

bridge *Canada*



FRANK AND GINNY: A BRIDGE TEACHING STORY.

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.



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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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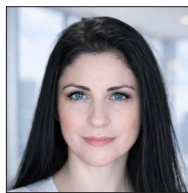
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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

The Goods

DON'T FORGET HOW THE CBF WAS FORMED!

In 2025 Douglas Drew passed away. If you don't know, Doug was one of the founders of the Canadian Bridge Federation. He fought hard for Canada to have status in the World Bridge Federation as any other country, overcoming the ACBL effect.

Because of his (and the five other pioneers), Canada sends our best players directly to the World Championships. The CBF is committed to building the game in our great country, and facilitating the most skilled teams, to go head-to-head against the World's best!

It is easy to take this privilege for granted. Don't!! The CBF is only as strong as its members! Get involved and belong to the CBF! As we have seen recently in the political environment, taking for granted your rights and status can be a poor choice.

LOTS OF GOOD STUFF IN THIS ISSUE OF BRIDGE CANADA:

- 2026 Maple Leaf Celebrity Classic article.
- Two Junior-related articles.
- 2025 IBPA Awards
- And lots more.

WELCOME TREVOR LAPORTE!

I am pleased to welcome Trevor to the *Bridge Canada* Team. He will be responsible for the production, and final look for our National Magazine. He also performs the same function for the ACBL, District 2 publication, *The Kibitzer*. Sincere, and heartfelt thanks, to Jude and Sky Goodwin, for all of their good work supporting the CBF in the past!

JUNIOR BRIDGE IN CANADA FOCUS

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 and/or on the CBF website. The playoffs for all four major events will be held in Penticton, BC, June 15-21, 2026, in conjunction with the Penticton Regional. The fall issue will have full coverage of these four premier events.

See you in June, at the Canadian Bridge Championships!

WINNING BRIDGE STRATEGIES

I am pleased to announce my new book will be published in early fall. Stay tuned.

GET BETTER BILL!

Bill Treble is the host for the June TGBCB. Unfortunately, shortly after submitting his article, he suffered a stroke, and is still hospitalized. Please join me in sending our best to Bill and Sue Treble, and wishing Bill a speedy recovery!

Neil Kimelman
Bridge Canada Managing Editor



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"ONLINE BRIDGE IS HELPING THE CBF BUILD COMMUNITY ACROSS OUR LARGE COUNTRY..."

As President of the CBF, an organization that spans a country that is physically large but not densely populated, one of my goals is engaging players across the country and facilitating Bridge opportunities for **players of all levels**. This year, we have harnessed online Bridge opportunities to allow us to be more far-reaching in including players from all areas of the country, and somewhat negating the effects of financial limitations for players.

REALBRIDGE

Our platform of choice is **RealBridge**, which uses video and audio such that you are interacting with those at your table in a manner similar to playing face to face.

1. We ran the **Round Robin phase of our Championships** on RealBridge, which allows developing players to test themselves against top players, without necessitating them to invest an inordinate amount of time and money for this valuable opportunity to compete at a high level.
2. This year we ran our **Canadian Open Pairs** on RealBridge. We had to combine the Open and B Flight players, but most everyone who played had an enjoyable time. It was a wonderful experience to play against some of Canada's best, and my congratulations go to **John Carruthers** and **Joey Silver** who came in first in the two day event. Special thanks go to **Katie Thorpe** who made the effort to get John and Joey signed up for this online platform 😊!

3. **Maple Leaf Friday games 8:00 ET**

Every Friday we run a stratified Open game on RealBridge.

This initiative was put in place to build community and help the Clubs financially by **sharing the profits**. We are working hard to build up the game so that there are profits to share (!), and we need your support by playing in this game as often as possible.

Please note that anyone from across the globe are welcome to participate. The fee is \$8 Canadian (or equivalent if in another currency).

PENTICTON REGIONAL

1. We are holding the **finals of all our Canadian Bridge Championships** in conjunction with the Penticton Regional, being held **June 15-21**. Not only are we running our **Open, Mixed, Women's** and **Senior's** finals, but we are running the **B Flight** playoffs (<3,500 MPs) and **C Flight** playoffs (<1,000 MPs) as well.
2. We will be setting up a **booth in the lobby of the Convention Centre** as an opportunity to share information, and for players to meet our Executive Administrator Sondra, and our Zonal and at Large Board members.

We will be at the booth **Wednesday during the Welcome Event** and at other times, so please watch for us.

I encourage you to pick up an information pamphlet, find out what playing opportunities there are, and see **how you might get involved** in helping the CBF build this great game.

In recent months we have focused our efforts on the **Developing players**, and we offer many events and learning opportunities for these **B and C players**.

I will be in Penticton all week, so please feel free to say hi, share your ideas, and offer any constructive feedback. The other Board members who will be in attendance are:

- Zone 1 – Allan Callard
- Zone 2 – Xavier Combey
- Zone 3 Director at Large – Paul Janicki
- Zone 4 – Marielle Brentnall
- Zone 5 – Lois Matton
- Zone 6 – Shelley Burns

Sincerely,

Shelley Burns
CBF President

"Building community, one card at a time."



Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

High EI is the hallmark of successful bridge players. Being able to harness your emotions, resulting from the inevitable ups and down at the bridge table, and transform them into positive outcomes, will serve you well in the long term.

Neil Kimelman

John Carruthers and Joey Silver win the 2026 Canadian Open Pairs Championship.



CBF Eh!

ABOUT US

- The Canadian Bridge Federation, established in 1967, is your National Bridge Organization, spearheaded by a volunteer Board of Directors, and one part time employee, in its never-ending mission to promote bridge within Canada and to protect and advance the national interests of Canadian bridge, including the selection and support of Canadian bridge teams and players for international competition.

MEMBERSHIP

- Opt in with ACBL membership for the equivalent cost of one coffee per month (C\$25/year)
- Enables participation in many national championship competitions, plus world events
- Supports junior players at international competitions
- Join in and be a part of the Canadian bridge scene, because community does not build itself!

CONGRATULATIONS ...

- to everybody who participated in our inaugural, annual CBF Maple Leaf Classic that raised \$25,000
- to Marie Callbeck & Vipul Parekh, national champions of the 2026 Helen Shields Rookie-Master Game, and runners up Edward Anderson & Darlene Nadon, followed by Dale Bercov & Chuck Cherry
- to Joseph Silver & John Carruthers, our first COPC online champions who won the grand prize of \$640, and to midflight winners Louis Daigneault & Denys Skalski

ONGOING

- Maple Leaf Games on Real Bridge – every Friday
- Check our online Events calendar

UPCOMING

- Do What You Love: June 14-21; support Alzheimers' research at club games
- Canadian Bridge Championships in Penticton: June 15-21
- Hall of Fame Reception in Penticton on Friday, June 19, 5:30-7pm PT
- CBF AGM online: Tuesday, June 23 @ 7:00 pm ET
- Erin Berry Rookie-Master Game: October 13

KEEP IN TOUCH

- website – www.cbf.ca
- emails – admin@cbf.ca; president@cbf.ca



WELCOME TO THE NORTH AMERICAN BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS



Inaugural CBF Maple Leaf Celebrity Classic A Big Success

The Canadian Bridge Federation's Maple Leaf Classic took place Feb 23, 2026 on RealBridge.

Congratulations to **Jan Jansma and Paul Frean**, who topped the 52 pair field.

The CBF wishes to thank ALL of the pros, celebrities, teachers, and those who bid on them. CBF President Shelley Burns and her committee worked tirelessly and the game raised over CAD \$25,000 for various CBF initiatives.

Save the date for 2027 - the 2nd Maple Leaf Classic is scheduled for **Monday, March 8, 2027** (just before the Spring NABC).

A post-game after-party was recorded. Our expert panel included Mitch Dunitz, Geoff Hampson, Brad Moss and Joe Grue. The 40 minute presentation can be viewed at: [2026 Maple Leaf Celebrity Classic](#)

Photo: CBF President Shelley Burns (center) presents Jan Jansma (left) and Paul Frean (right) with trophies for winning the 2026 Maple Leaf Classic

Pos	No	Pair	Average	MP	Bds
1	45	Jan Jansma & Paul Frean	66.40%	332 / 500	20
2	32	Brenda Bryant & Kenneth Diamond	65.30%	326.5 / 500	20
3	36	Jeffrey Smith & Jonathan Ferguson	61.70%	308.5 / 500	20
4	27	Bob Hamman & James Kavanagh	59.50%	297.5 / 500	20
5	24	Bob Kuz & Morrie Kleinplatz	59.40%	297 / 500	20
6	28	Jason Feldman & Samuel Krikler	59.00%	295 / 500	20
7	3	Zach Grossack & Frank Morgan	58.90%	294.5 / 500	20
8	48	Shan Huang & John McAllister	58.10%	290.5 / 500	20
9	20	Nicolas L'Ecuyer & Nancy Nicowski	57.10%	285.5 / 500	20
10	9	Kevin Bathurst & Rajath Shourie	56.70%	283.5 / 500	20
11	23	James Holzhauer & Colin Schloss	56.20%	281 / 500	20
12	25	Sarah De Wijs & Gunnar Gunnarsson	55.00%	275 / 500	20
13	2	John Carruthers & Laurence Gifford	54.40%	272 / 500	20
14	39	Geoff Hampson & Doug Baxter	53.40%	267 / 500	20
15	12	Tuna Elmas & Berk Basaran	53.20%	266 / 500	20
16	42	Joe Grue & Amy Mitura	52.80%	264 / 500	20
17	52	Patricia Herrera & Tom Henson	52.70%	263.5 / 500	20
18	10	Marc-Andre Fourcaudot & Sylvain Dionne	52.60%	263 / 500	20
19	44	Jill Marshall & Kathy McDonald	52.40%	262 / 500	20
20	19	Abdul Fakh & Michael Blancher	51.90%	259.5 / 500	20

Bridge Manitoba's Spring Fling!



Bridge Manitoba held its Spring Fling on March 21st, and it was a resounding success! 24 tables of players came out to our game and even more joined us for the dinner afterwards. The game was fun, the food was delicious, and a great time was had by all.

Sincere thanks to the many people who made this event such a success: the volunteers who helped with various tasks including setup/cleanup, registration, bartending, raffle ticket sales, and food service, **Jacqueline Meyers** for preparing salad for the large crowd, our local experts who offered a free game to raffle ticket winners, those who donated prizes for the raffles, those who brought desserts, **MC John Hindle**, and our lovely director **Shirley Galler**. An extra special thanks goes to **Leslie Speirs** for her outstanding job in organizing and running this event!





YOUNG HEARTS, BIG DREAMS: CANADA AT THE WBF U14 MINI BRIDGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Casper Gu

Although the harsh Canadian winter had not completely faded in March, two U14 junior players brought us a little warmth. On March 15, in Innisfil and North York, Ontario, Zachariah (Zach) Willie and Jingyu (Nina) Ke, both 12 years old, were giving it their all in pursuit of their first world-class title.

This was the **1st WBF U14 Mini Bridge Championship** held on RealBridge. The championship was global, serious, and unforgiving — one wrong card played would break everything. With 106 pairs registered, only three would stand on the podium for each direction.

Then, at the final table, Canadian Junior Zach and Nina had a brilliant board.

- ♠ QJ109
- ♥ 54
- ♦ AK32
- ♣ A64

Minibridge is not like normal bridge: everyone calls out how many high-card points they have, and then whoever has the highest point count gets to see their partner's hand shape, choose, and play the contract.

Zach, sitting East, was dealt the 14-count hand shown above. He had the highest point count at the table, so he decided to choose 4♠ as the contract after seeing Nina's 11 HCP and shape of

- ♠ ????
- ♥ ?????
- ♦ ?
- ♣ ???

This is what he had to say about it:

'I knew I had to go to 4♠. At that point, Nina and I were 4th, E-W, in a fiercely contested battle for the podium. Eleni and Maria from Greece had essentially locked first place by then, leading by a good margin for the duration of the game, so it was an intense fight between around 5 or 6 pairs for the 2nd and 3rd spots, with everyone hovering around 70%. Additionally, the round was almost over, and the pressure was mounting. So, whether 4♠ would make or not, I had to go for it to ensure we had a fighting chance for 2nd and 3rd place, and given the distribution and points, we had a good chance. Turns out, 4♠ did indeed make.' The full hand:

North

- ♠ A2
- ♥ Q1098
- ♦ Q1086
- ♣ 1075

West (Nina)

- ♠ K765
- ♥ AKJ32
- ♦ 4
- ♣ 832

East (Zach)

- ♠ QJ109
- ♥ 54
- ♦ AK32
- ♣ A64

South

- ♠ 843
- ♥ 76
- ♦ J975
- ♣ KQJ9

'I won the ♦A, underled the ♦K, ruffed diamonds in dummy twice using the ♣A as an entry back to my hand, gave up the ♠A and ♣KQ, and from there I had the ♠QJ10, ♥AK, and ♦K, all of which were good. This hand was critical in helping us get 3rd place in the championship.'

So who are Zach and Nina?

Zach and Nina were both born in 2013. They are two of the finest Canadian juniors playing bridge I've ever had the pleasure to meet. Their story started long before March 15th, long before either ever imagined standing on a world stage.

Nina started in March 2023, when an aunt introduced the game to her at a family dinner. The uniqueness of the rules sparked her interest, and she was in.

Like most beginners, Nina eventually hit a wall. Bridge became boring and frustrating, sometimes difficult and hard to manage. But it was her mother who pushed her through it, learning alongside her child and forging the path ahead together.

Zach started in October 2023, when two bridge players, Richard Garlick and Helene Taylor, started teaching bridge to his gifted classroom in Cookstown Central Public School, located in Simcoe County, Ontario.

At first, he thought the game was boring. However, skimming through the textbook provided, he found much more than first met the eye.

'At first, I thought bridge was just some simple, boring card game. However, as I skimmed the textbook we used in class, I realized how grand the game of bridge was and found myself constantly asking "What if a double happens?" or "What is 3NT+2 and what does it mean?" These types of questions and new elements quickly pulled me in, as complex and intricate matters are sort of my thing.'

Two completely different starting points, yet the same game that nearly lost them both brought them up to the world stage.

* * *

Unlike Zach, Nina wasn't a stranger to the world stage. Having competed before in the 19th World Youth Teams Championships, she knew exactly what kind of pressure she was up against.

Going into the championship, their mindsets could not have been more different. Nina's were measured, her one request being to not drop below the top twenty.

Zach, on the other hand, was experiencing the global stage for the first time. However, he faced the challenge head-on with confidence.

A long-standing tradition in the Canadian junior bridge community is that the more experienced players help bring along the newcomers. We are not rivals competing against one another, but teammates improving together and working toward the same goal. Although Zach and Nina had never played a single board as partners before, the mutual understanding and trust they built within this environment allowed them to perform with remarkable consistency in international competition.

With the tremendous support of bridge teachers such as **Tong Chen** (Waterloo), **Zhaoyang Cheng** (Toronto), and **Bing Le** (Ottawa), Canada sent a total of seven pairs to this WBF U14 event. Remarkably, the youngest participant, Aiden Yang from the Waterloo region, was only **nine years** old!!

And yet, neither of them are done.

Both players have set their sights on trying out for the Canadian Junior team, hoping to play in the 20th World Youth Teams Championships in 2027, while Nina dreams of one day starting a nonprofit to bring bridge to more young Canadians.

Perhaps the most important thing they have left behind isn't a certificate or a trophy, but the reminder to every junior who finds this game boring or frustrating to push through and overcome. In Zach's own words: *"Bridge truly did change my life."*

It changed Nina's as well, and if you let it, it might just also change yours.

Future Championship Information

The WBF U14 MiniBridge Championships will be held twice more this year, once in **June** and once in **September**. Children born on or after January 1, 2013, are eligible to participate.

If you, or your child/grandchild are interested, please feel free to contact me, **Casper Gu**, at **casbridge705@gmail.com**.



2025 IBPA Awards

Editor's note: Here are the winners of the 2025 IBPA winners; awarded for declarer play, bidding, defence and Junior prowess.

Justin Lall Play Award

Winner: Dror Padon

Journalist: Jerry Li, Beijing

This board is from the 2024 Premier League Final, held in Taicang Jiangsu Province from 16-23 November.

Board 11. Dealer South. Neither side vulnerable.

♠ 4	♠ A10965
♥ QJ72	♥ K3
♦ J32	♦ 96
♣ 10983	♣ QJ62
♠ KQ	♠ J8732
♥ A1084	♥ 965
♦ AKQ1075	♦ 84
♣ 5	♣ K74

West	North	East	South
Padon	O. Rimstedt	Birman	M. Rimstedt
			Pass
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♠	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♦	All Pass		

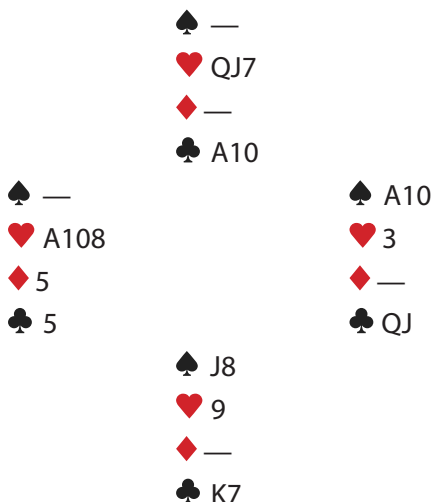
Dror Padon from Israel played in 6♦ on a trump lead. Padon drew trumps and played the king-queen of spades. If North had followed to the second spade, Padon would have overtaken with the ace and thrown a club on the spade ten, playing for spades 3-3 or 4-2. When North showed out on the second spade, Padon had to change his plan. He won the spade queen, and cashed two more trumps. North had to keep four hearts, pitching two clubs. South had to keep the spade guard, and pitching a club would have led to this position:

♠ —	♠ A10
♥ QJ72	♥ K3
♦ —	♦ —
♣ A10	♣ QJ
♠ —	♠ J8
♥ A1084	♥ 965
♦ 5	♦ —
♣ 5	♣ K

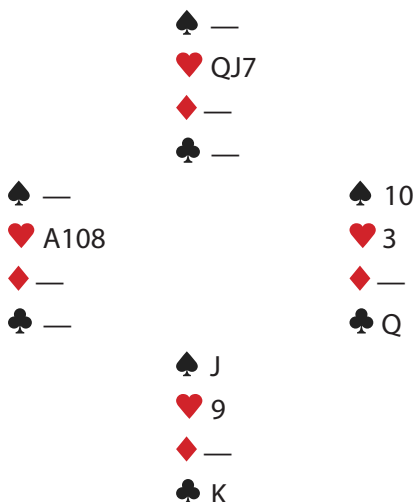


Dror Padon

With the defenders' club communication broken, declarer would cash the last trump (throwing a spade) and exit with a club to rectify the count. South can do nothing to prevent North from being squeezed in clubs and hearts. So, South discarded a seemingly-useless heart on the fifth round of trumps. Now Padon crossed to dummy with the king of hearts, leaving this position:



Padon threw the club loser on the spade ace, while North had to release another club. Finally, a club ruff in hand stripped North and West down to hearts in this position:



Padon exited with the ten of hearts, pinning South's now-bare nine of hearts, while North won with the jack, and North had to lead away from the queen into the ace-eight.

The Juan-Carlos Ventin Bidding Award

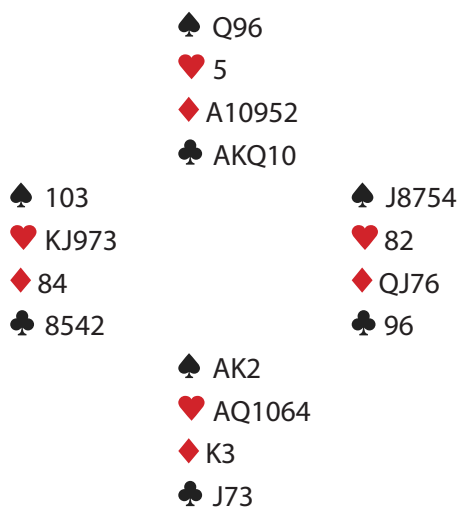
Winners: Kevin Bathurst and John Hurd

Journalist: John Carruthers



Kevin Bathurst and John Hurd showed exquisite judgement on the following deal:

Board 27. Dealer South. Neither side vulnerable.



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
<i>Martel</i>	<i>Greco</i>	<i>Fleisher</i>	<i>Hampson</i>
			1♣ ¹
1♥	2♦ ²	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠ ³	Pass	3NT
Pass	5NT ⁴	Pass	6NT
All Pass			

1. Precision, 16+HCP.
2. Natural, game forcing.
3. 4+clubs.
4. Pick a slam.

Hampson took his best play for twelve tricks: he won the club lead and played three rounds of diamonds, being one down at trick four; minus 50.

West	North	East	South
<i>Nickell</i>	<i>Hurd</i>	<i>Katz</i>	<i>Bathurst</i>
Pass	2♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	2NT
Pass	6♣	All Pass	4NT

Hurd won the spade lead in dummy and played three rounds of diamonds, ruffing the third with the seven of clubs. The seven was overruffed by the eight; after that, declarer ruffed the fourth diamond with the club jack, drew trumps and claimed. That was a fantastic plus 920 and a gain of 14 IMPs. For my money, this was the most beautifully bid deal of the event, with nary an artificial bid on display.

Gidwani Award for Best Defence

Winner: Ami Zamir

Journalist: Prakash Paranjape, London

Open Pre-QF: Norway vs Israel.

Board 37. Dealer South. Both sides vulnerable.

♠ K10965	♠ QJ872
♥ A42	♥ 765
♦ 98752	♦ AJ3
♣ —	♣ Q9
♠ A	♠ 43
♥ KJ983	♥ Q10
♦ K4	♦ Q106
♣ AJ543	♣ K108762

West	North	East	South
<i>Brogeland</i>	<i>Toledano</i>	<i>Bakke</i>	<i>Zamir</i>
1♥	1♠	Pass	Pass
Double	Pass	Pass	2♣
Double	2♦	Pass	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Toledano led the eight of diamonds, second best. Brogeland played low from dummy, won the king, and considered his options.

He could hope to get three hearts and two clubs in addition to two top diamonds. He would still need two tricks from the spade suit, so he tabled the ace of spades at trick two. That play opened the possibilities for some brilliant defensive moves.

Brogeland next played the heart king, correctly ducked by Toledano. The next heart was won by Zamir's queen. Zamir spent a considerable amount of time on his next move and came up with a gem. By cashing the spade ace, Brogeland had stripped his hand of a vital entry. Zamir proceeded to exploit that weakness by tabling the king of clubs and attacking another of Brogeland's entries.

Brogeland won the club ace, went to dummy with the club queen, and played the spade queen. Toledano won with the king and fired another diamond through dummy. Brogeland rose with the diamond ace and pulled a heart from the dummy.

This was the position:

♠ 109	♠ J87
♥ A	♥ 7
♦ 97	♦ J
♣ —	♣ —
♠ —	♠ —
♥ 983	♥ —
♦ —	♦ Q
♣ J5	♣ 10876

Zamir again gave serious thought to his next move. He was out of the major suits. If he discarded a club, he would have had to win the next diamond trick with the queen and play a club, providing a stepping stone to Brogeland's entryless hand. He wasn't, however, going to lay waste to his earlier brilliant move. He jettisoned the diamond queen!

Toledano won the heart ace and returned a diamond. He won the last two tricks with the spade ten and the diamond nine!

With Ilan Herbst making 4♥ on a double squeeze at the other table, Israel won 12 IMPs and took a slender one-IMP lead, with the score at 84-83 after this board. Eventually, they won the match 128-123.

Dick Freeman Award for Junior Hand of the Year

Winner: Marius Austad

Journalist: Jos Jacobs, Maarn

Under 26 Pairs Qualifying, Round 6.
Board 20. Dealer West. Both sides vulnerable.

♠ ARD8	
♥ —	
♦ ARV9873	
♣ 97	
♠ 109732	♠ V
♥ R972	♥ V854
♦ D54	♦ 6
♣ 5	♣ RDV10864
♠ 654	
♥ AD1063	
♦ 102	
♣ A32	

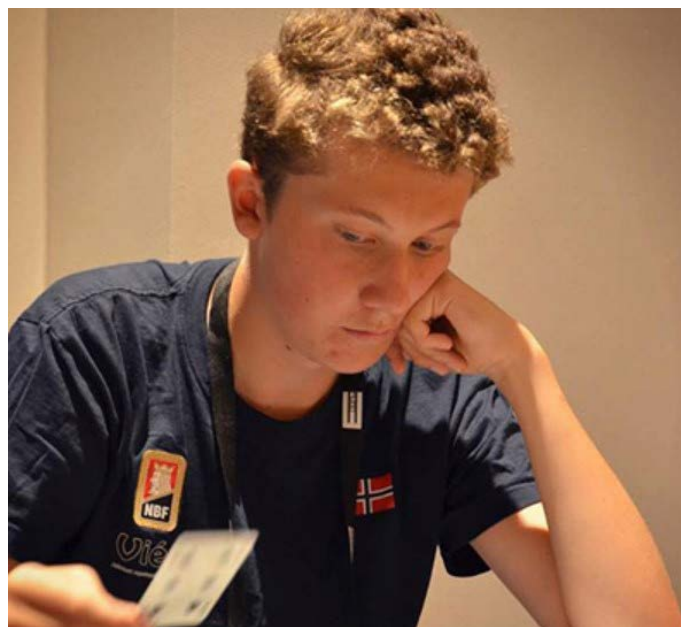
Many pairs reached slam, most of them playing 6♦ against the king of clubs lead. Even 6♦ proved too difficult to handle for eight declarers, with only two pairs making the slam, so making twelve tricks in 5♦ was an above-average score (68%). Even a part score would have scored above average if you made twelve tricks. This was the way to score 100%:

West	North	East	South
Madej	Austad	Pigulski	Øberg
Pass	2♣	4♣	4♥
Pass	6♦	Pass	7♦
All Pass			

Ida Marie's reasoning was very simple. "If partner can bid six out of hand and I am looking at no less than two aces, the grand must be on." So she bid one more for the road, and it was up to Marius to bring home the bacon on the lead of the king of clubs.

This is one of those deals where the solution, i.e. the winning line, becomes easy enough once you think of it. If spades are 4-2 or indeed 5-1 with West, you have to ruff your fourth spade in dummy. This means that trumps have to be 3-1 with West because otherwise, East will ruff a top spade. But, if spades are 4-2 and trumps 3-1 with West, you have to take the trump finesse straight away because you will be in dummy only once to do so, i.e. now. The diamond queen in the three-card holding is much more likely than the queen singleton.

So you win the ace of clubs, discard a club on the ace of hearts, and run the ten of diamonds. When this holds, you cash your top spades and ruff the spade loser with dummy's last trump. East can only discard losers in sheer admiration for your wonderful and more than entirely deserved +2140. Needless to say, this score brings you all the matchpoints.



Marius Austad



MEET... XAVIER COMBEY

Xavier was born in France but migrated to Canada (from Scotland!) to reunite with his estranged father and attend university in Montréal, where he has lived for the last 43 years.

He is the new CBF director for Zone II. He is a diamond life master that started getting involved in bridge locally a few years ago and joined the CBF board last year. A frequent regional tournaments player, chances are that you have met him if you played in Québec or Ontario. Let's get to know him better!

What drew you to start playing bridge and when did that happen?

I am a player at heart. I started playing competitively with Tarot and Go (I am still three dan, you can find me on PandaGo) and started playing bridge at University. I played a little after University, but family and career took over and I did not play seriously again until 2010 when Nicolas (L'Écuyer) contacted me to play with Marius Moldovan. I played a while with Marius, then a few years with Fengming Chen and I am now playing with Marc Lachapelle.

What do you think the biggest differences are between then and now?

Resources. There are so many resources available on the web now, it is amazing. In the old days, it was read, practice, meet strong players and ask them. Nowadays you can do all that on your computer, without ever leaving home.

What is your most memorable bridge moment?

There are two. Winning the 2018 COPC with Marc was really amazing. We started the final session with something like four zeros. When we played our last card Marc said something like "I think we might stand a chance" and right he was. There was also a CNTC qualifying hand a long time ago that I played against Pierre Treuil where I was dealt 13 black cards (KJ109xxx - -AKQxxx). I had just read that the idea on freak hands like this was to win the declaration at any cost and I started with a 1♠ overcall, ending in 6♠, making. I ruffed the heart opening lead, crashed the singleton queen of spades and I will never forget Nic's face when I ruffed the diamond switch.

What about life away from the bridge table?

I was an electrical engineer, and I used to travel quite a bit for work, mostly in the States but also Asia and the Middle East. That changed in 2000 when I started working for the Montreal Transportation Society as an operations manager, which I did until my retirement. I used to play wargames and played some of them for as long as a year (Scorched earth, World in flames). Now I just try to enjoy retirement with my wife and play bridge of course.

As someone involved in bridge, how do you see the game evolving?

The evolution of the game is scary. Membership is diminishing and getting older and older. We are deluding ourselves trying to get back to "before", it will

not happen. The younger generations are more in the “now” than we were, but bridge takes a lot of patience and effort. We have to accept that and build on the people we have.

I also see the game not evolving, and not stuck with our current paradigms. For example:

- Having some prize money tournaments would give more exposure to our game and might help attract new players. That is not for everyone, but it might be worth considering, at the ACBL level.
- The ACBL ranking system is flawed. Some older people cannot compete at the level they are stuck playing at. We need to have a “current” ranking, like in chess or amateur Go. Rethink schedules to allow some people to play only one event a day and make a sliding three-year ranking. Instead, we are moving seniors from 60 to 65 and creating super senior events.

What is your favourite bridge book?

There is more than one. I will give you my top three:

- Bridge with the blue team
- The complete book on hand evaluation in contract bridge
- Adventures in card play

Cats or dogs?

Cats, definitely. I am on my fifth one, the fourth almost reached 22 years, this one is going on 15.

Red or white?

No alcohol for me. If I indulge, I prefer Pinot, Port or, occasionally, Champagne.

What advice would you give to a new player who wants to improve?

I strongly believe that everything stems from your ability to declare. So my advice would be to focus your studies on declarer play before anything else. It will make defense easier. There is way too much emphasis on bidding early on in a player’s development. Beginners bid by rote, not understanding why. How can you find something if you don’t understand what you are looking for and why you are looking for it?

The key to this game is counting. If you don’t, the game will be tougher than it needs to.

If you want to enjoy the game, find a compatible partner. You need someone with the level of competitiveness you wish for.

I was an engineer and a manager. Retroaction is crucial to improvement. Analyze your failures objectively. Make adjustments.

Can you share any amusing stories with us?

A long time ago I played a Swiss match against the great Mary Paul. I had no idea who she was at the time. At the other table, our partners had a long and tortuous auction to 6NT, with 14 tricks on top. At our table, the bidding went 2C-3NT-7NT, 3NT showing a solid six or seven-card suit without a side ace or king. I have incorporated that in my partnerships for the last 16 years and it has never happened again. I find it amusing now, but not so much at the time.

Anything else?

Do not be afraid to try new things. For example, I do not play stayman (I think it is an awful convention, especially if you play a strong notrump). Why play a system that tells everyone what you have when you are going to be the hidden hand? The stayman relay is contradictory to relay systems principles: the weak hand relays the strong hand for information.

Bridge is a partnership game. I would not have enjoyed it so much without some of my partners, notably Fengming Chen, a great partner and really strong player and my good friend and expert player Marc Lachapelle, with whom I have enjoyed a lot of success at the bridge table.



Any person capable of angering you becomes your master.

Epictetus

FRANK & GINNY: COACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF YOUTH BRIDGE

By Casper Gu

This is an interview with two veteran bridge coaches that will appeal to all adult Bridge Enthusiasts. Frank and Ginny teach bridge at the Codrington Public School in Barrie, Ontario. This is their story.

Part I: Origins and the Coaching Journey

1. **The Initial Spark:** When did you both start playing bridge? Who was the person that first introduced you to this world of logic and strategy?

Ginny: I first started playing in university, both my parents were advanced players and I picked it up from them. I played for four years until I stopped for a while, picking the game back up when I retired.

Frank: I took beginner lessons with Maggie Sparrow, beginning in the fall of 2013. Maggie is still teaching, inspiring, and challenging players. She and I have a regular bridge on-line game, and I am still learning from her.

2. **The Transition:** How did the shift from being a competitive player to an instructor happen? Was there a specific moment that inspired you to take up coaching?

Ginny: I was a teacher and decided to volunteer for bridge teaching after I retired, it was only natural and felt like a good fit for me.

Frank: I decided to teach bridge because I wanted to become a better player. It is well (and often) said that to teach is to learn for a second time.

3. **The Debut:** Do you remember the feeling and atmosphere of standing in front of a class for the first time to teach the basics of the "Yellow Card" (SAYC)?

Ginny: The first class for me was the same and no different than the other 100 "first classes" that I have taught, being exciting and fun to introduce the game to a new group of players.

Frank: I am a retired teacher, so I've had many first time appearances in front of a class. My first bridge class was in a small room at a local recreational center. The first lesson to a beginner group of public school children is about holding their interest and building enjoyment. The first lesson to a beginner group of adults is always more challenging because there will be a wide range of experience with playing card games. I've seen adults who don't know the names of the suits, while some are returning to the game they played years ago.

4. **Reciprocity:** After years of teaching, has the game of bridge changed you in return, or perhaps deepened your understanding of life itself?





Ginny: The game of bridge has taught me how to have patience, which is not a strength of mine. I also learned more importantly to accept my partners' mistakes and errors.

Frank: You cannot play bridge well unless you accept that adversity will surely follow any success you might have. You have to learn from your mistakes. Those are good life lessons.

5. Core Qualities: In your opinion, besides technical skill, what is the most indispensable quality of a great youth bridge coach?

Ginny: The most important quality is patience, organization, and a sense of humor. Without these three, children won't take you seriously at all and will be lost.

Frank: Integrity. Prepare well, but admit when you've made a mistake. Students usually don't know that experts (and mortal teachers) will differ on the bidding or play of difficult hands.

Part II: Teaching Youth and "Fighting the Modern Era"

6. Student Profiles: How do your youth students typically find their way to bridge? In an age dominated by video games, what is it that makes them want to stay and study this "ancient" game?

Ginny: Many don't seem to stay, they have other interests that take up much more free time for them. However some are intrigued and stay with the game.

Frank: For our young students, bridge is a scheduled classroom lesson and activity. They can't escape! However, many play during their break times, and a few play at our club during school holidays. They love the problem solving aspect of the game.

7. Combating Instant Gratification: Modern youth are used to the instant feedback of social media and gaming, whereas bridge requires long-term focus and delayed gratification. How do you guide them to enjoy this "slower" logical beauty?

Ginny: For me, the most important part is to praise small steps, and give attainable goals for junior players. This is the most effective way in my opinion.

Frank: I doubt that anyone, of any age, who only wants instant gratification, will play bridge. Those who enjoy games that require thought and study, such as chess, or puzzles that require a level of concentration and analysis, such as Sudoku, will enjoy bridge. I also teach adults, and the common denominator is that they are all, without exception, life-long learners.

8. Learning Dynamics: Compared to adult learners, what unique intuitions or blind spots do teenagers have when grasping bridge logic (e.g., probability, defensive signaling)? How does this affect your teaching strategy?

Ginny: The senior students learn as well and the same as many adult beginners. However many students have difficulty understanding the communication between bidding with their partners.

Frank: The major difference between adult and teenage learners is the ability to focus. That is something that generally comes with maturity.

9. Overcoming Setbacks: What has been your greatest frustration in teaching? When students face complex mistakes or losing streaks, how do you help them rebuild their confidence?

Ginny: *Again, praise small steps, and give some attainable goals. I don't necessarily have any frustrations when teaching.*

Frank: *I really don't get frustrated when teaching, or at least I hope I wouldn't show it. That would be a good way to lose the confidence you need to build in the group. I emphasize that mistakes are part of the game. Every (honest) player will admit making a bad bid or play – and those are only the ones they know about.*

10. **The "Why":** After all these years, is there a specific moment or a particular student that made you realize, "This is exactly why I do what I do"?

Ginny: *When my students, like Casper or Zach, want to improve and play at the club or online, this is when I realize "This is exactly why I do what I do".*

Frank: *Bridge is a social game, played with a partner. No player can do well as an individual because you must cooperate and trust your partner. In every class there is a wide range of abilities and personalities and it has been a real joy to observe many young students mature in relationships with their peers over two or three years. I believe the social aspects of our game played a big part in their development. And, of course, it is very gratifying when a former student represents Canada at an international bridge tournament.*

Part III: Challenges and Barriers in Youth Bridge

11. **The First Hurdle:** In your experience, what is the hardest threshold for a teenager to cross? Is it the memorization of the system, or the psychological pressure of live play?

Ginny: *Many gifted students have no trouble memorizing the systems, and the problem usually comes when faced with on-the-spot challenges that are not covered in lessons. Many students are afraid of making simple mistakes, and they freeze.*

Frank: *The hardest threshold would depend on the teenager. I would add that I think everybody who begins to learn bridge thinks there is a large amount of memorization involved and, of course, that is not a trivial part of the game. But bridge is a trick taking*

game of logic and inference, and I try to emphasize those aspects of the game.

12. **The First Impression:** How do you design a first lesson so that a young person with zero concept of bridge leaves the room already looking forward to the next class?

Ginny: *Start with card knowledge, it is very important for a junior to understand the basics of this, and move to Whist. Whist is a much simpler and easier form of bridge. Then no-trump contracts.*

Frank: *We aim to get our youngest players, who are in grade 4, to play following a brief lesson. We make sure that all students know the name of each suit and the ranking within a suit. They must follow suit if they can, and the highest ranking card in the suit played takes a trick. With that simple introduction students can play a game of no-trump whist.*

13. **The Role of Parents:** How much of an impact does parental attitude have on a child's persistence? What are some of the most typical parental reactions you've encountered?

Ginny: *Most parents are not involved. Students usually don't care to involve parents. For the few who are involved, the parents usually ask what the next steps are for their daughter or son in playing. There is usually not much interaction.*

Frank: *The attitude of parents or guardians is obviously crucial to a child's development in, well, everything. I have received very little feedback from parents regarding our bridge lessons. The teachers at the school are more likely to get that feedback.*

Part IV: Teaching Environments and the "Gifted Class" Social Ecology

14. **Operational Model:** The Simcoe County Gifted Classes have been a vital platform for your teaching. What are the unique characteristics of this "centralized" model for high-achieving students?

Ginny: *Many gifted students like the challenge of the card game, and the numerical qualities that it entails. The social aspect of bridge is also something they*



need in a game, it draws the attention to how much cooperation is needed.

Frank: *Gifted students tend to develop quite far ranging interests and become deeply involved in topics and activities at a high level for their age. Bridge is a game that can be enjoyed at any level, but in a class of gifted students there will always be some who want to pursue the game further. Some of our students play bridge during their break time.*

15. A Micro-Social Circle: Does this concentrated environment create a unique social ecology? Beyond bridge skills, do these children build deeper, long-lasting friendships or networks because of the game?

Ginny: *Perhaps, but we may not see them much when they leave grade 8 for high school.*

Frank: *I believe some do, because the bridge partnership is likely to extend beyond the game.*

16. The Value of Concentration: When a group of equally bright and competitive kids gathers, why is this “peer motivation” so critical for improving their bridge game?

Frank: *In general, gifted students recognize and value the abilities and interests of their classmates. They encourage improvement in each other, regardless of the particular interest or area of knowledge. And, of course, the teachers do this every school day.*

17. Adapting to Uncertainty: If these centralized teaching environments were to change, what do you think would be the most direct impact on local youth bridge promotion? Are you considering new ways to reach these high-potential young people?

Ginny: *When the gifted program is gone here, there won't be any access to bridge for the students here and I fear fewer young people will play. This is a very serious concern for me.*

Frank: *I doubt very much that we could continue teaching bridge if the gifted program were to end in the school. Bridge is an "add on" – one with great value, but not part of the regular curriculum.*

Part V: Bridge as a Long-term Life Investment

18. Character Building: Have you observed any distinct traits in children who play bridge long-term—perhaps in terms of temperament, resilience under pressure, or way of thinking?

Ginny: *These students are unusually good at math! They enjoy competition, however need to understand that making a mistake is alright.*

Frank: *I doubt very much that we could continue teaching bridge if the gifted program were to end in the school. Bridge is an "add on" – one with great value, but not part of the regular curriculum.*

19. The Academic Link: In your view, how does the logical reasoning and concentration fostered by bridge translate into concrete help for STEM subjects like Math or Programming?

Ginny: *Organizing thoughts and deduction. This is reasoning, which is very important for STEM activities and bridge.*

Frank: *Logical reasoning, making inferences, and using your imagination are all parts of becoming a good bridge player. These are also desirable characteristics in mathematics, science and programming. And in many aspects of life.*

20. University Admissions: Have you heard of students using their bridge experience as a highlight in their university personal statements? Do you feel bridge is given the recognition it deserves by admissions officers?

Ginny: *No. Admissions would have to understand bridge for this to occur. Unless you reach a high profile world class position, probably not.*

Frank: *I doubt playing bridge would be mentioned on an admissions form unless there is some special involvement or achievement.*

21. Career Advantages: In their future careers, what bridge-trained skills—such as risk management and teamwork—do you believe offer them a competitive edge?

Ginny: *Deduction, organization, and risk taking. All trained by bridge, and very vital for any future career. Along with the willingness to work with a partner, and the enjoyment of competition.*

Frank: *Teamwork is so important. In bridge it is everything, and it is just as important in any career.*

22. The Pitch: If you had to prove to a parent who knows nothing about bridge that "letting your child learn bridge is a high-value investment," where would you start?

Ginny: *If I was to prove to a parent, I think the first thing to do is to teach the parent the game of bridge.*

Frank: *I would ask the parent to tell me about their child. If you know a child's strengths and what they like to do you can quite easily describe bridge as a great activity because the game includes so many positive, desirable qualities.*

Part VI: Outlook and Closing Thoughts

23. Organizational Support: What work done by ACBL and CBF do you find most valuable for local promotion? What further support do you hope to see from these organizations?

Frank: ACBL provides great support for our program with learning materials, cards, trophies and certificate blanks. Teachers also receive a stipend from ACBL if they satisfy certain reasonable requirements. Our local unit, 246, has also provided financial support for the student tournament.

24. **Beyond the Table:** When your students eventually leave the bridge table and step onto the broader stage of life, what lessons or principles do you hope they take with them?

Ginny: Mainly the ability to work with a partner. It is vital and needed in most situations and careers.

Frank: Life is a partnership with your friends, those you work or study with, maybe eventually a spouse. Treat them well, with honesty and integrity. That's how to play the game and that is a good recipe for living well.

25. **Final Reflection:** After so many years spent with the game, what has been the greatest surprise bridge has brought to your life?

Ginny: How much fun the social aspect is, and the many many friends I have made—like my teaching partner, Frank.

Frank: After I took a series of introductory lessons, I thought I knew the game. I didn't and I don't. I expect to be learning this game this rest of my life.

Editor's note: For more information as to how to teach bridge in your community, Frank has graciously agreed to be contacted at fmustoe@utschools.ca

INTERMEDIATE DECLARER PLAY PROBLEM

SOLUTION PAGE 44

Contract: 4♥. IMPs. E-W vulnerable. West is the dealer. The bidding:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♥
2♠	4♥	All Pass	

North

♠ A975

♥ KJ74

♦ A3

♣ KQJ

South

♠ 83

♥ AQ1032

♦ 104

♣ 9743

Lead: ♠K. Trumps are 3-1. Plan the play.



Some people say bridge is a card game. I call it an exercise in patience, gossip, and passive-aggressive commentary.

Author unknown

IT DOESN'T MATTER: A BRIDGE MOVIE

Adapted from an article by Barnet Shenkin, *Brilliantly Missed*, in the January 26 IBPA Bulletin.

By Neil Kimelman

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

Playing IMPs, Both vul, you pick up as South:

♠A97654 ♥— ♦AQ84 ♣K75. East is dealer. The bidding starts:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	3♥	3♠
4♣	4♠	5♣	?

DO YOU BID?

It is unclear who can make what. E-W appears to have a good fit in two suits. Vulnerable, E-W are likely to have their bids, and your ♣K appears to be a useless card. But you have great playing strength, and East may never get the lead. Bidding seems clearly right.

WHAT DO YOU BID?

The main two choices are 5♠ and 5♦. I clearly think the latter is better. If defending partner will be on lead, and you want to strongly suggest a diamond lead. Plus, partner will be in a better position if the opponents bid more.

However, the big plus of 5♦ is that you suspect that the opponents might be able to make 11 tricks in hearts or clubs, and if one of them has a spade void... Despite these considerations, the actual South bid 5♠, which ended the auction!

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

Surprised is my reaction. Regardless, it is an important fact to keep in mind during the play. You fetch a decent dummy:

Dummy

♠ KQ103
♥ 8753
♦ K3
♣ 843

Declarer

♠ A97654
♥ —
♦ AQ84
♣ K75

The opening lead is the ♥Q, which you ruff. When you lead a spade to the King, West shows out, discarding the ♦5. Plan the Play.

WHAT IS YOUR PLAN?

You only have 10 tricks. There is a slight chance to end-play West, if they started with ♣AQJ109. Possible but not likely. Anything else?

East has preempted in hearts, raised clubs, and has shown three spades. That leaves them 0-1 diamond. There is a chance that you may be able to throw in West with a diamond to lead away from the ♣A.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

Ruff a heart, and then pull the remaining two rounds of trump. West follows to the 2nd heart with the six, and discards the ♣6 and ♣J on the two round of trumps. Cash the top three diamonds (East started with one) pitching a club. This is the ending:

North		East	
♠ 3	♠ —	♠ —	♠ —
♥ 87	♥ —	♥ AJ10	♥ —
♦ —	♦ J10	♦ —	♦ —
♣ 84	♣ AQ92	♣ 102	♣ 102
South		West (me)	
♠ 9	♠ —	♠ —	♠ —
♥ —	♥ —	♥ —	♥ —
♦ 8	♦ —	♦ J10	♦ —
♣ K75	♣ —	♣ AQ92	♣ —

West has defended well, keeping the 5th diamond and unblocking clubs.

CAN YOU STILL MAKE 5♠?

Yes! Continue with your plan. Lead the 4th diamond, and discard a 2nd club. West must lead the ♦J, and you have an elegant response. Simply discard the last club from dummy, and the ♣5 from your hand. Here is the ending:

North		East	
♠ 3	♠ —	♠ —	♠ —
♥ 87	♥ A	♥ —	♥ —
♦ —	♦ —6	♦ —	♦ —
♣ —	♣ 102	♣ —	♣ —
West (me)		South	
♠ —	♠ 9	♠ —	♠ 9
♥ —	♥ —	♥ —	♥ —
♦ —	♦ —	♦ —	♦ —
♣ AQ9	♣ K7	♣ —	♣ K7

Whatever club West plays, you have the last three tricks. The full deal:

North		East	
♠ KQ103	♠ J82	♠ —	♠ —
♥ 8753	♥ AKJ10942	♥ —	♥ —
♦ K3	♦ 2	♦ —	♦ —
♣ 843	♣ 102	♣ —	♣ —
West (me)		South	
♠ —	♠ A97654	♠ —	♠ —
♥ Q6	♥ —	♥ —	♥ —
♦ J109765	♦ AQ84	♦ —	♦ —
♣ AQJ96	♣ K75	♣ —	♣ —

This is well played, but it didn't matter. Your partners were in 6♥ doubled making 7 for +1860. Had you gone down in 5♠ you would still have won 18 IMPs, and the match by 40 IMPs. Still you never know what will take place at the other table...

the GREAT CANADIAN BIDDING CONTEST




June 2026 TGCBC

Host: Bill Treble

For panelists, and their bids, see page 41

Editor's note: I am very pleased to continue the recent tradition of having other Canadian Experts hosting TGCBC. The June host is Bill Treble. Bill is also a Winnipeg, bridge colleague and friend of mine. He is 46th on the CBF Top 1000 Masterpoint winners of all time, with 13,041. He is also a winner of many events including the 2022 CSTC, and twice the COPCs. If that is not enough, Bill is a highly regarded writer of five bridge books.

The top panelist for June was Danny Miles, with 49 (again, still). I GUARANTEE this will not happen in September as Danny has graciously agreed to be the host. Honourable mentions go to Dan Jacob with 47, and Terry Du with 46. You can find Danny's problem choices after this article.

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.

- Do you agree with 2NT? If not, what would be your rebid choice?
- Do you agree with the 4NT keycard ask? Or would you have taken it slower?
- 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?

a)	Score	Votes
Yes	3	20
No	1	2
b)	Score	Votes
Yes	3	17
No	2	6
c)	Score	Votes
Yes	4	21
No	1	2

Kimelman: No, I would rebid x2Hx. Once we are in a game-forcing auction, I like to bid my suits naturally. Much easier to find a good slam this way.

Kuz: 30-70 for agree. I prefer x2Hx for space, since we are in the slam range with either a fit or more controls.

I also would bid the major, although I think it's close to a 50-50 proposition. 2NT is perfectly acceptable if you have Puppet Stayman in your arsenal, but if you play regular Stayman, then 2♥ is the way to go.

A deciding factor in this situation for opener's rebid choice is the number of losers. If you were to rebid 2♥, partner would be expecting you to have at most four losers, which happens to be the case here, so both the major suit and 2NT are good choices. However, if the loser count is five, then 2NT now becomes the more descriptive rebid.

Deng: I agree with 2NT.

Xu: Yes, 2NT if we don't have Kokish relay.

Chen (and Du similarly): Agree with 2NT. 5332 is perfect as notrump rebid. A five-card major can be found easily with Puppet or Romex.

Cooper: Yes, I agree with 2NT. Many pairs use Kokish, where 2♥ by opener is a relay, so this should be a common approach.

Simon: Yes to 2NT, when playing Puppet Stayman we can easily find our fit in a major suit, and it accurately describes the point-count and shape of the hand.

Lindop: 2NT is fine, depending on partnership agreements. The 2♦ response presumably creates a game force, so 2NT simply advertises any balanced hand of 22 or more points.

Grainger: I prefer Kokish to get point ranges across but 2NT is automatic versus a natural 2♥.

Miles: If we are playing Kokish (or Birthright, as he preferred it be called) then we could have shown 2NT obviously over 2♦. We are in a game force so it's not super-serious.

Many of the readers may already know Kokish/ Birthright, but for those who are unfamiliar with the concept, it uses a 2♥ rebid by opener after 2♣-2♦ as EITHER a natural continuation, one- or two-suited, or a strong balanced hand of 25+ HCP. It asks responder to bid 2♠, whereupon the exact hand type is shown with 2NT (strong balanced hand, saying nothing about hearts) or anything else, which confirms the 2♥ bid as natural and providing more information.

The next two panelists come to the grips of whether to treat this hand as being in the 22-24 range or upgrade due to the wealth of aces and kings:

Lorber: Yes, but only if Kokish. After 2♦ promising 2+ controls, we are in a game force and the easier auctions over 2NT are worth hiding a bit of strength.

L'Ecuyer: I'm happy with 2NT. It's descriptive and easy. I don't feel I have too good a hand for it.

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

Cooper: I disagree with RKC and would have taken it slower. In principle, I am better placed to describe my hand as partner could have 4-4 or 5-4 in the majors, or just three cards in hearts. Meanwhile, I have shown a 5332 with five hearts and 22-24 HCP. I would try 4♣ (or 3NT if it is a serious slam try). That way, I should get an opinion from him as well, which could be useful.

Todd: Yes, I would RKC. What good would slower do?

Kimelman: No. You know very little about partner's hand, and you want to give them a chance to show anything else beside the ace of spades.

Kuz: No, slower for me. I would have cue-bid 4♣.

Deng: I wouldn't bid 4NT. If partner has something like Axx(x) Qxx(x) xxx xxx, we may not have a slam because there could be one loser in each red suit.

Xu: Yes, partner shows a heart fit and willingness to go further, so what are you waiting for?

Chen (and Du): Agree with 4NT. All side suits have been controlled, and partner showed some extras with the cue-bid, so the five-level looks safe.

I actually think there are benefits to going slower. All the partnership needs to agree upon is that in a 2♣ auction, opener can make a keycard ask, but responder cannot. That being the case, if we were to cue-bid 4♣ here, these are the options that partner would have:

- a) Show a control in another side suit;
- b) Jump to five of the agreed trump suit to show a better-than-expected holding there;
- c) Bid 4NT to indicate something that might be useful to partner as a possible extra trick.

We can now move on to a few additional comments

Simon: Yes, I ask for keycards. What interests me is the king and queen of hearts.

And in the same vein:

Lindop: Yes, you already know parter has the ace of spades, but you are vitally interested in what he has in the trump suit.

Lebi: Agree with 4NT and partner encouraged.

Miles: Yes. Partner has already bid their values with 2♦ and 3♠. They are unlikely to cooperate further, and we know what we need.

Turner: Yes, I agree. Partner will have a heart honor and the ace of spades for his cue-bid, and I think he is likely that he has four spades or four hearts for his invite (no 3NT or 4NT over 2NT) so it's likely 6♥ will have play.

Lorber: Agree. Now that because 2♦ promised at least two controls, we know partner has the spade ace. A cue-bidding auction could reveal if partner has shortness, but responder doesn't have any controls beyond what I've already learned this way.

L'Ecuyer: I agree with 4NT, as I can hardly be better facing a hand that is making a slam try opposite a hand that is known to be in the 22-24 point range.

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? First we'll hear from the naysayers:

Deng: No. I still am worried about two red-suit losers.

Todd: No.

Everyone else took the plunge, for various reasons.

Kimelman: We are off the king of hearts. I expect partner likely has the trump queen and/or four hearts for their 3S cue-bid. What else could they have to try for slam?

Kuz: Yes, if partner has three trumps, he has something else on the side.

Balcombe: Yes, why else did I bid RKC?

Xu: Yes, 2♦ shows 2+ controls, 5♣ confirms it is the ace of spades, so it's a good slam with the heart queen unless responder has a mirror holding in diamonds missing the queen.

Smith: Yes, I ask for the trump queen.

Cooper: Yes, I would ask for the trump queen. "Forward the Light Brigade! Charge for the guns!" he said.

Hornby (and Thurston): Yes, agree with 5♦ to ask for the queen of trump.

Simon: Yes, I don't think he would cue-bid with just the ace of spades and queen of hearts. He has at least four hearts or other high cards or good distribution.

Lindop: Yes, I ask for the trump queen. Partner already showed 2+ controls and then made a slam try with 3♠, so should have something extra. The queen of hearts and one of the minor-suit queens...or perhaps a fourth spade, and that should be enough for slam.

Grainger: You're committed to asking at this point IMO.

Jacob: Yes, I ask for the trump queen. Partner could have one of the minor-suit queens for four spades to the AJ, etc.

Lebi: I am bidding slam at this point, no need to ask for the queen. I assume we have at least a nine-card fit and will take my chances on the trump suit, one way or the other.

Maybe, maybe not to the nine-card heart fit. However, if responder has only three hearts, an outside useful card would be needed to make the slam try.

L'Ecuyer: 5♦ is fine also; no trump queen from partner, no slam. If he shows that card, we are in 6♥ and I hope we can make it.

And we conclude with a very good summation from:

Du: Now I will ask for the trump queen with 5♦ and I think 6♥ will have a good chance to make if partner has that card. On a normal trump split (one loser) a slam still requires a twelfth trick, which could come from responder's possible minor-suit queen, doubleton in diamonds, length in clubs or spades, etc.....

And now we'll draw back the curtain to reveal partner's hand, which consists of ♠A103 ♥Q632 ♦743 ♣J105. First off, responder's slam try is quite marginal opposite 22-24 balanced, with no possible third cover card or ruffing value. Does the fourth trump and the J10 of clubs make it worth the 3♠ cue-bid? I guess it's not total lunacy but it's certainly somewhat optimistic.

At the table, my partner got worried about the diamond situation and signed off in 5♥ without asking for the trump queen. When it turned out there was an inevitable heart loser, his caution seemed to be justified. But as it turned out, when he played the AK of clubs from his hand, the Qx fell doubleton and twelve tricks were made after all. Was there ever any doubt? 😊

2. As South, you hold ♠K4 ♥762 ♦Q6 ♣AQ9543.

E-W vul, IMPs, South deals.

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	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?

a)	Score	Votes
No	4	21
Yes	1	2

b) Bid	Score	Votes
1NT	6	9
3♣	5	8
2♣	4	4
2NT	3	2

The vote was almost a total landslide in favor of opening in first chair:

Kimelman: I would open the bidding always. At these colors, I imagine it will be close to a unanimous panel. Right on the mark with your guess, Neil, as there were only two passers.

Balcombe: I would open, at least at favorable vulnerability.

Deng: I would open this hand.

Xu: I would have started with 1♣. Good rebiddable suit and favorable vulnerability.

Chen: I would have opened 1♣. 7-loser hand and have no rebid problems (2♣).

In this day and age, all 12-counts get opened as a matter of routine. Partnerships often get in right away with 11-point hands as well, but in my style, the decision hinges on the number of losers. With six you should definitely open and with seven it is also reasonable to open. An eight-loser hand would have too many gaps in it to justify opening those types of 11-counts.

Editor's note: *In my soon-to-be-released new book, I suggest many players are asking the wrong questions, when deciding whether to bid.*

Smith: Yes, I would have opened this hand 1♣ in first seat.

Cooper: I disagree and would have opened this hand 1♣. White against red, matchpoints, first punch. Also, playing Drury, you have boxed yourself on any major suit third-seat opening, which is not that remote.

Good point, Stephen. The moral is, then, that even hands more borderline than this one might have to be opened 1♣ because you might not be able to mention the suit conveniently after an original pass.

Lindop: No, I would open 1♣. 11 HCPs plus two length points is an easy opening bid these days.

Miles: No, I can't imagine passing this hand in 2026, let alone in first seat at favorable vulnerability.

Lorber: Disagree, this is a mandatory 1♣ opening bid. And in the extreme minority:

Stark: Yes, I agree with pass. If you play a 10-13 notrump range, it's an automatic 1NT opener.

Thurston: I agree with pass.

b) What is your bidding plan now?

The initial pass managed to generate a lively discussion among the panel on what to do over partner's third-seat opening, with four options being mentioned. First up, we have:

Deng: If I had passed initially, I would bid 2NT now.

Todd: I could bid 3♣, 2♣, or 1/2 NT. I bid 2NT but would be okay with showing a three-card limit raise.

A 2NT response shows the point-count accurately and shows two of opener's major, perhaps with an honor, so it's a decent choice. However, it leaves the nice club suit unmentioned and is probably not everyone's cup of tea with xxx Qx in the red suits. Next we'll hear from:

Lindop: 2♣. I'm backed into a corner by my failure to open and my methods. Unless I have some artificial way to show clubs, I'll simply start with Drury and take it from there. I'll treat my Kx of spades as three-card support if necessary. If partner shows a minimum, I'll settle for a part-score in spades; it is match-points after all. If partner shows opening values, I'll suggest 3NT as a contract and accept 4♠ if he prefers that.

Turner: 2♣ to start with. I'll tell partner later that I got my spades and hearts confused. 2♠ next over 2♦ or 2♥, 3NT over 2NT, 6♣ over 3♣.

L'Ecuyer: 2♣ Drury. So be it. I will not jump to 3♣ or 2NT with Kx in spades. Kx looks as good as xxx in opener's major. I will pass 2♠ and bid 3♣ over 2♦.

My general plan would be the same as Nick's, showing a good passed hand with eight black-suit cards although not in the exact proportion that opener will expect. I think he should be able to figure my shape out on that bidding, but even if he doesn't, we should be able to reach a playable contract.

Moving on, we'll check in on the second-largest group of voters:

Balcombe: 3♣. Don't most people play this as a maximum passed hand with long clubs? Partner could be very light for the third-seat opening, so a wrong-sided 1NT seems not best.

Xu: Next bid depends on the agreement between partners. For example, 3♣ if it's invitational with 6+ clubs and if 2NT is natural, it is also a choice. When all this is unavailable, Drury 2C is okay for me, 11 HCP and king-doubleton of opener's major qualifying it.

Chen: 3♣. Without discussion, this should be a maximum passed hand with good clubs. If responder has a weaker suit, he should bid 1NT first and then mention clubs at his next turn. 2♣ is Drury so we cannot make that response. 2NT is also a choice.

Smith: Now I bid 3♣, invitational with 6+ clubs.

Hornby: What is 3♣ or 2NT by a passed hand? I must do something that might rescue me from the failure to open and show a decent passed hand with long clubs. I play 2NT to show a fit jump and three of a minor to show this type of hand, ergo 3♣ here.

Cimon: 3♣. Should be invitational with a six-card suit. If partner continues the bidding with 3♦ or 3♥, I will then bid 3♠. Another option would be Drury, even if I have only two spades.

Grainger: I would respond 3♣, showing about 10 points and at least six clubs. You need to play something that shows clubs when Drury is in effect, and this is the usual option.

Jacob: Is 3♣ a fit jump or natural? If natural, I bid 3♣, otherwise 1NT.

The passed-hand 3♣ is right on point-count and quality of the long suit. However, it tends to show a relative misfit for the opened major, generally two small at best. That is not the case here, as responder has Kx. The group that was in the plurality by a mere whisker:

Stark: 1NT. Not 2♣ and not a jump to 2NT, whatever that means. With some partners, I can bid 3♣ to show this type of hand, however.

Lorber: 1NT. Hard to catch up. A natural 3C is a possibility if available. Having forgot to open, I'll guess 3♠ over 2♦, 4♣ over a club rebid. Over 2♥, I'd keep the bidding alive with 2♠, but at least one of my minor-suit queens is less good now.

I'm glad you elaborated on your follow-up plans, Michel. Not all the 1NT responders did so.

Miles: I start with 1NT and await developments. Maybe my pass will work out by letting me bid a quite 2♠ over 2♦.

Too quiet, in my opinion. After the 1NT bid, responder should be taking a more forward-going action at the next opportunity.

Lebi: No option here. 1NT for now.

Thurston: 1NT. If opener passes, I am done. If he bids 2♠, I raise. If he bids two of a red suit, I bid 2NT.

Even in a 2/1 environment with forcing notrump responses, Paul treats a 1NT bid by a passed hand as not entirely forcing. I won't hazard a guess on the exact percentages, but I think more than half of the panel, and the bridge community at large, would treat it as forcing if partner has anything resembling sound opening values.

Cooper: A useful agreement is to play that 3♣ now shows this hand, denying spade support, 6-7 clubs, invitational. Many play fit-showing jumps by a passed hand, so not knowing the system here, I would respond 1NT and see what happens.

Du: 1NT. It is tougher here. 2♣ is Drury, and both 2NT and 3♣ might be some type of convention that you and your partner play. So 1NT might be the only option left to us. Hopefully you play it as semi-forcing by a passed hand.

Kuz: 1NT. I prefer playing 1NT forcing by a passed hand for holdings exactly like this.

Kimelman: 1NT. Over a red-suit continuation by partner, I will bid 3♠, which I think does the hand reasonable justice.

In my partnerships I also play 1NT by an initial passed hand as being a one-round force. Although I took a different path with a Drury 2♣, I can relate to this contingent, most of whom realize that encouraging action has to be taken next time around, even if partner rebids 2♦ or 2♥.

Partner held ♠A107643 ♥Q8 ♦AK74 ♣8. 4♠ should be reached over a 2NT or 2♣ Drury response. Ditto over a 1NT reply, unless that player wimps out at his next turn. A 3♣ is more problematic, because while partner has sound values, the hand seems like a misfit and he may not be willing to get into a trump fight. Some openers might pass, but I expect that several of them might try 3♦ (not 3♠), and when partner takes a 3♠ preference, that sequence will do the trick in arriving at the best spot.

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

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

What is your call?

Bid	Score	Votes
5NT	10	1
6NT	9	1
6♥	9	8
4♠	8	7
5♥	7	2
4NT	6	0
4♥	6	4

The panel is divided into four camps on this hand, those being the individuals who:

- *Confirm trumps with 4♥ and leave the next move up to responder;*
- *Invite slam with a jump to 5♥ or a black-suit cuebid;*
- *Those who would like to make a keycard ask with hearts as the trump suit, and...*
- *The panelists that commit the hand to slam without further ado.*

We'll kick off with those members of our panel who set the trump suit for now:

Simon: 4♥. Partner is a passed hand. Yes, partner could have 6-5 either way in the red suits with the king of hearts and the AJ of diamonds, but I'm not sure I want to play for that specific hand. At matchpoints, it's better to be a bit conservative.

Chen: 4♥. Partner is captain of this hand. If he drives the hand to 6♥, I will convert it to 6NT to get a better matchpoint score.

Du: 4♥. Your hand has not significantly improved after the 4♦ call.

L'Ecuyer: 4♥. I think partner is bidding 4♦ as a probable choice of games. Hard to see something else facing a passed hand without extra shape in diamonds. I expect partner to be 5/5+ here. My black suit cards are sort of working facing that shape but there are a lot of points in those suits. 6♥ is by no means a bargain facing x Kxxxx Axxxx xx.

If responder's ambitions were only to play in game, he would have continued with 3NT if he were 5-4 in the red suits and even if he has 5-5 distribution. At matchpoints, you don't want to be insisting on a red-suit contract, especially when as we know, five of a minor requires more assets than 3NT or four of either major. We should treat this sequence as partner showing 5-5 or better shape, as Nick says, but also with some aspirations towards bigger things.

An unpassed responder might be the captain once you've indicated your preference as to the trump suit, but in this case, partner has essentially shot his bolt with the 3♦ and 4♦ bids and is not likely to take a further move. You will have to show more enthusiasm than just going back to 4♥. Two panelists show more ambition by bidding responder's major one level higher than necessary:

Lorber: 5♥. I know that partner may not be very strong, but he risks a misfit with 4♦ and the hand cannot be any better than the auction to date.

Lindop: 5♥. I have a maximum and good cards in both of responder's suits. If we haven't discussed the meaning of 4NT in this auction—probably natural—I don't want to risk that. Slam should have a reasonable play if partner has two key cards, the king of hearts and ace of diamonds for example. Partner should go on if he has something like that if we are on the same wavelength. I don't want to be in slam if partner has no honours in hearts.

What David is referring to here in his comments is that when responder bids like this, opener with two hearts and three+ diamonds wants to be able to play 4NT rather than the minor-suit game, so 4NT would be to play rather than a keycard ask in one of partner's suits.

Our next group bids 4♠, with different intentions as we can see from their remarks:

Deng: If there is no agreement, it is difficult to find a fit here. If partner has two of the three cards among the ace of hearts, king of hearts and ace of diamonds, I would like to play a slam from our side. I would probably bid 4♠ first and then 5♥ to show slam interest in hearts.

Smith: I bid 4♠, a cue-bid. If partner has at least one keycard, I should be safe at the five-level. I'll leave the next decision to partner.

Thurston: 4♠. Not just control-showing but trying to show enthusiasm for a possible slam.

These panelists are using the 4♠ bid to co-operate with any slam ambitions that responder might have.

Grainger: I play 4♠ as RKC for hearts, 4NT natural, 5♣ and higher as keycard responses in diamonds. That seems appropriate. The auction is somewhat of a headache, and needs discussion on what opener's subsequent bids mean, and there should be a keycard for hearts or 6 keycard option. Whatever it is, you bid it.

Jacob: Whatever is kickback (RKC) for hearts, 4♠ or 4NT.

Todd: Assuming 4NT is to play, we have a problem. If 4♠ is a cue-bid for responder's minor and 4NT is KC for hearts, I bid 4NT. If on the other hand 4NT is no fit, then I cue-bid 4S. If partner asks for keycards, I show them and convert 6♦ to 6♥.

Stark: 4♠. I can't retreat to 4♥ as I have extras, and partner should have a decent passed hand. If responder wanted to play in game only, they would rebid 3NT. 4♠ becomes a general cue-bid to say "I have slam interest"—not clear what the trump suit

is, though. FYI, I think two robots on BBO play 4♠ as agreeing hearts and extras, while 5C agrees diamonds with extras. NT would say "let's play here."

One thing any regular partnership ought to discuss is auctions like these, where there is a higher notrump opening of 2NT or 2♣ followed by 2NT, and responder transfers to a major and then bids another suit at the four-level. Since opener doesn't have the room to agree either suit as trump below game, the challenge for him is to distinguish between a minimum hand and one that has improved quite noticeably with partner's bids. Having specific agreements and being on the same page with each other is a must in these situations.

Many of our panelists have feel that the red-suit holdings and quick tricks in the black suits justify an even more optimistic decision on their part:

Kimelman: 6♥. Your red-suit holdings are golden. Partner will have two of the three missing red-suit honors but cannot have three, as they did not open the bidding.

Kuz: 6♥. Most players don't bid in this manner without 5-5 shape. So, with five honors in his suits and the queen of spades protected, I blast. This might come down to spot cards in responder's hand.

Balcombe: 6♥. As a passed hand, shouldn't partner have something like x Kxxxx AJxxx xx?

Xu: 6♥. Passed hand transfer and 4♦ continuation should be 5-5 with an ace and a king in the long suits.

Lebi: Methods are required here. We need a way to show hearts and slam interest, RKCB or something positive. Failing that, I guess to bid 6♥. As little as Kxxxx AJxxx in his suits makes a great slam.

Miles: 6♥, yuck. We've run out of room. I can't confirm hearts without risk of playing 4♥. Obviously, we need two out of three keycards for slam to be excellent. I'll give up on a possible 7♥ contract as partner is a passed

hand. I can't really construct hands that we might want to play in diamonds or notrump (void Axxxx Axxxx Qx would be wild, but partner would have opened something). 4NT is a suggestion to play. If they have Kxxxxx AJxxx x, I will apologize.

Turner: 6♥. I think partner must have at least ten cards in the red suits for this auction... a passed hand with only 5-4 shape would just bid 3NT at his second turn at matchpoints, I think. How about x Axxxx Axxxx Qx? I don't think I can reasonably choose between hearts and notrump, even if I bid 5NT now.

We have two final views of the opener's hand:

Hornby: The greedy matchpoints 6NT. It is barely possible that responder has the three missing red-suit honors in which case we need to have a talk. Anything I bid over 4♦ (except the wholly inadequate 4♥) sounds like a cue-bid for diamonds.

Cooper: 5NT, all aboard! Another super-max with FIVE honors in partner's suits and three sure winners on the side. I have queens for notrump, that strain might be safer. If responder bids 6♦, I'll correct to 6♥ and hopefully partner will understand that I'm willing to play 6NT if he is. If they pass or go on to 6NT, I am content.

I must admit, the thought of 5NT and a subsequent 6♥ did not occur to me. But Stephen is right on with his suggestion, as opener can have partner choose between the heart and notrump slams. Responder had pretty much what our panelists expected:
♠6♥K9875♦A9875♣Q7.

6♥ is a strong favorite to make, and 6NT will also have a good play for twelve tricks. Responder is likely not going to accept a 5♥ invite or cooperate with a slam invite as he's bid the full value and shape of his hand at this point. It therefore falls upon opener to get his side there, either by a direct jump to slam or via a Keycard Ask if the partnership has such an agreement.

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?

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

I expected this hand to be the closest vote of the bunch, and that's what it turned out to be. The reason is that South has an assortment of choices for the second action, none of which are 100% ideal. The breakdown was essentially a four-way split, each of the options garnering between 5 and 7 votes. First we'll hear what the advocates of the cheapest bid have to say:

L'Ecuyer: 1NT. Tough hand. Anything can be right. I am trying to hear 2♥ from partner without overstating my hand. Classical hand to be playing some XYZ type of variation. 2NT is too much for me with such diamonds. I will go low and hope.

Lorber: 1NT. Not strong enough for 2♦. 2♣ doesn't convey any strength and overstates the fit. While 2NT is acceptable, the diamond holding is weak. At matchpoints, I'd risk missing a close game and increase the chances of going plus.

Grainger: This depends on your opening style. Playing 14-16 1NT and opening 11-point hands as I do, I would bid 1NT and see if partner can take another call. If you're playing Roth-Stone, you make an invitational call of some type.

Xu: If there are methods to show invitational hands with hearts, take it. If not, for matchpoints I'll bid 1NT.

Balcombe: 1NT. My preference is to stay low in the highest-scoring strain. Besides, partner may bid again.

Kuz: 1NT. Heavy? Yes, but this time I am going low and try to protect a plus. System agreements would also play a role (do we rebid 1NT with 4333 distribution?).

Cooper: 1NT. This is a hand that has no perfect description available. Let me count the ways:

- 1NT—a little heavy, no stopper in the unbid suit. Hand is not so great if there is no fit. Opener will bid 2♥ with 4315 that leads to 4♥.
- 2♣—in some systems opener has shown 5+ clubs. But otherwise, misdirected and heavy.
- 2♦—4th suit forcing to game. Light, but should aid in finding the best denomination. Will need good luck to make game.
- 2♥—could work out. Overstates the suit, understates the hand.
- 2NT—approximate value is right, diamond stopper still missing, will still get to hearts if opener has three of them.

A very good summation of the pluses and minuses for each of responder's continuations, Steve. I'm a bit surprised that 3♣ was not mentioned, perhaps that was because it's the lowest-paying denomination and an eight-card fit may not be guaranteed for our side. Now we'll move over to the other end of the spectrum on how to approach South's rebid:

Chen: 2♦. Not sure if the system uses XYZ, so 4th suit to force and wait for partner's third bid.

Jacob: 2♦. (I would bid 2♣ if XYZ to invite) as I don't like the alternatives.

Lebi: 2♦. Given that I must misdescribe the hand in some fashion, I will aim high by bidding the fourth suit and find the eight-card heart fit or the right side for notrump if there is one.

Miles: 2♦. Absolutely hate doing this but will take the chance of at least finding the right strain and playing notrump from partner's side. My second choice is 1NT. Third choice 3♣ maybe.

Du: 2♦. To provide a more accurate assessment of this hand, I require additional information. Do you play 2-way checkback or XYZ? Do you play fourth suit as a game force? If you do not have an invitational action at your disposal, you may have to bid 2♦ (overbid), 2♣ (underbid) or 1NT (underbid and wrong-sided). 2NT shows 11-12 but is also wrong-sided. 3♣? If you don't play Walsh, you may end up playing 4-3 in trumps if partner's hand is 4324, which is bad in a matchpoints game.

Let's take a brief time-out to explain the particulars of the Walsh style of bidding. If the North-South pair is using weak notrump openings, then the sequence 1♣-1♥-1♠ automatically shows an unbalanced hand with nine cards in the black suits as North hasn't opened 1NT as he would holding 12-14 and hasn't rebid 1NT, which is how you describe the 15-17 point balanced hands.

Richard Walsh, a 1960s' player and theoretician, suggested that even in a strong notrump partnership, opener's rebid should distinguish between a balanced and unbalanced hand. Ergo, opener's 1♠ would imply 4+ spades and 5+ clubs. If he has a balanced minimum hand, then his priority would be to show it with a 1NT rebid, even if he has four-card major(s). A fair number of strong notrump pairs at the expert level indeed use Walsh parameters for opener's rebid.

Now, going back to responder's hand, is it worth a game force or is 2♦ too pushy and action? You could make an argument either way, but what sways me in that direction is holding the king of each black suit. That means that taking seven or eight tricks in spades and clubs is entirely possible, and if opener has the

requisite high card in diamonds, there should be a play for nine tricks.

There are two bids that responder can make that show invitational values, and they each have their advocates:

Deng: If we play XYZ, I would bid 2♣ and then 2♥. Otherwise, I would bid 2NT to show an invitational hand.

Smith: I'll bid 2NT, invitational. If my system allows me to bid 2♣ to initiate an invitational sequence, I would bid that instead.

Thurston: Very good hand for XYZ, my 2♣ would force 2♦ over which I bid 2♥ to show invitational values with 5 hearts. Without XYZ, I continue with 2NT.

Thank you, Paul, this saves me the trouble of explaining the XYZ convention, which has been mentioned by numerous panelists. Doing a web-search for XYZ bridge on your browser should direct you to a site that explains this bidding tool in more detail

Lindop: 2NT. I have enough to invite game but not sufficient values to commit to it at matchpoints. Hopefully opener can now show three-card heart support. This may wrong-side notrump, but I don't think I can do any better. The others with my hand will face the same problem and I think this will be the popular choice.

Stark: 2NT or 2♣ depending on style. If we play XYZ were the first three bids are all at the one-level, then 2♣ is a relay to 2♦ and then I can make a bid that describes my shape and show invitational values. So, after partner bids 2♦, I can follow up with 2♥ to show an 11-count with five hearts. If we don't play XYZ, then I must fudge. My best attempt is 2NT to show 11-12 HCP, diamond stopper be damned.

The other invitational bid avoids notrump because of the lack of a diamond stopper:

Kimelman: 3♣. Even playing a strong notrump system, this seems like a clear choice.

Hornby: It's a non-problem if I'm playing XYZ, but if 4th suit is game-forcing, all that's left is 3♣.

Cimon: 3♣. Opener should have 5+ clubs and 4 spades. If he opened weak with good distribution, it is better to play a suit contract. If opener has a good hand, he'll bid over 3♣ in a helpful way that gets us to the right spot.

Turner: I think 3♣ is the "classic" bid with this hand...I'll see if it works out here.

Partner's had ♠A986 ♥Q2 ♦QJ ♣KQ1083. Notrump may be the highest-paying contract, but is the lowest-scoring at the table as the defenders will lead a diamond and win five tricks in that suit plus the ace of hearts. A club partial will score a comfortable +110 or +130. The 5-2 heart fit is the double-dummy spot and can make ten tricks with the fortunate 3-3 trump break.

This is not to say that 2♦ is the perfect bid as it could result in a minus score, but 3NT will have some play if opener has a stopper in the unbid suit. In this case, opener DOES have 14 HCP, but let's reduce it to 12 by taking away the queen of hearts and making it a small diamond to give him a full stopper. Now there are eight probable tricks in notrump and a ninth could be available in the heart suit.

Of course, the actual layout of the hand was somewhat unlucky for notrump purposes, as the diamonds in the opponents' hands could have just as easily been 4-4 rather than 5-3. As the vote share indicates, there is no definitively right or wrong answer on this hand. Yes, the XYZ convention works nicely here if the partnership is using it. And if the Walsh style on opener's rebid is in effect, I suspect more panelists could be willing to go with the 3♣ option at responder's second turn.

5. As South, you hold ♠AQ92 ♥85 ♦Q95 ♣K1063. Both vul, IMPs.

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

1. Support with 8+ HCPs, creating a game force. What is your call?

Bid	Score	Votes
3♠	10	12
3NT	7	8
4♣	7	3

While there are three bids receiving votes, unlike the last two problems, this hand comes down to a two-horse race for our panelists. This is the classic scenario of a minor-suit fit having been established between a very good opening hand and a responder that has enough values to be in game and a shade more on top of that. So, the issue is whether to:

- Go looking for slam and bypass 3NT in the process;*
- Park the contract in 3NT for now and leave the matter of whether to go any further in opener's court, and....*
- Steer a middle course with 3♠ to indicate at least mild slam interest.*

To start with, let's hear from the bull market:

Kuz: 4♣. I see no reason to slow down (most people I play with will agree to that statement). There are a lot of combinations that will produce slam opposite 1-4-3-5 or even 0-4-3-6 hands. Plus, I enjoy bidding slams.

Stark: 4♣. Keeping it simple. I have a good hand for clubs, so let's set that up. Yes, 3NT might be all the matchpoints, but then again, it might not be. If partner bids 4NT over my 4♣, that should likely be to play, as they have an easy control showing cue-bid of 4♦, 4♥ or 4♠ to go slamming in clubs (then a 4NT bid by either of us would be keycard for clubs). Picture opener with x AKQx Axx AQxxx. Partner did not have to bid 3♦ if they have a minimum reverse with a diamond stopper, in that case they could have bid 3NT. So I think partner has a good reverse.

That's a reasonable assumption to make in considering what to do with this hand. Also, the 4♣ pretty much guarantees four-card trump support, while the other two contenders (3NT and 3♠) would leave some uncertainty about how many cards in partner's minor responder has. Now we'll shift over to the 3NT bidders and the reasons for their choice:

Balcombe: 3NT. Seems routine with the two queens not great for a high-level contract.

Deng: 3NT. The fourth suit is asking for a stopper.

Maybe in some cases where the fourth suit is needed to establish a game force, but in this situation, we are already committed to playing in game. Ergo, if opener lacked a high card in diamonds, his/her action would be 3♥ or 3♠, not 3♦.

Chen: 3NT. 8 of 11 HCP are outside of partner's suits, so the hand isn't very good for slam. 3NT may produce a better matchpoint score.

Cooper: 3NT. "It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done. Partner may just want to play notrump from the right side if his red suits aren't that vulnerable to attack. If he makes any move over 3NT, I'll cooperate. "To the moon, Alice!"

Hornby: Sound like partner is 1-4-3-5ish, so I'll show my spade wastage with 3NT. If they take further action, I'll cooperate.

Lindop: 3NT. It is matchpoints, right? If I cue-bid 3♠, I'm probably committed to 6♣ since 5♣ is unlikely to be a good score. My queens in spades and diamonds sway me into going low, although I'll cooperate if he makes a further move.

Lebi: 3NT. Matchpoints, ugh. Can't commit to slam in clubs, so I take the safe scoring game. I would definitely bid 4♣ in IMPs.

Tuner: 3NT. And I'm accepting the delay-of-game penalty. My (lame) argument in the post-mortem will be that my hand with spade and diamond strength might have bid 2NT or 3NT last round, so clubs followed by NT must have some slam interest in clubs. Second choices: 4NT, 6♣ or 3NT followed by 4♣.

2NT by responder on the previous turn would almost certainly have been Ingberman (relay to 3C followed by pass or 3H to show a weaker supporting hand) for virtually all expert pairs and even some regular club-level partnerships. As for David's comment that responder is making a slam try by taking the slow route to 3NT, I'm not so sure about that. Isn't South's first duty to confirm support and enough values for game with 3♣ when opener is relatively unlimited, and then offer 3NT as a possible contract at the next turn?

The 3NT bidders are entitled to their opinion and I understand their reasoning to a certain extent, but the blissful assumption that opener may take a further bid in which case they would cooperate is wishful thinking, IMO. As Andy Stark has mentioned, North has already suggested a bit extra with 3♦, and that being the case, is only going to come up with yet another bid if he has borderline strong 2♣ values. The fact of the matter is that 3NT is likely to end the auction.

Now let's assess the South hand in terms of how many tricks it might provide for opener in a minor-suit contract. One in spades, another in clubs, one heart ruff for sure and possibly a second one if that is required. As for the pointed queens, one of them is likely wasted but the queen of diamonds might be

useful if opener has the 1-4-3-5ish distribution that his 3♦ bid suggests. I would estimate the hand as being a good bet of providing at least four tricks in the way of assistance for partner. That and the certainty of a nine-card or better fit makes the hand good enough to at least bid 3♠ rather than 3NT in my opinion.

The 3♠ bidders, as we are about to see, come in two variants. Some are intending to sit 3NT if opener now bids it, while a slightly greater number will remove to 4♣ to green-light a cue-bid or keycard ask from partner.

Du: 3♠. If opener now bids 3NT, then 4♣ shows slam interest. 6♣ has a decent chance if partner has a little extra for his reverse bid. The fourth club and two keycards are significant assets.

Smith: I bid 3♠. I have a useful hand for partner.

Simon: 3♠. A cue-bid, a little try for the slam. The fourth club is a big card.

Grainger: 3♠. A typical minimum like x AQxx AJx AQxxx makes slam a reasonable proposition and partner could have much more than that. This gets across that you have no help in hearts but still have slam interest.

Jacob: 3♠, a bit too much potential to shut it down in 3NT.

Kimelman: 3♠. I have the spade ace and four-card trump support. Over 3♣, I like playing a third suit by the reversing hand as a pattern bid. Then I could easily key-card.

Xu: 3♠. My hand is too good to bid 3NT.

Miles: 3♠, and if opener bids 3NT I will pull to 4♣. I expect a 4♦ cue-bid from partner over 4♣. In my fantasy world, if partner skips 4♦, I can bid 4NT to play. In reality, we're getting to 6♣.

Todd: 3♠—too much for 3NT but I will sit that contract if opener now bids it.

Lorber: 3♠, will pass 3NT if that is partner's next bid.

L'Ecuyer: 3♠ for now. In my style, I am almost surely bidding a slam. Just a matter of hearing partner out before doing something more drastic like KCB or anything else. I would have liked to confirm clubs with four of them and bid 4x♣e, good clubs and slammish, over partner's 2♥. Methods are important.

I fully agree with Nick's opinion that a jump to 4♣ at responder's previous turn is a good way of describing the hand. Let's consider the implications of such an action. If South had controls in one or both red suits, the actual 3♣ is the way to go since you want to preserve enough room to later show them. Ergo, the immediate jump ought to be a kind of "picture bid", confirming four or more clubs and enough points to try for slam, with the remaining values concentrated in spades. South would therefore go that route with the actual hand or AJxxx and KJxx in spades and clubs respectively, with no diamond or heart control.

Now that the entire panel has had their say, opener's hand was ♠K♥KQJ6♦A107♣AQ984. Interestingly enough, it's the queen of diamonds in the South hand that turns out to be the wasted card, while the queen of spades allows opener to take two diamond pitches on the extra spade winners. If you turn the king of spades in opener's hand to the king of diamonds, slam also makes, and even the AJ10 makes it a 50-50 proposition.

Note that if the auction had gone 1♣-1♠-2♥-4♣, North would have had an easy key-card ask given that responder's values are located in the black suits.

Canadian Bridge Humour


The 1978 Nationals, held in New Orleans, was one of the first NABCs to incorporate bidding boxes. Eric Murray recalls one hand from this tourney, in Roy Hughes great book on Murray and Kehela, **Canada's Bridge Warriors**. Murray relates what happened:

Eric: 'It went three passes to me and I held: ♠653♥J765♦107643♣7. It was clear to me that one of those green pass cards was an error. I peered over the tops of my cards at the opponents but neither one of them looked unduly concerned, so I glanced across the table and saw beads of perspiration forming on Sami's brow, so I thought I'd think about this for a while. I started to study my cards and a waterfall was pouring onto the table. Finally I shook my head and said, "Oh I'm not going to open this hand – I don't have the majors", and put my hand back in the pocket.

Sami cried, "I had 19 pts." To which I responded "Why would you pass with 19 points?" Sami exploded across the table to grab my cards. But I wouldn't let him have them. After a brief tussle I spread my cards across the table for everyone to see. He had of course pulled the wrong card. He held ♠J109♥AQ8♦A♣AKJ543. It was in one of the Swiss matches. At the other table they played in 3♣ down one, so we won 2 IMPs.

Sami's not one to hold a grudge - within eight months he was speaking to me again.'



	Name	Hand 1		Hand 2		Hand 3		Hand 4		Hand 5		Total
		Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	Bid	Score	
	Keith Balcombe	yny	8	n3♣	9	6♥	9	1NT	7	3NT	7	40
	Fengming Chen	yyy	10	n3♣	9	4♥	6	2♦	10	3NT	7	42
	Francine Cimon	yyy	10	n3♣	9	4♥	6	3♣	8	3♠	10	43
	Stephen Cooper	yny	9	n3♣	9	5NT	10	1NT	7	3NT	7	42
	Eve Deng	yynn	7	n2NT	7	4♠	8	2NT	7	3NT	7	36
	Terry Du	yyy	10	n1NT	10	4♥	6	2♦	10	3♠	10	46
	David Grainger	yyy	10	n3♣	9	4♠	8	1NT	7	3♠	10	44
	Ray Hornby	yyy	10	n3♣	9	6NT	9	3♣	8	3NT	7	43
	Dan Jacob	yyy	10	n3♣	9	4♠	8	2♦	10	3♠	10	47
	Neil Kimelman	nny	7	n1NT	10	6♥	9	3♣	8	3♠	10	44
	Bob Kuz	nny	7	n1NT	10	6♥	9	1NT	7	4♣	8	41
	Robert Lebi	yyy	10	n1NT	10	6♥	7	2♦	10	3NT	7	44
	Nick L'Ecuyer	yyy	10	n2♣	8	4♥	6	1NT	7	3♠	10	41
	David Lindop	yyy	10	n2♣	8	5♥	7	2NT	7	3NT	7	39
	Michel Lorber	yyy	10	n1NT	10	5♥	7	1NT	7	3♠	10	44
	Danny Miles	yyy	10	n1NT	10	6♥	9	2♦	10	3♠	10	49
	Julie Smith	yyy	10	n3♣	9	4♠	8	2NT	7	3♠	10	44
	Andy Stark	yyy	10	y2♣	5	4♠	8	2NT	7	4♣	7	37
	Paul Thurston	yyy	10	y2♣	5	4♠	8	2NT	7	3♠	10	40
	Bob Todd	yynn	9	n2NT	7	4♠	8	3♣	8	3♠	10	42
	David Turner	yyy	10	n2♣	8	6♥	9	3♣	8	3NT	7	42
	Edward Xu	yyy	10	n2♣	8	6♥	9	1NT	7	3♠	10	44



SEPTEMBER 2026 PROBLEMS

Host: Danny Miles

Readers are invited to submit your solutions, to TGCBC by August 7th. Top point getter will be mentioned.

1. North dealer. Neither vul, IMPs. As South, you hold
♠Q4 ♥7 ♦KJ853 ♣K10942.

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	?

What do you bid?

2. North dealer. Neither vul, IMPs. As South, you hold
♠QJ2 ♥AJ542 ♦10973 ♣J.

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	Dbl
1NT	3♦	Pass	?

Do you agree with the double?

What is your call?

3. South dealer. E-W vul, IMPs. As South, you hold
♠A762 ♥KJ4 ♦A7532 ♣A.

West	North	East	South
			1♦
1♠	Dbl	Pass	?

What is your call?

4) Matchpoints, North dealer, N-S vul. As South you hold
♠KQ10863 ♥53 ♦AQ105 ♣A.

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

What is your call?

5. West is the dealer. Both vul, IMPs. As South, you hold
♠AQ92 ♥J4 ♦73 ♣AJ954.

West	North	East	South
2♦	Pass	Pass	?

What is your call?



Ethan & Sam



INTERMEDIATE DECLARER PLAY SOLUTION

PROBLEM PAGE 24

Contract: 4♥. IMPs. E-W vulnerable. West is the dealer. The bidding:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♥
2♠	4♥	All Pass	

North

♠ A975
♥ KJ74
♦ A3
♣ KQJ

South

♠ 83
♥ AQ1032
♦ 104
♣ 9743

Lead: ♠K. Trumps are 3-1. Plan the play.

You have 10 tricks" 1 spade, 6 hearts (5 high hearts and a club ruff), 1 diamond and 2 clubs. That was an easy hand....

...Not so fast! As a declarer, we ask if anything can go wrong, and is there any reasonable action we can take to neutralize that threat.

As declarer, you always want pause a trick one. Here West bid 2♠ vul, vs not. He may hold seven spades at this vulnerability. If so, the ♠A is going to get ruffed at trick one. Now you are down, losing one more trick in each of the three side suits.

What can you do about this?

Duck the first two spades in dummy. When West plays a 3rd spade at trick three, play the nine from dummy, and ruff in your hand. Now you pull trumps, and safely cash the ♠A from dummy, discard the ♦4. The full deal:

North

♠ A975
♥ KJ74
♦ A3
♣ KQJ

West

♠ KQJ10642
♥ 6
♦ 952
♣ 82

East

♠ —
♥ 985
♦ KQJ876
♣ A1065

South

♠ 83
♥ AQ1032
♦ 104
♣ 9743

**My partner made
a bidding error.
He thought I knew
what I was doing.**



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2026

MONTH	DATE	EVENTS
JUNE	Fridays 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
	June 23	Annual General Meeting – 7:00 p.m ET (Zoom)
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 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)
OCTOBER	Fridays 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 - In Bridge Clubs
	October 19	CBC Round Robin Registration Opens
	Oct. 21 AM or AFT	ACBL-wide Instant Matchpoint Game
NOVEMBER	Fridays 8:00 pm ET	Maple Leaf Bridge Games - RealBridge
	All Month	Qualifying games for the 2027 CBC - COPC & Teams
DECEMBER	Fridays 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