	2NT	10	46
	Terry Du	3♣	10	5♣	10	Dbl	8	Pass	10	3♣	8	46
	David Grainger	3♣	10	Pass	9	Pass	7	Pass	10	2NT	10	46
	Ray Hornby	3♦	7	5♣	10	Pass	7	1♥	6	3♥	7	37
	Dan Jacob	3♣	10	Pass	9	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♣	8	44
	Bob Kuz	3♦	7	Pass	9	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♣	8	41
	Robert Lebi	3♣	10	Pass	9	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♣	8	44
	Nick L'Ecuyer	3♣	10	Pass	9	5♣	10	Pass	10	2NT	10	49
	David Lindop	3♣	10	5♣	10	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♥	7	44
	Michel Lorber	3♣	10	Pass	9	5♣	10	Pass	10	3♣	8	47
	Zyg Marcinski	2♣	7	5♣	10	Dbl	8	Pass	10	3♣	8	43
	Danny Miles	3♣	10	5♣	10	4♠	6	1NT	7	3♣	8	41
	Julie Smith	3♦	7	5♣	10	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♣	10	44
	Andy Stark	3♦	7	5♣	10	5♣	10	Pass	10	3♥	7	44
	Paul Thurston	3♣	10	5♣	10	5♣	10	2♣	8	3♣	8	46
	Bob Todd	3♦	7	5♣	10	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♥	7	41
	Bill Treble	3♣	10	Pass	9	5♣	10	Pass	10	2NT	10	49
	David Turner	3♣	10	Pass	9	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♣	8	44
	Edward Xu	3NT	8	5♣	10	Pass	7	Pass	10	3♣	10	45



JUNE 2026 PROBLEMS

Host: Bill Treble

Readers are invited to submit your solutions, to TGCBC by May 1st. Top point getter will be mentioned.

1. As South, you hold ♠KQ9 ♥AJ874 ♦AK5 ♣AK. Neither vul, IMPs.

West	North	East	South
		Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦ ¹	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣ ²	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠ ³	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣ ⁴	Pass	?

- Shows 2+ controls.
- Puppet Stayman, asking for 4- or 5-card major.
- Cuebid, agreeing hearts as trump.
- 1 or 4 key cards.

a) Do you agree with 2NT? If not, what would be your rebid choice?

b) Do you agree with the 4NT keycard ask? Or would you have taken it slower?

c) Now you can ask for the trump queen with 5♦, but it will commit your side to slam if partner has it. Yes or no?

2) Matchpoints, South dealer, E-W vul. As South you hold ♠K5 ♥762 ♦Q6 ♣AQ9543.

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♠	Pass	?

1. You play Drury.

a) Do you agree with South's pass or would you have opened this hand in first seat?

b) What is your bidding plan now?

3) Matchpoints, North dealer, E-W vul. As South you hold ♠AQ105 ♥QJ10 ♦KQ ♣AK106.

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦ ¹	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	?

1. Hearts.

What is your call?

4) Matchpoints, North dealer, N-S vul. As South you hold ♠K5 ♥KJ873 ♦983 ♣A62.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	?

What is your call?

5) Matchpoints, West dealer, neither vul. As South you hold ♠AQ92 ♥85 ♦Q95 ♣K1063.

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♣ ¹
Pass	3♦	Pass	?

1) Club support with 8+ HCPs, creating a game force.

What is your call?

DECLARER PLAY PROBLEM

PROBLEM PAGE 19

Contract: 6♠. IMPs. The bidding:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	6♠
All Pass			

♠ AQ874
♥ Q8
♦ A4
♣ AK62

♠ KJ1065
♥ A42
♦ QJ10
♣ Q7

Lead: ♥J. Trumps are 2-1. Plan the play.

West is unlikely to have led from the king of hearts, where a passive lead is likely to be much better. There are eleven tricks on top, with a winning diamond finesse, your twelfth trick. That is a 50% chance. As declarer you always try to look for the best possible line. Assuming that East has the ♥K, you have a 100% line on this deal!!

Play the eight of hearts from dummy at trick one. Win the ace of hearts, and then draw trumps with the ace and king. Next, cash the queen, king and ace of clubs, discarding a heart from hand. After ruffing dummy's remaining club, exit with a heart to dummy's queen and East's king.

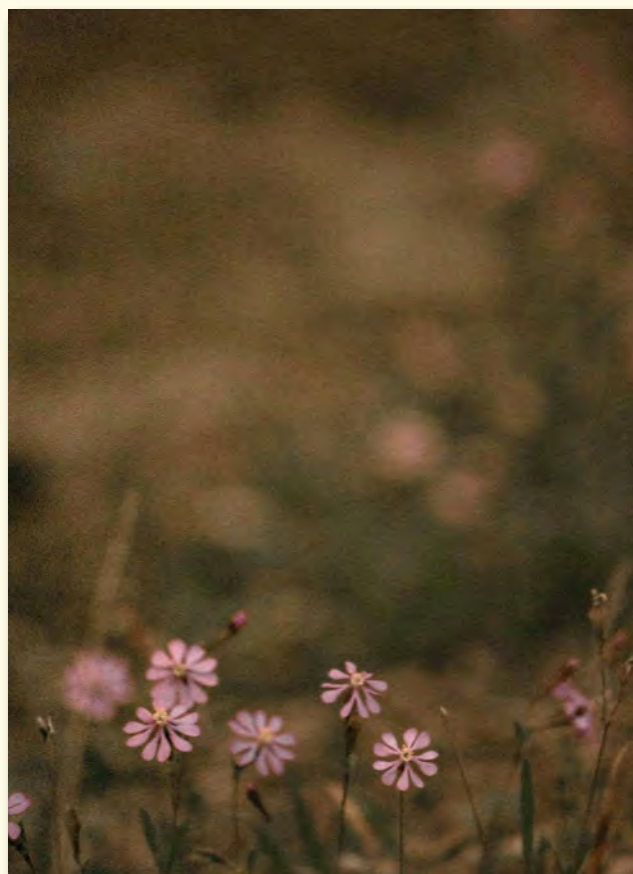
East is now end-played, and forced to lead a red suit. If a heart, ruff in hand and discard dummy's four of diamonds before claiming twelve tricks. A diamond return gives you a free finesse. The full deal:

♠ AQ874
♥ Q8
♦ A4
♣ AK62

♠ 9
♥ J1097
♦ 8632
♣ 10543

♠ 32
♥ K653
♦ K975
♣ J98

♠ KJ1065
♥ A42
♦ QJ10
♣ Q7





THE IBPA FILES: DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

PROBLEM PAGE 19

Editor's note: Here is a real life lead problem, adapted from an article in the November issue of the IBPA magazine. With the title, it would have been more apt for the December issue of Bridge Canada, but you can't have everything.

"There is no such thing as a blind opening lead, just deaf opening leaders."

Terrence Reese

Neither vul, playing Board-a-match scoring. N-S and partner are expert, or world class calibre players. N-S is not a regular partnership. As East you hold ♠J10984 ♥K ♦10985 ♣Q87, and hear this auction:

West	North	East	South
			3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♣
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♥
Pass	6NT	Pass	Pass
Dbl	7♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All Pass		

What do you lead?

Solution

You have a surprisingly good hand for this auction!! If the bids can be believed, North has a hand with long hearts and secondary spades? What about West? Clearly ♦A with a side ace, or

another high diamond. South? They pre-empted in diamonds and then bid 4♣. Maybe they have clubs as a second suit? Can you put together a deal that fits these parameters, where the lead makes a difference?

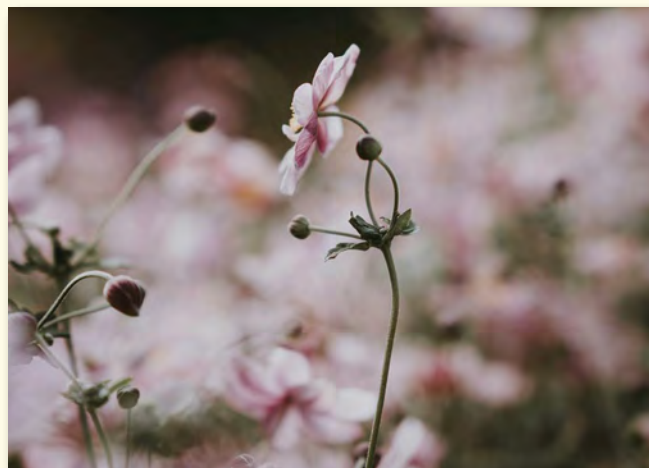
If you ask yourself these questions, the solution seems within reach. But there is still one obstacle standing in the way of coming up with the correct answer. Would it make any difference if you held ♠J10984 ♥2 ♦10985 ♣Q87?

This was the full layout:

♠ AKQ5	
♥ AQJ10873	
♦ -	
♣ AK	
♠ 732	♠ J10984
♥ 9642	♥ K
♦ AQ7	♦ 10985
♣ J52	♣ Q87
♠ 6	
♥ 5	
♦ KJ6432	
♣ 109643	

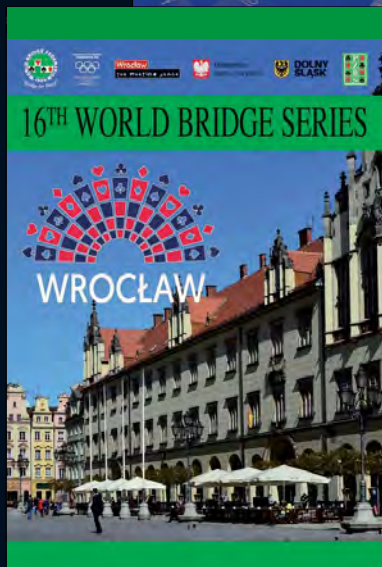
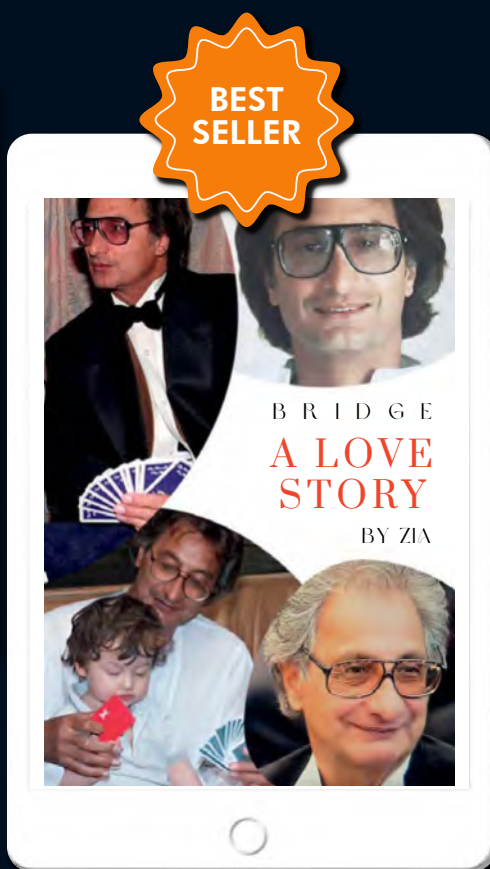
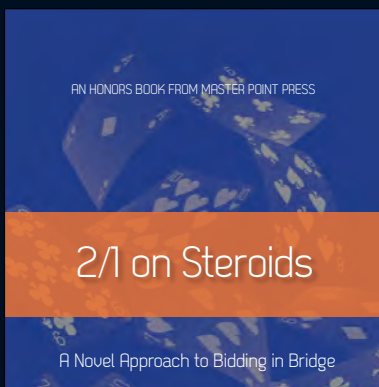
The actual East led ♦10. Declarer ruffed the diamond, ♠A, ruff a spade with the ♥5, back to their hand with the ♣A, and led the ♥A and prayed. Their wishes were delivered.

Yes Terrence, as usual, you were right. East's hope that declarer will lose a finesse to your ♥K, based on the bidding, is virtually impossible.



MONTH	DATE	EVENTS
MARCH	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	March 16 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Silver Senior Pairs (1 of 2)
	March 21-22	CNTC B & C on RealBridge
	March 25 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Charity Game (1 of 2)
APRIL	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	In person Clubs - Charity Games
	April 13	Helen Shields Rookie Master Game - F2F Clubs
	April 30 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Charity Game (2 of 2)
	April 25-26	Canadian Open Pairs Championships - Online
MAY	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Grass Roots Fund Games
	May 18-24	Stardust Week – Gold Points at Clubs
JUNE	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	North American Pairs - Flight Open, A, B and C
	June 15 -21	Canadian Bridge Championships in Penticton, BC
		CNTC A-B-C / CWTC / CSTC / CMTC / COPC
	June 14-21 (1 day)	Day of Bridge / Alzheimer Societies
JULY	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	North American Pairs - Flight Open, A, B and C
AUGUST	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	North American Pairs - Flight Open, A, B and C
	August 3-8	World Youth Transnational Championships - China
	Aug 20 - Sept 3	World Bridge Series - Poland (Open Year)
SEPTEMBER	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Qualifying games for the 2027 CBC - COPC & Teams
	All Month	International Fund Games
	Sept 1-30	Registration for CBF Online Team League
	Sept 28 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Silver Senior Pairs (2 of 2)
	Sept 28 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Silver Senior Pairs (2 of 2)
OCTOBER	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Qualifying games for the 2027 CBC - COPC & Teams
	All Month	CBF Online Team League - Oct through Feb.
	All Month	Jane Johnson Club Appreciation Games
	October 13	Erin Berry Rookie Master Game at in person Clubs
	October 19	CBC Round Robin Registration Opens
	October 21 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Instant Matchpoint Game
NOVEMBER	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Qualifying games for the 2027 CBC - COPC & Teams
DECEMBER	Fridays 7:50/8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Qualifying games for the 2027 CBC - COPC & Teams
	December 14-20	Stardust Week - Gold Points at Clubs

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