

THE BIDDING BOX

MODERATOR: JOSH DONN
josh@thodonn.com

See the West and East hands that appear on pages 49 and 55 respectively, and try bidding them with a regular partner. Compare how you performed with the expert pairs whose auctions you can read about in this month's column. The North-South players are silent unless otherwise noted. The competitors were not informed of any interference by the opponents before the bidding commenced. The form of scoring is matchpoints with a 12 top.

The Bridge Bulletin auctions are meant to portray possible bidding sequences to one of the top-scoring contracts using common methods.

We have four talented players this month, representing different areas of the country, competing with an exceptionally difficult set of hands to bid.

The first pair is Alex Hudson of Morrisville NC and Peter Boyd-Bowman of Greensboro NC (not to be confused with the famous player Peter Boyd, known for his long-term partnership with Steve Robinson). Hudson and Boyd-Bowman are young and talented professional bridge players who can often be seen at various tournaments. Their bidding system is 2/1 forcing to game, but they have some uncommon and advanced agreements, as will be seen.

The competition is stiff, as their counterparts are Tracey Bauer of San Rafael CA and Richard Reitman of Los Gatos CA. Bauer has contributed to bridge in many ways, arranging events to raise money for various causes. She is currently working on a project to create a type of online community that connects more bridge players together. Reitman is a national champion, winning the Truscott/USPC Senior Swiss Teams title in 2016. Their bidding system is a more simple and familiar version of 2/1.

Problem 1

North deals. None vulnerable.

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

Hudson	Boyd-Bowman
2♦	2♣
2♠	2NT
3♦	3♥
3♠	4♦
4NT	5♦
5NT	6♥
Pass	

2♣ showed a strong hand, but one of the options for this pair is an 18- or 19-point balanced hand (with this incredible 17-point hand being a prime candidate for an upgrade). 2♦ was waiting. 2♥ showed multiple possible hand types, and 2♠ was also waiting. 2NT finally showed a balanced 18-19. For simplicity, the first two rounds of the auction can be ignored and just pretend opener began with 2NT. 3♦ was a transfer to hearts, which was accepted. 3♠ has, again, multiple meanings for this pair; its most common purpose is to see if there is a heart fit. 4♦ confirmed a fit for hearts

and a control in diamonds. Responder bid 4NT, which shows a spade control, as this pair switches the common meanings of 4♣ and 4NT in order to save space when asking for aces. Without any control in clubs, opener settled for 5♥, and knowing the ♠K was missing, responder, in turn, settled for 6♥.

Bauer	Reitman
1♥	1♦
2♣	1♠
4♣	3♥
4NT	4♦
5NT	5♦
Pass	6♥

The 1♦ and 1♥ opening were both standard. 1♠ was a creative choice with a strong three-card holding. Opener didn't want to rebid no-trump because he was worried about wrong-siding a notrump contract with his low club doubleton. 2♣ was artificial and forcing. Now opener bid 3♥ to show his secondary support and extra strength. 4♣ showed a control in support of hearts, as did 4♦. 4NT was key card Blackwood. Although not often recommended with a void, Bauer was willing to presume her partner held the ♠A on the bidding. 5♦ showed 0 or 3 key cards for hearts, and 5NT said all the key cards were held. Opener had no king to show below 6♥, so that is what he bid. This pair suffered the same issue as the other pair, namely, learning the ♠K was missing but not being able to identify that there were enough tricks outside of clubs.

Bridge Bulletin auction: 1♦-1♥; 2NT-3♣; 3♥-4♣; 4NT[RKCB]-5♣[2 key cards + ♥Q]; 5NT-6♦; 7NT-Pass. 3♣ is checking back for a heart fit, and 6♦ shows the ♠K. 7♥ might be slightly safer, but if the diamonds and hearts run (and also maybe if not), then the tricks for 7NT are there.

Scores: 7NT 12; 7♥ 10; 7♦ 8; 6NT 7; 6♥ 4; 6♦ 1

Hudson-Boyd-Bowman 4,
Bauer-Reitman 4

Problem 2

East deals. N-S vulnerable.

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

Hudson	Boyd-Bowman
1♥	1♠
2♠	1♣
3♦	3♥
4♥	Pass

The start of 1♣-1♥; 1♠ would be unanimous for those playing a natural bidding system. Responder went back to 2♣ on the second round. Holding a bit of extra values as well as extra club length, opener raised himself 3♣. Liking his hand, responder tried 3♦ as a mark-time bid to get more information from opener. When opener showed heart tolerance (3♥), responder carried on to 4♥, offering a 5-2 fit. The offer was accepted when responder passed. Although at a glance 4♥ might appear to be a reasonable contract, the likely defense of two rounds of diamonds will see the defense end up with one spade trick, one or two heart tricks, and two diamond tricks.

Bauer	Reitman
1♥	1♠
1NT	2♠
Pass	

After the same start, responder here chose to rebid 1NT. Opener rebid clubs, and very conservatively, responder chose to pass. A raise to 2♣ at that point seems fairly safe, and might lead to a good game contract.

Bridge Bulletin auction: 1♣-1♥; 1♠-2♣; 2♣-5♣; Pass. The singleton spade and the potential diamond weakness both point to 3NT not being the best game.

Scores: 5♣ 11; 4♣ 7; 2♥ 4

Hudson-Boyd-Bowman 4,
Bauer-Reitman 11

Problem 3

South deals. E-W vulnerable.

South opens 1♠.

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

Hudson	North	Boyd-Bowman	South
Dbl	(Pass)	2♦	(1♠)
3♦	All Pass		(Pass)

West had a clear takeout double of the 1♠ opening bid. The only four-card suit East had was diamonds, therefore he bid 2♦. The doubler raised to 3♦ to show some extra strength. Although East's hand is actually good in the context of the auction, given that 2♦ didn't promise anything at all, there didn't seem to be a likely game with this flat hand. With that in mind, East judged well to pass.

Bauer	North	Reitman	South
Dbl	(Pass)	2♦	(1♠)
2♠	(Pass)	3♠	(Pass)
4♦	All Pass		

West doubled and East bid 2♦, as at the other table. Here, West decided to cuebid the opponent's suit to show the extra values. East appreciated his ace and king on an auction where he might easily be far weaker. He tried to express that with a return cuebid of 3♠. West had nothing to do at this point but bid 4♦, which East correctly decided to pass.

Bridge Bulletin auction: As Hudson and Boyd-Bowman.

Scores: 2♥ 11; 3♥ 9; 3♦ 7; 4♦ 5; 4♥ 3; 5♦ 1

Hudson-Boyd-Bowman 11,
Bauer-Reitman 16

Problem 4

West deals. Both vulnerable.

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

Hudson	Boyd-Bowman
1♠	1NT
3♣	Pass

West opened 1♠, and East rebid 1NT which was semi-forcing in their methods. That means opener only passes with a minimal, balanced hand.

3♣ by West has a different meaning than standard for this pair. It shows 14-16 HCP with 5-5 shape, which fits West's hand to a T. East decided to pass, which certainly could have been right, if there were a spade loser, for example. Here, the fit was nice enough that 5♣ was a good contract.

Bauer	Reitman
1♠	1NT
2♣	3♣
3NT	Pass

West opened 1♠, after which 1NT was completely forcing in this pair's agreements. West rebid 2♣, and East did pretty well to raise to 3♣. West had a slight misjudgment at that point in bidding 3NT. While 3NT is very often the correct matchpoint contract, there are some hands that will play better in a minor-suit fit.

Bridge Bulletin auction: 1♠-1NT; 2♣-3♣; 5♣-Pass. Similar to Problem 2, West has too many holes in the

outside suits for 3NT to likely be the right contract.

Scores: 5♣ 11; 4♣ 7; 3♠ 5; 4♠ 4
Hudson-Boyd-Bowman 18,
Bauer-Reitman 16

Problem 5

North deals. N-S vulnerable.

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ Q 6 4	♠ A K J 2
♥ K Q 9 8 7 5 3	♥ A 6 4 2
♦ K 9 4	♦ —
♣ —	♣ A K 9 6 5

<i>Hudson</i>	<i>Boyd-Bowman</i>
1♥	1♣
5♣	4♦
7♥	5NT
	Pass

East opened 1♣, and West responded 1♥. 4♦ was a splinter bid, a common convention showing a strong hand with a heart fit and diamond shortness. Despite a wasted ♦K, West had a ton of playing strength with the long heart suit. 5♣ showed a control. East bid 5NT, the old-fashioned grand-slam force. It instructs partner to bid a grand slam with two of the top three honors in trumps. West obliged, and an excellent grand slam was reached.

<i>Bauer</i>	<i>Reitman</i>
1♥	1♣
3♥	3♦
5♣	3♠
6♥	5♣
	Pass

After the 1♣-1♥ beginning, East rebid 3♦. This is another version of a splinter bid that some pairs play. West rebid hearts, and 3♠ showed a control in that suit. 5♣ was exclusion key card Blackwood, asking for key cards outside of clubs, implying a void. 5♣ showed two key cards outside of clubs and no trump queen. In this sequence, West never learned about the diamond void. That gave

West little option but to sign off in 6♥.

Bridge Bulletin auction: 1♣-1♥; 4♦-5♣; 5♦-6♥; 7♥-Pass. There are two key points to this auction. First, 5♦ strongly implies a control in spades (and it's likely from the 4♦ splinter anyway). Because West bypassed spades, East should not make further slam tries if spades are a concern. Second, 6♥ must contain good trumps. This is the information that allows opener to bid a grand slam.

Scores: 7♥ 11; 6♥ 7; 6NT(W) 4
Hudson-Boyd-Bowman 29,
Bauer-Reitman 23

Problem 6

East deals. E-W vulnerable.

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ 10 5 2	♠ J 9 8
♥ A K Q 8 6	♥ 9
♦ J	♦ A K 9 4 2
♣ A Q 5 4	♣ J 9 4 3

<i>Hudson</i>	<i>Boyd-Bowman</i>
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♦
2♥	2NT
3♠	4♦
5♣	Pass

East passed, and West had a normal 1♥ opening bid. East responded 1NT, and West rebid 2♣. This is a convention common in Europe called Gazzilli. The 2♣ rebid is either a normal 2♣ rebid, or a variety of strong hands. 2♦ was artificial showing 8 or more HCP, and forcing to game if opener had one of the strong options. 2♥ said that opener had a normal minimum hand with hearts and clubs. 2NT by East was invitational with a club fit, an aggressive choice given that East had already showed some values. West had a complete maximum for the auction this far. 3♠ bid was intended as natural-ish, but East seemed to think it showed some kind of spade control.

4♦ also showed a control, and opener could only sign off in 5♣ over that.

<i>Bauer</i>	<i>Reitman</i>
1♥	Pass
2♣	1NT
3♦	3♣
5♣	4♦
	Pass

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East passed, West opened 1♥, and East rebid 1NT. For this pair, the 2♣ rebid was a natural bid. East is close between passing and raising, but here decided to raise. With 16 HCP, West couldn't really pass. The 3♦ call was undiscussed, but intended in this instance to show a diamond control. 4♦ looked like a logical choice with responder's hand at this point, propelling this pair to 5♣ as well.

Bridge Bulletin auction: Pass-1♥; 1NT-2♣; 3♣-3♠; 3NT-Pass. It's hard to avoid game convincingly on these cards. Here, opener can imply short diamonds, leaving responder no real choice but to bid 3NT. The lack of a spade stopper isn't a huge problem because often the opponents can only take four. The bigger issue is that a club loser is likely as well.

Scores: 1NT 11; 2NT 10; 2♣ 6; 2♥ 4; 3NT 3; 4♣ 2
Hudson-Boyd-Bowman 29,
Bauer-Reitman 23

Problem 7

South deals. Both vulnerable.

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ —	♠ A K J 9 8 5 4
♥ K J 9 6 4	♥ A
♦ A 4	♦ Q J 9 8
♣ K Q J 5 3 2	♣ 8

<i>Hudson</i>	<i>Boyd-Bowman</i>
1♣	1♠
2♥	3♠
4♠	5♠
6♦	6♠
Pass	

The 1♣ opening is a typical choice, even holding five hearts. This allows for opener to eventually show the complete 5-6 distribution. East responded 1♠, and West rebid 2♥. This reverse shows extra strength, normally more than the 14 this hand has, but there is obvious distributional compensation. 2♠ by East was intend-

ed to set spades as trumps; that is why West raised with the void. Because the trump suit was already determined in a forcing manner, raising was actually the least encouraging action possible. Even so, East had a promising-looking hand, so he bid 5♠. On a strong auction like this, raising a major suit to the five level invites slam but denies a control in the unbid suit, diamonds in this case. West obediently showed the ♦A, and then they finally managed to put on the brakes in slam.

<i>Bauer</i>	<i>Reitman</i>
1♣	1♠
2♥	3♠
4♥	4♠
Pass	

At this table, West rebid hearts after the 3♠ jump-rebid by East. This showed five hearts and, by inference, six clubs. East appreciated that the hands didn't fit well, thus he signed off in 4♠.

Bridge Bulletin auction: As Bauer and Reitman. With opener being 5-6, the possibility of two or three losers in spades and diamonds is very real, despite East's exciting hand.

Scores: 4♠ 11; 5♠ 6; 3NT 5; 5♠ 4; 6♠ 2
Hudson-Boyd-Bowman 29,
Bauer-Reitman 34

Problem 8

West deals. None vulnerable.

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠ 6 3	♠ A Q 10
♥ 8 6	♥ A K Q J 5
♦ A K 9 2	♦ 6 3
♣ K Q J 9 8	♣ 7 6 2

<i>Hudson</i>	<i>Boyd-Bowman</i>
<i>Bauer</i>	<i>Reitman</i>
1♣	1♥
2♣	2♠
2NT	3♠
3NT	Pass

Both pairs had the same auction. After 1♣-1♥, the West players rebid 2♣. Opener would prefer a six-card suit, but this strong five-card suit can do in a pinch if a player is stuck. Both responders now rebid 2♠. This is a forcing bid implying spade strength, but it need not be a four-card suit because opener already denied four or more spades. Both Wests rebid 2NT because the diamonds were well stopped. The East players next showed some club support. Because West had only five, they both decided to rebid 3NT rather than encourage further. East had some extra values, but in the face of partner's discouragement, they both decided to leave matters in 3NT.

Bridge Bulletin auction: 1♣-1♥; 2♣-2♠; 3♣-4♠; 4♦-4NT; 5♠-6NT; Pass.

Opening the West hand 1♦ and rebidding 2♣ is another viable strategy. When East learns a key card is missing, it seems notrump will be at least as good of a strain as clubs.

Scores: 6NT(E) 12; 6♠(E) 11; 5NT(E) 8; 5NT(W) 6; 6NT(W) 6; 6♠(W) 5; 5♠(W) 3
Final score: Hudson-Boyd-Bowman 35, Bauer-Reitman 40

Score correction

In the February "Bidding Box" column, the scores for Problem 8 were incorrect. The scores should have been as follows:

6NT 12; 6♦ 9; 5NT 6; 5♦ 3; 7♦ 1