

Last week's winners: Monday 31/6/03

Friday 4/7/03

1st Clive/Eddie 55 %

2nd Martin/Rosemary 51 %

No results as only 6 players.

Welcome back, Bill

Bill has spent a few days in hospital and has missed a few weeks. He seems to be back to his perky self now. Let's hope that the Bill/Ian partnership take off from where it was (winning). Mind you, Ian has done pretty well with Jon the last two times that they played together on Mondays (1st and 3rd).

A New Suit at the three Level

This is normally forcing.

Hand 19E East hand 19 from Monday. Partner opened 1♠, you respond 2♦ and partner rebids 3♣. What is your bid? This ♦ suit is too poor to rebid, you don't like either of partner's suits. You have no ♥ suit to bid and you have no ♥ stop to bid 3NT. So the holder elected to pass. You cannot, partner's bid is game forcing. You must bid, especially as you have a moose. And the correct bid? If you play 4th suit forcing then you should bid 3♥ and partner will then bid 3NT with a suitable (he has already shown 5♠'s and 4♣'s) hand and a ♥ stop. Incidentally, 3♥ cannot logically be natural (suggesting a ♥ contract) as partner has denied a ♥ suit. If you do have a ♥ suit, then bid 3NT. Anyway, if you are not happy about bidding 4th suit forcing then you still cannot pass. So with this hand, bid 3♠. Partner will know that this is most likely a doubleton, denying a ♥ stop.

And what happened? 3♣ made +2, with either 4♠ or 3NT making easily at other tables (partner had ♥Kxx).

New suits at the three level are almost always forcing, there are very few exceptions.

Two Different Styles ?

We all know that Hans and myself have totally different opinions on just about every bidding sequence imaginable. Funny how we both claim to bid just like Marty Bergen (Hans has just read Points Smoints). Anyway, on Friday we had just 6 players, so we alternated with 4 playing (rubber?) bridge for 4 hands and 2 sat out (kibitzing). This formula obviously led to loads of analysis etc. Hans made a number of bids that I did not like, and I made a number of bids that Hans did not like (what's new?). Well, the new thing is that rather than my concentrating on another's poor (in my view) bidding, we'll have a look at four hands where my bidding (and Bill's in one case) was criticised. So, just for a change, it's Terry under the spotlight with Hans' opinions. I was playing with Clive for the next 3 boards: -

No Game when Responder has 14 Points?

Board 10 from Friday

I held this West hand on Friday. Partner opened 1♠ and the bidding was: -

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ are my bids.

Hand 10W
1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 4♥ - pass

♠ K

♥ A10654

♦ AK764

♣ 83

Hans said that he did not like it (the bidding). First, he said that 3♦ was not forcing. John, Clive and my humble self all disagreed. Secondly, he said that after partner's 3♥ bid, I should pass as it is a mis-fit.

Now I have come to know Hans quite well by now, and know that he was not joking. Let's consider the 2nd point, that I should pass 3♥ - with two aces and two kings opposite a 1st seat vulnerable opener. Both hands East A & B are consistent with the bidding. With East A, 4♥ is pretty good. Not so pretty with East B. Guess which one partner actually held? Hans was right of course, but then he was sitting behind East. Would you pass 3♥?

East A	East B	East	West (me)	
♠ A107652	♠ AQ1075	1♠	2♥ (1)	(1) promises 5♥'s
♥ K7	♥ J7	2♠ (2)	3♦ (3)	(2) not strong enough for 3♣
♦ Q	♦ 5	3♥ (4)	4♥	(3) natural and forcing
♣ A976	♣ K7642	pass		(4) probably just two♥'s

Now about 3♦ being forcing or not, there is no doubt in my mind. 4♦ by-passes 3NT and would be a cue bid agreeing ♠'s. What do the experts say? :-

'After opener repeats his suit, if responder bids a 3rd suit either at the three level or as a reverse, then it is completely forcing.' - Crowhurst, page 178

Here are a few useful tips, with which I am sure that Clive and John will unreservedly agree – they both agreed that my 3♦ bid was 100% forcing and they also thought that I had no realistic option (not being clairvoyant) but to go to game.

- A new suit by responder is nearly always forcing.
- A new suit at the three level is nearly always forcing.
- *A new suit at the three level by responder who has not limited his hand is*

100% forcing.

The bottom line? East had an extremely light opener. It turned out to be a total mis-fit. But after the opening bid, I believe that game is unavoidable. Hans disagrees. OK. And if you do open East B, should it be 1♣ or 1♠? This is discussed later.

Over the Top – One too many?

Board 2 from Friday

I held this North hand on Friday. Both Vulnerable. The bidding was: -

Hand 2N

	West	North	East	South
♠ K8	-	-	1♣	1♥
♥ J3	1♠	2♦	2♠	3♦
♦ J106432	pass	pass	3♠	pass
♣ KJ4	pass	4♦	dbl	all pass

Now I got a lot of stick from everybody, with them saying that minus one (so -200) would be a bad score. First of all, 1 down in a competitive situation at rubber bridge (or teams scoring) is good bridge. One down is -100. When it gets doubled, then that ups the anti. It is not good to double opponents into game unless you can be pretty sure of a two trick set. The law of total tricks says that 4♦ is a good bet, and I am a law abiding citizen. Assuming the opponents make +140 in their contract, then -100 or -200 is OK at teams. But doubled is a different story. If you go one down, then you lose 60 points, that's OK. Two down and you lose 260, not so good. If you make, then that's +710, so a 570 points gain. That's very good. Doubling is against the odds on close hands at teams scoring. It's not worth it if minus one is the likely outcome. A small gain for minus two, but a disaster if declarer makes. It really is different from pairs scoring.

What happened? I took my time playing this one, with 4 vultures all criticising my bid and dying for the post-mortem (only my partner, Clive, was supportive). The silence at the end was broken as Clive said 'well bid and played partner' while chalking up the +710.

Of course the unbelievers said that I had been lucky – indeed I was, lucky that somebody holding just ♦AQ doubleton chose to double! You need trump *length* for successful penalty doubles. This theme comes up later (somebody doubling with a KJx holding).

4NT, Blackwood or Quantitative?

Board 5 from Friday

East	West	East	
♠ KQ3	-	1♦	I held this East hand on Friday and opened 1♦. My 2NT rebid (1) showed 17-18 points.
♥ 98	1♥	2NT (1)	(we play a weak NT). Partner's 3♣ bid is in essence natural but he could just be fishing
♦ AQJ96	3♣	3NT	for a 5-3 ♥ fit. My 3NT was natural and denied 3 ♥'s. So what is 4NT? I took it as
♣ AJ3	4NT	?	natural (quantitative), I liked my hand and so

bid 6NT. This contract failed on a finesse. Hans was in there very quickly, stating that the 4NT bid was obviously Blackwood, and that only somebody like me would take it as anything else. In news-sheet 31 I gave a *fairly* comprehensive list of situations where 4NT is quantitative (natural and invitational to slam) or Blackwood. Generally speaking, one uses Gerber after partner's last natural bid was no trumps. This particular sequence was not included, so let's hear it from the experts: -

'After 3NT has been bid, 5♣ is Gerber, 4NT is a natural raise and 4♣ would show ♣'s.'

- Better Bidding with Bergen, page 179

Max Hardy is **very** specific, this is an exact quote from a **very** recent book: -

‘When three notrump has been bid, a removal to four clubs is NOT the Gerber convention. It is either a slam try in a previously bid club suit, or a club cue bid in support of a previously bid suit. In either case, the removal of three notrump is always a forcing slam try. It is never because of fear that three notrump will not make.

When three notrump has been reached and the bidder’s partner needs to know about aces by number, Gerber is a jump to five clubs.

Raises of notrump are always quantitative. A raise of notrump to the four level is never Blackwood
- Standard Bridge Bidding for the 21st Century , Max Hardy, page 247.

So it seems that not only a person like me considers 4NT to be natural after partner’s 3NT. Finally, let’s hear it from an undoubted expert in the field, Mr Blackwood himself: -

‘If my partner’s last true bid was notrump, then a bid of 4NT by me is a notrump raise.’

- Blackwood on Slams Easley Blackwood page 42.

Guess that’s pretty clear? To ask for aces after a natural NT bid, Gerber (a jump in ♣’s) is used. 4NT is always quantitative. After 3NT, 5♣ is Gerber.

Hans does not pay me very many compliments about bidding, so I really appreciate being called ‘somebody like’ Marty Bergen, Max Hardy and Easley Blackwood.

Of course all of you guys (Jon, Ian, Jan, Malgosia etc.) who always use 4♣ and only 4♣, regardless of previous bids, to ask for aces will be laughing. What is all the fuss about?

Partner Overcalls 1NT

Board 20 from Friday

Hand 20N LHO opens 1♠, partner overcalls 1NT (15-17 in their system), RHO passes, what is your bid? There are two reasonable (?) options. You can simply pass or bid 2♣, Stayman. If you bid 2♣, Stayman, then you invite next turn (with 2NT or 3♥). The advantage? You may make a thin game. The disadvantage? 2NT or 3♥ may go down, 3NT or 4♥ may go down. Bill chose to pass, a decision with which I totally agree. Hans said to bid 2♣ as 2NT is safe opposite a minimum overcall without 4♥’s.

I disagree. What actually happened (totally irrelevant, I know)? Partner had a flattish 15 count and really struggled in just 1NT. A guide-line for an invitational bid is 8 points; this hand is seven points with 4 jacks (bad cards – 4 jacks does not equal 4 points) and fairly flat. On the plus side it has decent intermediates and (as Hans points out), the majority of the opponents points are situated under the declarer. However, jacks are not good cards for entries; entering this hand is likely to be difficult and so the location of opponent’s points is not so important. Indeed, this featured in the play, Ian (Bill’s partner) had to continually lead from hand. I believe pass is correct, Hans says to have a go. Different styles? Or has somebody got it wrong? What would you bid? Are you a man or a mouse? Squeak, squeak.

Bidding the opponent's suit

Board 13 from Monday

East 13 I held this hand on Monday. My RHO opened 1♣, what do you bid?
 We had no agreement on two suited overcalls (Michaels or whatever) and
 ♠ AK984 to overcall 1♥ would risk missing a ♠ fit. I elected to double, intending to
 ♥ AQ10872 pull partner's 1♦ to 1♥ or his 1NT to 2♥. However, the bidding took a
 ♦ 7 different turn. LHO bid 1♦, partner passed and RHO bid 3♣. What do you
 ♣ 8 do now? LHO has some values, RHO has a strong hand with ♣'s. Partner
 can't have much. I still liked my hand and so I bid 3♦. This is a bid of
 LHO's suit, and I intended it as showing a good distributional hand with both majors. LHO doubled, round
 to me and I pulled to 3♥. The opponents eventually ended up in 5♣ doubled (by my partner). There was a
 lot of discussion about this hand, and a number of very interesting points. So let's see it in full and have the
 complete bidding: -

Dealer:	♠ -	West	North	East(Me)	South
North	♥ 53				
Both vul	♦ AJ53	-	1♣	dbl (1)	1♦ (2)
	♣ AKQ6542	pass	3♣ (3)	3♦ (4)	dbl (5)
		pass	pass	3♥ (6)	dbl (7)
♠ 10653	N	♠ AK985	pass (8)	4♣ (9)	pass
♥ 64	W E	♥ AQ10872	pass	5♣ (11)	pass
♦ K109	S	♦ 7	dbl (12)	pass (13)	all pass
♣ J1093		♣ 8			
	♠ QJ72				
	♥ KJ9				
	♦ Q8642				
	♣ 7				

So, a bit of a shambles really. Let's look at all of the bids: -

- (1) A double of 1♣ normally shows tolerance for all 3 unbid suits. However, this hand is strong enough to bid again if partner bids ♦'s or NT. Anyway, most people pay more attention to majors. ♦'s are for the rich and famous and I don't qualify.
- (2) A reasonable bid, although many would prefer redouble. 1NT (6-9) is also worth considering. This is one occasion where it's best not to bid a 4 card major – RHO has implied that suit and redouble is to be preferred to 1♠.
- (3) Looks OK to me, the hand has improved immensely when partner shows ♦'s and this hand is easily worth 3♣. The ♣ suit is the feature of this hand, and there could be a slam. But I prefer 3♦; partner has shown 4, probably 5 ♦'s and (as I keep saying) a 4-4 fit is good. These are decent ♦'s. Also, of course, a 3♦ bid here would avoid the ensuing misunderstanding. Anyway, 3♣ or 3♦ are both good bids here.
- (4) Initially my double showed ♠'s, ♥'s and ♦'s. However, after South has bid ♦'s, this bid cannot be natural. It shows a big major two-suiter.
- (5) I was not joking, I do have ♦'s, a pretty obvious bid.
- (6) I'm not joking either. I do have a big major two suiter. Since partner is probably bust, I'll just bid my best major and forget about game ambitions.
- (7) Penalties. I do *not* like this bid. If you trust East's bidding (South knew exactly what was going on) then this KJ9 holding is unsuitable for a penalty double. 3♥ doubled (minus 2) does not get a good score for N-S when you know that you can make 3NT. The real problem with double here is that partner is very likely to pull it (perhaps he should not with this particular hand, but he should with a singleton or void ♥) and if he does then you miss 3NT. North obviously has no ♥ or ♠ stop and will by-pass 3NT as you did not redouble or bid 1NT at your first turn. I think that 3NT stands out a mile now with the South cards. East has promised a strong distributional hand with both majors; you have both majors well stopped, so 3NT. Anything else (double) is just being greedy and you deserve East to be 6700 distribution and make! This East hand is probably minimal for the bidding, he could easily

have 12 or 13 cards in the majors.

- (8) Clearly West was not too sure what was going on. He should convert to 3♠, but best to pass if you're not sure?
- (9) North did not like the double. North really should pass if he believes that East has ♦'s, but then that gets a bad score anyway as South's double is not sound.
- (10) Natural, hoping to make but no real chance (3NT would be so much easier).
- (11) I prefer 5♦ here, but North thought that East had a good ♦ suit!
- (12) Greedy? They may bid 5♦ (which makes easily).
- (13) I stick by my ♣ bid. ♦'s are for old ladies.

5♣ stands no chance. It actually went two down (North thought that I had a ♦ suit). North said that they were unlucky and were fixed. I think that N-S got what they deserved, with both making poor bids. What do you think?

So, 5♣ doubled went two off for a bottom for N-S. At the other tables, 5♣ went down undoubled, 5♦ made and 4♠ was doubled (minus two). Does nobody know that long minor suits with all the other suits stopped play well in No Trumps? 5♦, of course, is also a very sensible contract (well bid, Don & Sid). Having a fit (5-4 here) is all important in suit contracts. The N-S hands should end up in 5♦ or 3NT; doubling 4♥/♠ is also reasonable (although North may take the good view to pull 4♠ doubled to 5♦), anything else deserves a bad score.

Just as an aside, cue bids of opponent's suits need not be alerted. There are very few situations when a bid of an opponent's suit is natural.

5-5 in the Black Suits

East A	East B
♠ AQ1075	♠ AQ1075
♥ K7	♥ J7
♦ Q	♦ 5
♣ AJ762	♣ K7642

With two 5 card suits, open the highest ranking. But which suit do you open with 5 ♣'s and 5 ♠'s? Expert opinion is divided. Many (including Marty Bergen) will always open 1♠. An equal number will open 1♣ with the intention of bidding ♠'s twice later. Others will open 1♠ (with the intent intention of bidding 3♣ over a two level response) with strong hands like Hand A, but will open 1♣ with hands like Hand B. It depends upon your style/system. 2/1 players always open 1♠ as 3♣ after 2♦/♥ does not show extra values in 2/1.