

Introduction

The Pattaya bridge Club was founded back in 1995 by Barry Kenyon. I took over the club in 1998 when Barry said that his other activities - British consulate representative, golf, running the quiz nights etc etc left him short of time.

The first couple of news-sheets were produced in 2002, mainly to lay down the ground rules for one or two unruly elements; but a more normal news sheet, featuring interesting hands etc soon developed. This book is a compilation of the first 60+ news sheets, I have retained the early news-sheets to maintain completeness and for historical interest, they may give you an insight of what a club director has to put up with.

The Setting

Pattaya Bridge Club is fairly unique in that it comprises a large number of tourists and transients - a number of members spend the summer in Europe/USA and the winter in Thailand. This factor, together with the tourists means that the numbers swell in the peak season (Winter). We have around 3-4 tables in the low season and up to 11 in the high season.

Of course we have some residents, and a some who turn up for a month of so on a regular basis. One notable member of this latter set is Chuck (an A-flight player from the USA). Clive, John Gavens and Gerry are three experienced players who are regular visitors from UK. And there are numerous other fine visitors from other countries.

The standard at the club is very mixed, with probably more resident beginners than experienced players. One regular visitor/resident is Hans, another fine player from Holland. Hans and myself, however, have differing opinions on many (most) aspects of bidding; you will meet many examples throughout this book.

Level

The news sheets, and thus this book, are mainly aimed at the average level of our club's players. Thus beginner to average club player, plus the odd player who thinks he is a budding expert.

Content

I have mainly concentrated on bidding aspects, with Acol (weak NT) and Standard American being covered. Occasionally I will diverge into the play of the hand.

I have also produced a number of additional booklets throughout the year, three of which are included as appendices: -

- Appendix A Scoring at Bridge
- Appendix B Hand Evaluation
- Appendix C Lebensohl

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The nature of this book (a collection of news-sheets) does not lend itself to an index. There are, however, a number of interesting articles that you may wish to refer to and so I give a list of the most important. A more complete index is given separately on the web-site (www.pattayabridge.com).

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Appendix A	The rule of two and three (and four) for pre-empting.
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Welcome to Pattaya Bridge Club! There are two Bridge Clubs in Pattaya: -

The original club meets on Monday afternoon at 2.00 p.m. sharp (please arrive early). The venue is the coffee shop at Pattaya Beach Tower, Soi 4 in North Pattaya. Visitors (with or without partners) are welcome. The playing fee is 50 bht and the session goes on till about 5.30 p.m. I can usually arrange a partner for anybody who does not have one, but please arrive early. This Monday meet is a smoking session.

The second club meets on Friday morning, 10.00 a.m. at the Red Baron Bar in the Amari Orchid Resort. This session tends to attract less people (guess they're tired after a strenuous night out?). Anyway, this session is non-smoking; the playing fee is just 20 bht and the session finishes before 1.00 pm. However, the Amari does not charge for the room, so players are expected to buy something to drink (a coffee with biscuits is 60 Bht). Also, this resort is one of the better ones in Pattaya, so decent attire please. Reasonable shorts and a shirt are acceptable – string vests etc are not (the same applies to the Monday session).

Tesco-Lotus

Naklua

Playing Conditions

We have a

very mixed standard, varying

from excellent to virtual beginners, so come along whatever your standard is - If you have no partner, I can usually arrange one of a comparable standard. Need lessons? Have a word with me.

Big C

Dolphin
Roundabout

No 2 Rd

4

**Amari
Orchid**

Dusit
Resort

**Pattaya
Beach
Tower**

South Pattaya

Beach Road

In addition to the two regular clubs, some players also meet informally at other times. This generally depends on the time of year and how many players there are around. In the high season (Nov-Feb) we often get 10 or more tables on Mondays and up to 7 on Fridays.

In the low season it's down to about 4 on Mondays and 2 on Fridays.

If you are part of a group of players and want to play more often, then let me know and I can arrange it. We sometimes have additional sessions at Soi 4 in the high season.

Manners and Etiquette at our Bridge Club.

I am sure that most members are appalled at the lack of manners shown by various individuals over the last few weeks. I, myself, find it quite amazing that I have to do something like write this note, but here goes:

First of all, play starts promptly at 2.00 pm. Since I usually have no idea how many tables there will be and I often have to find suitable partners for individuals, it makes life very difficult for me if people arrive bang on time (or even late!). So please be early, especially if you have not arranged a partner.

Secondly, attire. Entering the Soi 4 club (or the Amari!) wearing a string vest or similar attire really is unacceptable. I realise that it makes scratching your armpits easier ... but really! If anyone cannot afford a shirt I can probably arrange a collection. The Monday club is a smoking club. The Friday morning Amari club is non-smoking. *Full stop.* I am fed up with people who want to change either. Luckily, Thai law has stepped in so that I no longer have problems at the Amari. As far as the Monday club is concerned, I will try to accommodate a non-smoker who has asma etc by seating him/her outside, but if this is inconvenient (for the movement or whatever) then tough luck – come to the Friday session.

Now about discussing hands and criticising partner (or opponents). Please keep running commentary to a bare minimum. ‘Well played partner’ or ‘bad luck’ are usually quite adequate. Unless you are a well established partnership or you know that your partner would appreciate your comments, then keep it zipped. Criticising opponents is a no-no. I realise that not everybody plays as (good?) Americans do. Just because people don’t bid the American way, there is no need to criticise them. At our club I am the Dictator – I mean Director. You may bid as you like (within reason), regardless of what an ‘expert’ American says. Just as an aside, isn’t it interesting that 3 out of the top 10 best selling novels in France have an anti-American theme! I wonder why?

There are a couple of members who insist upon talking about every hand. Of course they both believe that they are superior bridge players. Unfortunately, one of them talks garbage 90% of the time and the other 50% of the time. On the one occasion that they partnered each other, the partnership lasted 3 hands before one walked out (the mathematics are such that they are both talking garbage after 3 or so hands). This is really rather pathetic for two ‘adults’. So only comment if you know what you are talking about and even then saying nothing is often better. Chuck and Jeff please note.

Cards (and bidding cards) should be placed on the table and not slapped down in an apparent show of anger (Thorlief). This is cheating (when showing displeasure at some action of partner’s). If *two* opponents (even if one is American) had asked you not to do this the previous week, then I can only assume that the offender is stupid or wants to cause problems. If his English is not up to reading this note (one reason why we have bidding boxes), then perhaps Alex will translate. Although Alex, always the gentleman (as opposed to those referred to in this note), may choose to tone down my opinions!

If a disagreement occurs at the table or if there is incessant chatter, then call the director and I will try to sort it out amicably. I will no longer tolerate people shouting out insults at one another. Opinions such as ‘you are a rude pig’ may or may not be true, but really should not be shouted out (please, Ian). Any repeat of this appalling behaviour and offending parties will be requested to leave. My patience has run out. A few people (all 4 who seem to be involved in many of the above ‘incidents’) are now ‘on notice’. One such individual (Thorlief) has been involved in a loud argument *three weeks running* (with 3 different opponents!). Any further digression and offenders will be asked to stand in the corner. More serious offenders will have to stand outside the headmaster’s classroom.

Please take special note if you are Belgian, American, Australian or Norwegian and 'know' that I am referring to you. (*Editor's note – Jeff, Chuck, Ian and Thorlief*).

Anyway, how about some bridge: -

Responses to a Strong (15-17) NT.

I have been asked to describe Stayman and Jacoby transfers. Here is a very simplistic guideline for strong NT players: -

2♣ - Stayman – when you have one (or two) 4 card majors. 4 card Major

You usually need invitational values to bid Stayman – so 8+ points
So after 1NT, 2♣ promises a 4 card major and asks opener to bid a 4 card major

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ = no 4 card major
2♥ = 4 ♥'s (possibly also 4 ♠'s)
2♠ = 4 ♠'s (denies 4 ♥'s)

When opener has replied to Stayman, responder either bids game, invites or sometimes goes slamming. Examples: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT = 8 pts, invitational
1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♥ = 8 pts, invitational (4 ♥'s)
1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 2NT = 8 pts, invitational (4 ♠'s)

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT = 9+ pts
1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♥ = 9+ pts, (4 ♥'s)
1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3NT = 9+ pts, (4 ♠'s)

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♣ = 16+pts, asks for aces

2♦/♥ - Transfer – when you have a 5 card major. 5 card Major

You can transfer on any strength (even no points)

After 1NT, 2♦ shows 5 ♥'s and 2♥ shows 5 ♠'s. Opener must complete the transfer (even if he has just a doubleton) and responder continues as follows: -

With 0-7 points, pass
With 8 points, invite
With 9+ points, force to game
With 16+ points, look for slam Examples: -

1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - pass = 0-7 pts, 5+ ♥'s

1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT = 8 pts, invitational 5 ♥'s
1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♥ = 8 pts, invitational, 6+ ♥'s

1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3NT = 9+ pts, opener to pass or bid 4♥
1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♥ = 9+ pts, opener must pass
1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♣ = 9+ pts, game forcing, 5 ♥'s and 4 ♣'s

1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♣ = 16+ pts, asking for aces

Since my last memo received a favourable reception from almost everybody, I intend to write a regular weekly bulletin. If you have a topic that you wish to bring up, or if there was an interesting hand, then please tell me and I will try to include it in the following week's issue.

Psychic Bidding

In the previous issue, I stated that players may bid as they like. It appears that I have to clarify some aspects; especially for one particular member who continually wishes to argue with me (and everybody else). Basically, the published Laws of Bridge apply.

If your partner opens, say, 1♥ and you respond 1♠ with a singleton ♠, then this is a psyche and the opponents should report it to the director. If a similar psychic bid occurs later (even months later), then this is a partnership understanding and is illegal – Law 40B. 'If the Director decides that a side has been damaged then he may (in this case certainly will) award an adjusted score' – Law 40C.

And from the ACBL Bulletin, an article on psyching: -

'A player's first psychic bid with a new partner is judged to be legal. A second psychic call is judged to establish a pattern of psychic bidding that may well establish a partnership understanding. Such subsequent psychic bidding would be penalized by the director.'

'People who employ psychic bids against less experienced players may be guilty of unsportsmanlike behaviour.' – In plain English, it simply is not cricket.

- ♠ J943 Just as an aside, a word about NT bids. Take this example. If your partner
- ♥ KJ75 opens (say 1♦) then a NT response is allowed (although not a good bid).
- ♦ K If you are opener and if you open 1♣, then a rebid of NT is allowed
- ♣ AK62 (although also not a good bid unless you play Walsh over a 1♦ response).

However, it is not allowed to open this hand 1NT. A 1NT opening must have at least 2 cards in each suit. To open 1NT with a singleton is a psyche, a 1NT opening promises a balanced hand in addition to the requisite number of points. Do not open 1NT with an unbalanced hand simply to show points. Regulations for a 2NT opening are less strict and a singleton is allowed.

Controlled Psyches.

These have nothing to do with controls (aces and kings). A controlled Psyche is one in which the auction is under control; often when the psycher has a fit for partner or partner has shown a long suit. For clarification, I shall define a number of cases.

As opposed to an ordinary psyche, controlled psyches are *illegal* (in this club): -

- (a) - A situation which you have discussed with partner, where a psychic bid would be very effective.
- (b) - A situation, as with weak jump shifts or weak opening 2 or 3's, where partner may pretend to have values (or a suit) that he does not have as there is no danger for his side because of the sanctuary of playing in partner's long suit (or fit). For example, in the sequence 3♥ - pass - 3♠, 3♠ is normally considered to be strong with ♠'s. If responder then settles for 4♥ and turns up with minimal values and/or no ♠ suit, then this is a controlled psyche and is illegal.
- (c) - All situations such as (b) where there is little danger for the offending party, having a safe spot.
- (d) - Where a player or partnership frequently (more than once) psyches in a given situation.

There are numerous other examples. As stated, controlled psyches are not allowed. Offenders will most certainly receive an adjusted (unfavourable) score. A repeat offender will simply be asked to leave.

There are a couple of classic psyche situations which are hardly worth mentioning, namely a psychic major suit opening in 3rd seat (as opposed to a light 3rd seat opening, which is perfectly OK) and a 1♠ bid after partner's opening 1♥ has been doubled. While these bid are legal, they are not if repeated or if they have been discussed. Psyches can, of course, be effective.

Time for a history lesson:

Lets go back into the last century, the Final of the Bermuda bowl 1966, between Italy and North America. The example is simply too trivial, but it may well have been one of the most (in)famous controlled psyches in Bridge history?

			West	North	East	South
Dealer:	♠ J10					
North	♥ AQ54		-	1♥	dbl	1♠
Love all	♦ A82		1NT	pass	2♣	pass
	♣ 9842		2♦	pass	2NT	pass
			pass	pass	pass	
♠ KQ865	N	♠ A42	This is a perfect example of how bidding has changed over the years. Very few people would open the North hand these days (especially with 1♥ in 1 st seat) and even fewer would find a double with the East hand. I consider South's bid to be a controlled psyche for two reasons: -			
♥ J10	W E	♥ K98				
♦ 10643	S	♦ Q9				
♣ AQ		♣ KJ1075				
	♠ 973					
	♥ 7632					
	♦ KJ75					
	♣ 63					

Firstly, it may well have been discussed before; but secondly, South has the sanctuary of the known ♥ fit. What do you think?

Now a bid of 1♠ after partner's opening of 1♥ has been doubled is a fairly routine psychic situation, and most partnerships know how to deal with this effectively (and call the Director at the end of play). However, on this particular occasion, the psychic 1♠ bid had found a flaw in the Italian's system. A double by West would have shown short ♠'s. The Italians were unable to recover and missed a game made in the other room.

So, no big deal. But just think about it a little. These guys were the best in the world; they had studied each other's system for months before the match. Did the Americans know beforehand that a psyche would probably work in this situation? Had they discussed it? If so, were they under any obligation to tell the Italians that their system did not work? Or did the Italians simply get what they deserved for having such an artificial system? Should the 1♠ bid have been alerted as possibly psychic? Is a psyche when you have a known sanctuary acceptable? After months of study, perhaps this was, after all, simply a spur-of-the-moment psyche? Who knows? It is all water under last century's bridge. Remember Simon and Garfunkel? We, of course, would have no problem. A decent natural system has a double of 1♥ promising ♠'s or a very good hand, the East hand above would certainly not qualify on either count in most systems these days.

I guess I have made my own personal views on psyching fairly plain. But (unfortunately) psyches are part of the game. I like to play bridge for enjoyment. When there is a psyche, then there is usually somebody at the table who feels a bit bitter. If the psyche works, then the opponents are unhappy. If you go for a number, then partner is not too pleased. Do people really get pleasure out of this? If you get your kicks out of psyching and bluffing, then take up poker. Be aware that controlled psyches are illegal; and if playing poker, beware of aces and eights.

Since our club has a very mixed standard with many unfamiliar partnerships, I would certainly appreciate it if people would refrain from psyching. Please report all psyches. If I consider a psyche to be a controlled psyche, offenders will most certainly be penalised. If this upsets Thorlief, I have absolutely no problem with that.

Wasn't it nice and peaceful last week? No arguments, no shouting, no psyches, nobody walking out. I guess putting my foot down has had the desired effect, with the unruly elements either staying away or behaving themselves. Maybe I will start advising Tony Blair on how to deal with his football hooligans. Mind you, Friday was not quite so peaceful – do these people (Thorlief) realise that they are within 5mm of being thrown out? I really don't care who is to blame, if people 'on notice' are involved in loud arguments at the Amari then they are certainly out. This is the **LAST** warning. I will not risk the club's standing at the Amari because of one loud mouthed Norwegian. It is simply more than pathetic. Let's have a look at a hand from last week. First of all, we will discuss Stayman.

Thinking in Defence

How about this play problem? :-

Dealer:	♠ K4	West	North	East	South
South	♥ Q75				
N-S vul	♦ K93	-	-	-	1NT (1)
	♣ QJ1082	pass	3NT	pass	pass
		pass			
♠ Q973	N				
♥ AJ83	W E				
♦ A	S	(1)	15-17		
♣ 7543					

You are West. You lead ♠3, ♠4 from dummy and partner's ♠10 is taken by declarer's ♠J. South then leads the ♦J which you win, what do you play now?

East has at most 3 points. Even if he has the ♣K, declarer makes 5 ♣ tricks via the finesse (South must have at least a doubleton for his 1NT opening of course) and so East can have at most one more ♣ if he has the king. Thus South always makes 5 ♣ tricks and has, after the unfortunate ♠ lead, three ♠ tricks. If East has the ♦Q then South certainly has the ♥K and he develops extra tricks in ♦'s or ♥'s – the contract always makes.

So how can the contract go down? What card must West lead now?

Answer overleaf.

Thinking in Defence – The Solution

The only chance of defeating the contract is if East has the ♥K three or four times with the ♥10 or ♥9! The layout must be something like: -

♠ K4		♠ 1082	Just in case South, as here, has the ♥10
♥ Q75		♥ K94	West must lead the ♥J. If dummy
♦ K93		♦ 1087654	covers with the ♥Q the East wins the ♥K
♣ QJ1082		♣ 6	and the ♥10 is finessed. If the ♥J is not
♠ Q973	N		covered then small to the ♥K also gives
♥ AJ83	W E		E-W 4 ♥ tricks.
♦ A	S		
♣ 7543			It was unlucky for South that West had to
	♠ AJ65		take the ♦A immediately. South suggested
	♥ 1062		a finesse in ♦'s in the hope that West
	♦ QJ2		would duck - South would then have
	♣ AK9		'stolen' his 9 th trick with the ♦K.

Incidentally, I would not open the South hand with a strong NT, the totally flat shape should deduct one point. But this is a play and not a bidding problem and many players would open a strong NT!

Requirements for Slam

♠ AQ2 So, that's covered Stayman and NT openings/overcalls for now. I will just
♥ K98 comment on a couple of other hands from Monday (18/11/02). This is the
♦ 975 North hand No. 21. Your partner opens 2NT (20-22). What is your
♣ Q1032 reaction? A balanced 11 count with reasonable intermediates. This gives
you a combined 31-33 count, so enough for a small slam? This hand had
been played 3 times before it came to our table. I had absolutely no hesitation in simply raising 2NT to 3NT. The previous 3 times that it had been played, it was in 6NT (-1). I asked one of the partnerships. Apparently, 'the books' say that 32 points is sufficient for a small slam. I have two comments here. First of all, you do not have a combined (average) 32 count – this hand is not worth 11 points. Totally flat hands should deduct 1 point. Also, the requirement of about 32 or 33 points for a small slam only applies if you have a fit for partner and/or a long suit (a source of tricks). One person suggested to me that perhaps the hand should bid 4NT (quantitative) asking opener to bid 6 if max. I do not consider this hand good enough even for this more cautious approach. In actual fact, Opener had a flat 22 count (and probably would have bid slam) and 11 tricks was the limit. So, when going slamming, you need extras if you have no fit and/or ruffing values. For a NT slam, a long suit (source of tricks) is necessary if you do not have a real abundance of points. The hand was played one more time, by Martin and Rosemary. Now Martin is not renowned for cautious bidding, but he got this spot on when he also simply raised Rosemary's 2NT to 3NT. I wonder if the fact that Martin had just read my booklet on hand evaluation had any influence on him being the only other person to get this one right?

Stayman

Now 'everybody' plays Stayman, but as with any convention that has been around for years, there are variations – Puppet Stayman, Forcing Stayman, Garbage Stayman etc. The best is, in my view, 'Garbage' Stayman – so named because the 2♣ may be bid on garbage. It is what most people play. In it's simplest form, which I will deal with here, a 2♣ over partner's 1NT opening (or 3♣ over a 2NT opening) promises at least one 4 card major but does not promise anything in the way of points. Consider the East hand no. 4 from last week. I was asked how this should be bid after partner had opened 1NT.

The answer is answer is that it depends upon what type of Stayman you play.

♠ 987432 If you play a variation which allows a 2NT response (either showing both
♥ A1098 majors or a maximum – schemes that really have no merit whatsoever),
♦ 106 then you simply have to transfer to ♠'s and pass. If you play Garbage
♣ 8 Stayman, then you bid 2♣. You then pass a major suit response and
convert 2♦ to 2♠. This is standard practice and promises a weak hand with
at least 54 in the majors. With a weak hand and 45(♠♥), you would again bid Stayman, but this time convert
2♦ to 2♥. These are weak bids and partner is not allowed to bid on. Let's have a look at both hands: -

West	East	At the table where I was asked to comment, West had opened 1NT, I guess 16-19? East bid 2♣ and West bid 2NT
♠ AK2	♠ 987432	to show a maximum, although I believe that East did not
♥ QJ6	♥ A1098	understand the bid and did not know that his partner could
♦ AK42	♦ 106	have 19 pts. I do not like either this NT range or this
♣ Q54	♣ 8	variation of Stayman. On the last round, I was sitting out, so I spectated this hand to see what would happen.

This time, the opening bid from Rosemary was 2NT! Needless to say, I don't really like this bid either (although on this hand it worked out very well and, indeed, Benjamin Acol (Martin and Rosemary play this) does recommend a 2NT opening of 19-21, with higher ranges opened either 2♣ or 2♦). My personal opinion is that 2NT openings are best played as 20-21 or 20-22. You may stretch with a good 19, but this is a bad 19 (totally flat, no intermediates). I am willing to argue (I mean debate) with anybody, including Albert Benjamin. After the 2NT opening, they ended up in 4♠ (-1) which actually earned a top for Rosemary! And, knowing Martin, I think that he would have bid 4♠ no matter what Rosemary had opened. I believe that the hand should be opened 1♦ (with the intention of jumping to 2NT next bid). At our table, Alex (my opponent) did indeed open 1♦, but the rest of our auction really was comical and you need to see the complete deal to appreciate it. Bear in mind that my partner (Don) is really just learning (I am giving him lessons) and we have only just covered Stayman. We have not yet fully covered competitive auctions, especially overcalls of 1NT! I am sure that Chuck would say that anybody receiving lessons from me needs all the help they can get.

Before we look at the complete deal, a word about NT overcalls, Stayman and transfers in competition. First, I would like to clarify exactly what is meant by playing a Weak NT. A Weak NT is an *opening* bid with a balanced 12-14 pts. Playing a Weak NT, a 1NT overcall of an opponent's 1 of a suit is still 15-18 etc (less in the balancing seat). The 1NT overcall is totally independent of whether you play a Strong or Weak opening NT. Now I mention this because a few people our club (even an experienced American) were unfamiliar with the Weak NT and thought that it also applied to a 1NT overcall. Incidentally, common practice is that if your side opens 1NT (either Strong or Weak), if the next hand overcalls or doubles then Stayman and transfers are all off. I like to play Lebensohl in this situation with a cue bid as Stayman but it depends upon exactly what the overcall was, and means (there are a lot of artificial overcalls). You need to discuss this with your partner.

Anyway, the point I am making is that the 1NT overcall has nothing to do with the strength of your 1NT opening. And what do you bid when your partner has overcalled with 1NT? Easiest is simply to play transfers and Stayman just as if he had opened 1NT.

So, let's look at the infamous hand 4 again. At our table the bidding took a slight twist, with NT and 'Stayman' again featuring, but this time by the opponents!

Dealer:	♠ -	West	North	East	South
West	♥ 32	(Alex)	(Terry)	(Thorleif)	(Don)
Both vul	♦ 98753				
	♣ AK9762	1♦ (1)	pass	1♠ (2)	1NT! (3)
		dbl (4)	2♣ (5)	pass	2♥ (6)
♠ AK5		♠ 987432	dbl (7)	3♣ (8)	pass pass
♥ QJ6	W E	♥ A1098	dbl (9)	pass	pass
♦ AK42	S	♦ 106			
♣ Q54		♣ 8			
	♠ QJ106				
	♥ K754				
	♦ QJ				
	♣ J103				

Now of course, this auction needs explaining! It may seem like an exert from a Victor Mollo (Hideous Hog, Rueful Rabbit etc.) novel, but it is what really happened last week!

- (1) The correct (in my opinion) opening bid. Well done Alex.
- (2) I believe that this is correct, better than pass. Playing weak jump shifts, 2♠ (2-5 points, 6 card suit) is an alternative, although most people would frown upon this with decent a 4 card ♥ suit.
- (3) At the same time as bidding, Don alerted this as a weak NT(!) – toooo true (but he did have a ♠ stop)! Although, of course, you should not alert your own bids! The opponents may take advantage of this free information (at their peril) but as far as partner (North) is concerned, this is unauthorised information and he must bid as if he had not heard the explanation.
- (4) Especially with the gratuitous information, Alex was clearly looking for 800 or so.
- (5) I suspected that my partner may interpret this as Stayman, (it is not after a double) but I am not allowed to know that my partner has a weak hand, I must bid as though he had said nothing. Either way, I have no other bid.
- (6) I have 4 ♥'s.
- (7) What is 5 or 6 down, doubled, vulnerable?
- (8) Let's try again
- (9) I've run out of red bidding cards, are you going any higher?

You cannot really criticise the E-W bidding, nor the ♦10 lead (it makes no difference anyway). With a more than fortunate lie of the cards, and a ♦ 'suit' headed by the nine that produced 3 tricks! N-S chalked up +830 (+1). E-W may have considered calling the director but he was sitting at the table! and nothing unethical happened anyway. Sometimes you are just really unlucky, ask Karapet ..., I mean Alex.

What should the auction (assuming no interference) on this hand be?

1♦ - 1♠ - 2NT - 3♠ (weak) - 4♠. Or maybe just simply 1♦ - 1♠ - 2NT - 4♠,

although the former really is better, just in case opener has little tolerance for ♠'s. East could also try 4♥ at his 2nd turn. 4♠ is very unlucky to go down, and earns a good score anyway. Of course, even the best laid plans may be thwarted by dynamic Dons. Just one more point. Playing a strong NT, the 2NT rebid here is 18-19. Playing a weak NT it is normally 17-18 (with 3NT as 19). Most expert weak NT players (I can hear Chuck saying – are there any?) play the jump rebid as 17-19 these days, leaving the 3NT rebid to show a strong hand with a long semi-solid suit (as it is with the strong NT). After a strong 2NT rebid, it is simplest to play any subsequent bid a game forcing.

Hand Evaluation

This brings me to what I consider to be a very important point – hand evaluation, and how it may change during the auction. Consider this hand, a nice shapely 10 count.

Partner opens with 1♠. Things are looking pretty good. Depending upon your methods, you will either bid 4♠, or make a rather cautious game try or even a mild slam try by showing your singleton. Whatever you choose, your hand has suddenly become worth more than 10 points. But what if partner had opened 1♥? Not so good now! So you bid 1♠ and partner rebids 1NT(12-14) or maybe 2♥. Either way, you should simply pass.

So a hand that can think about slamming when partner bids one suit is a load of junk opposite another suit! This is what hand (re)evaluation is all about.

Now I would not have inserted the last paragraph if it was not relevant to a hand from last Monday. This hand which I will mention was a relatively minor affair. At our table I

was playing against Chris and Ian. Ian held this hand (West No. 24) and passed as dealer and Chris opened 1♥ against silent opposition. An 11 count, so obviously 2NT? Since you are a passed hand, it is preferable not to bid 2♣ (if you thought that that was a reasonable alternative) as partner may pass it. In this situation 2♣/♦ are not forcing (unless you play Drury) and should be 5+ card suits. With no fit for partner and 11 points,

2NT is ‘clear-cut’? I do not think so. This is another (slightly less obvious) hand for re-evaluation. It is a great hand opposite a 1♠ opener (or anything except 1♥). Opposite a 1♥ (five card) opener, the hand is simply not worth 11 points. As I mentioned above, the generally accepted rule is to deduct 1 point for a totally flat (4333) hand. In this situation, your hand is even worse! with a doubleton in partner’s suit. Now I know that Ian is always eager to hear any comments that I have (as is everybody else? ho, ho) and so I mentioned that, although you cannot really say that 2NT is wrong, I considered 1NT to be a far better bid (having re-evaluated). Chris agreed, saying that he would award 60 Brownie points for a 1NT bid and 40 for 2NT (you cannot say it is wrong). Just out of interest, I polled a few of our leading players. Gerry said that he thought 1NT to be a bit of an underbid, but there really was no alternative as it was not worth 2NT (my sentiments exactly, although I do not consider 1NT to be much of an underbid). Both Hans and Paul, on the other hand, were of the opinion that 2NT was the only plausible bid, ‘bid 1NT and you may miss game’! I disagree. Remember, we are playing a strong NT. 3NT is probably only going to make if opener has 15 or more points. With such a hand and a decent ♥ suit, he will bid again. If the ♥ suit is not too good, Chris would have opened a strong 1NT (5 card majors are OK). You may occasionally miss 3NT when opener has a decent 14 count, but you will go down in 2NT far more often. Obviously opinion is divided. What do you think?

One final hand. You are dealer and playing a strong (15-17) NT. What do you open? 1NT? A balanced hand with 15 points, seems obvious?! I do not agree! When you first pick up your hand you evaluate its strength initially by adding up the points.

- ♠ KQ5 You then make adjustments for long suits, intermediates etc. This hand has
 - ♥ KJ a long suit, but unfortunately most of the points are outside the suit. Also,
 - ♦ A54 KJ *doubleton* is not worth 4 points. In my opinion, this hand is not worth a
 - ♣ Q7532 strong 1NT opener. I can write pages (indeed I have) on hand evaluation.
- It really is much more complex than simply adding up your points!

Playing a weak NT, either 1NT or 1♣ would be an acceptable opening, a question of style? I would choose 1NT (weak). Playing a strong NT, open 1♣ and rebid 1NT (12-14). If you hold this hand and your RHO opens (say 1♦) do not overcall 1NT (15-18). This is far too dangerous and as I said, the hand is not worth 15 points. Best is simply to pass (this is a good defensive hand), the ♣ suit is really too ropey for a two level overcall and it is not a suit that you would particularly want partner to lead in defence. A double of an opening 1♦ bid is, of course, out of the question with just 5 cards in the major suits. Pass is the only bid. What happened in real life? The hand overcalled a 1♦ opening with 1NT, next hand doubled and it was 500 away on a partscore hand. These are the kinds of swings that you cannot afford in a teams event or when playing for money.

If you have any interesting hands or bidding questions, then please ask me and I will cover them. If an interesting hand occurs at the club, tell me the bidding and I will note down the deal at the end of the session. You will get my verdict in a following news sheet. Does anybody have a topic that they particularly would like covered? Stayman? Transfers? Weak twos? Negative (Sputnik) doubles? Roman Key Card Blackwood? Splinters? Opening 1NT with a five card major? Reverses? You name it.

West	East	Just to fill up the space, how about a ‘controversial?’
♠ 2	♠ 43	pre-empt? I held the West hand and opened 3♣, 1st in
♥ A62	♥ 85	hand and vulnerable. East passed of course (3♦ would be
♦ 42	♦ AK987653	strong and forcing). LHO led ♥K and I ducked (with the
♣ AJ107632	♣ 8	♥6). Clearly a trump is in order, but it is far better for LHO

to go over to partner’s ‘♥A’ so that he can lead the trump.
LHO (Hans) was somewhat peeved when I turned up with
the ♥A and got a ruff in dummy. When I subsequently turned up with ♣A (thus making 3♣), Hans was rather more verbal; saying that I should not pre-empt with two aces, especially opposite a non-passed partner, as game may be missed. Of course he was correct and game may have been missed. Had I passed, who knows how the bidding would have developed? 5♦ by East is unlikely to be reached opposite a passed partner and fails on a trump lead (or 3-0 split) so should go down. 4♠ by N-S will fail if E-W find their ♣ ruff. So who missed game? When I am vulnerable and playing for money, my pre-empts are up to strength. Am I right or am I right? Anyway, making 3♣ and hearing the adverse comment(s) was much more fun. *‘I don’t mind the abuse, it’s waiting for it that is so trying’* – The Rueful Rabbit.

Nice and peaceful last week? I guess not. But the troublemaker who has been mentioned in the last three issues (Thorlief) will no longer be playing. Enough said, lets get onto some serious stuff – Bridge.

Game Tries and all that Jazz

I shall cover just one general topic this week - an area where many players have difficulty: – cue bids, game tries, NT probes (both showing a stop and asking), 4th suit forcing and splinters. Quite a lot of stuff here, but they are sort of inter-twined and I will attempt to unravel them.

- a) The Game Try. Generally used only when a major suit has been agreed at the two level. It is a bid which asks partner to go to 4 of the major with a suitable hand.
- b) The NT probe. Generally used when a minor suit has been agreed. A bid of a new suit shows a stop in the suit and asks partner to bid a stop of his own in search of 3NT.
- c) The NT (or stopper ask) ask. When 3 suits have been bid naturally, a bid of the 4th suit is conventional, asking partner to clarify his hand. A NT bid directly after partner has bid the 4th suit shows a stopper in the 4th suit (this is the method adopted by just about everybody except Chuck). Without a stopper, you cannot bid NT.

A fairly similar situation is when you bid a suit which the opponents have bid. Again, you may well be looking for NT and partner must obviously have something in the suit to bid NT. Opinion is divided here. Some people (e.g Hans) insist that the situation is exactly the same as 4th suit, and that a NT bid must be a real stopper. Others employ this bid (the Directional Asking Bid, or DAB) when they have a half stopper themselves and just need a little help. This is the approach adopted by myself and Paul. I guess you need to discuss it with your partner. I personally feel that there are few occasions when you would want to ask partner for a stop if you yourself have nothing in a suit that the opponents have bid. With a double stop, partner will bid NT himself and so I feel that the DAB approach (promising a little something, and enabling partner to bid NT on as little as J9x or Qx) is to be preferred.

- d) The Cue bid. This is a bid in a new suit (when a fit has been established) at a level which commits the partnership to game. It generally shows the ace and invites partner to cue bid in search of slam.
- e) The Splinter. Usually after a major suit has been bid by partner. An unnecessary jump (one level above a forcing bid) is a splinter. It agrees partner's last bid suit as trumps and shows shortage (singleton or void) in the suit bid.

Obviously we need a few examples: -

- 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♦ This is not a cue bid or a NT probe. It is a game try. Of course, if opener subsequently bid on over game, then it was a cue bid.
- 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♥ This is not a cue bid. It is normally interpreted as a game try but often with a 4 (possibly 5) card ♥ suit (responder may just have 4 or more ♥'s and ♥'s may be a better strain. Anyway, it is a game try and not a NT probe or cue bid.
- 1 ♠ - 3 ♠ - 4 ♦ This is a cue bid. The bid commits the partnership to game. If opener was not interested in slam, he would simply bid 4 ♠.
- 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 4 ♦ This is a splinter, either singleton or void.
- 1 ♠ - 2 ♥ - 4 ♦ This is a splinter, either singleton or void. It agrees partner's ♥ suit as trumps.
- 1 ♥ - 2 ♥ - 2 ♠ This is a game try. It is not a NT probe or a cue bid.
- 1 ♥ - 2 ♥ - 3 ♠ This is a splinter, either singleton or void.
- 1 ♣ - 2 ♣ - 2 ♥ This is showing a stopper with 3NT in mind. It is not a suggestion to play in ♥'s.
- 1 ♣ - 3 ♣ - 3 ♥ Again showing a stopper with 3NT in mind.

In these last two examples, if partner does indeed bid 3NT and you bid on, then the bid was a cue bid. Things are much the same when responder makes a bid after opener's 2nd bid: -

- 1 ♣ - 1 ♠ - 3 ♠ - 4 ♦ This is a cue bid. It commits the partnership to game.
- 1 ♣ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 3 ♦ This is a game try. We could stop in 3 ♠.
- 1 ♣ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♠ - 4 ♦ This is a splinter, either singleton or void.
- 1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 3 ♦ This is a splinter, either singleton or void. It agrees ♠'s as trumps.
- 1 ♣ - 1 ♥ - 1 ♠ - 2 ♦ This is 4th suit forcing. A NT bid now by opener shows a ♦ stop.

Anyway, the reason I am mentioning all of this is because a hand came up last week where knowledge of game tries would have got to the correct contract. Before I get onto the

- actual hand, consider this one. You open 1 ♥ and get a 2 ♥ response (6-9 pts). Obviously you have a good hand, but to jump to 4 ♥ really would be too optimistic. So you invite game. Traditionally, 3 ♥ is the bid.
- ♠ A842
- ♥ AQ974
- ♦ 76
- ♣ AK
- But if you play (help suit) game tries, then bid 2 ♠. It says 'please bid game if you can help me in ♠'s'. So, that is the general concept of the help suit game try, we need help in the suit bid. The ace, king or often queen are enough. With adequate trump support, even a small doubleton is good. Got the general idea? Use the game try to establish if partner can help in a specific suit.

Now let's get on to Hand 16 from last week. First of all, what do you open?

♠ A842 A nice hand with 21 points. 2NT (20-22) is a reasonable bid, but I do not
♥ AQ974 like it for two reasons. Firstly the hand is not balanced and secondly
♦ A because the ♥ suit is quite respectable. So how about a strong 2♥? Even if
♣ AK9 you play strong twos (either directly or Benjamin), this hand does not
qualify. The ♥ suit is not good enough and the hand has insufficient
playing strength. That just leaves 1♥ as the only acceptable opening bid. Now some people may cry out
'but it may be passed out!' True, but if partner cannot respond, I would certainly prefer to play the hand in
1♥ rather than 2NT! So, we open a heavyweight 1♥ and partner responds 2♥, what now? Partner's
support has improved our already powerful hand, and we are (at least I am) certainly looking for slam.

Remember last week when I said that you should not even try for slam on that flat combined 32 count?
The situation here is completely different. We are *not* flat and we *have a fit*. And remember what I said
about re-evaluation. This hand can only open 1♥; but once partner supports, it becomes enormous.

A bid of 4♥ now would show a relatively balanced 19 count. We are too strong. A cue bid or a
splinter is pointless, as partner has nothing to cue in return! Standard Blackwood is useless, we have all
the aces and if we ask for kings we have no idea if partner has the useful ♠K or the 'less useful' ♦K. We
could use Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB) to establish that partner has the ♥K, but that does not
really help, we need to know about his ♠ holding. Having used RKCB, there are methods to ask for a
specific king, but that will get us too high – they are designed for situations when looking for the grand. So
none of the slam conventions help. How do we find out if partner has help in ♠'s?

Simple. We just use a game try! After 1♥ - 2♥, we bid 2♠; a game try, asking for help in ♠'s. Now
partner will think that we are just trying for game, but that does not matter (we are the Captain, he is the
crew). If he signs off in 3♥, then we simply bid 4♥. But if he accepts the 'game try' then we use RKCB
to check that he has the king of trumps and bid 6♥ (or you could just bid 6♥ anyway). What happened in
real life last week? Partner had an eight count including the ♥K and ♠K (doubleton) and would (should)
certainly accept a game try. The hand was played 5 times. 13 tricks were made twice and 12 on the other
3 occasions. Unfortunately, nobody bid slam. It does not come up that often, but game tries can be used
when looking for slam.

Everything seems to be running peacefully now, but just on word for those of you who attend the Amari Session. I was always of the opinion that the Pattaya Mail was distributed free to customers at many Hotels and other locations. Indeed, this is true; but it appears not to be the case at the Amari. You are free to read the papers in the lounge, but please do not remove them.

No Trump Bids and Rebids.

When you hold a balanced hand it is normally best to inform partner by either opening in NT or rebidding in NT. The points required depend upon your adopted NT opening range and the summary below indicates the recommended bidding for either a weak NT or strong NT system: -

	Strong NT	Weak NT
Opening bid	15-17	12-14
Rebid	12-14	15-16
Jump rebid	18-19	17-18 (19)

Let's have a hand that occurred recently. A club member held this hand, they were playing a strong NT. What do you open? A flat 17 count. With points in the 'long' suit

and a ♥ tenace, this is an absolutely classic 1NT opening. You do *not* need a stop in every suit in order to open 1NT. He actually chose a 1♣ opening.

♠ KQ94 After a 1♥ response from partner, there is now no sensible bid. (1NT would show 12-14 and 2NT 18-19). A jump raise to 3♥ would show this point range, but would need 4 trumps and a less balanced hand. 1♠ is the only vaguely reasonable bid (you should never deny holding a 4 card major) but partner would certainly expect a much more shapely hand. The hand is now unbidable. He actually chose 2NT, which simply demonstrates the incorrect opening and compounded the error. How can you overvalue the hand and bid 2NT with these ♦'s if they deterred you from opening 1NT? Now I consider this to be an obvious 1NT opening and most experts these days would even open 1NT with a small doubleton in an otherwise balanced hand. Open 1NT whenever possible and get the hand off your chest.

Now let's have a hand from last Monday. You pick up this collection and open 1♦ with the intention of rebidding 2NT over a 1♥/♠ response from partner. Unfortunately,

it does not quite work out that way. LHO overcalls 1♥, partner passes and RHO bids 1♠. So do you still bid 2NT to show 18-19 points? - No. You can only do that when partner has bid (thus promising at least 6 points). To bid 2NT would be far too dangerous, as partner may well have zero points. In this situation the normal rebid rules do not apply and a bid of 1NT is sufficient. Now let's change the hand slightly to a balanced 16 count. You obviously open 1NT, end of story. But this time you are playing a weak NT so you open 1♦ with the intention of rebidding 1NT (15-16). However, the sequence goes the same as before, with LHO overcalling 1♥, partner passing and RHO bidding 1♠. What now? It would be far too dangerous to say anything now – simply pass. It may appear that playing a strong NT is superior in this situation; but in actual fact is probably is not. It is the opponents' hand and the less that they know about your hand, the better. Had you opened a strong NT, you may possibly have been doubled if LHO has 15+ points.

A Double of 1NT.

That brings us nicely on to the next topic. We all know that a double of an opening suit bid is for take-out, showing shortage in the suit bid. But what is a double of a 1NT opening and what should the doubler's partner do? I have seen this go wrong enough times at the club to know that it is a subject that needs covering.

First of all, a double of a 1NT opening cannot be for take out. It is for penalties (except when playing some fancy defences to 1NT such as DONT). So, a double shows 15+ points and is for blood. It is not an invitation for partner to bid. Let's have a few hands where your partner has doubled a 1NT opening.

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D
♠ J1094	♠ K76	♠ 87	♠ Q76
♥ 6	♥ 98	♥ 93	♥ 932
♦ A863	♦ J72	♦ 762	♦ 8762
♣ AJ85	♣ KJ976	♣ QJ10742	♣ 974

With hand A, you have sufficient points to make game your way. But you should pass. You will get more points for setting the opponents. The only possible exception is when you are vulnerable and they are not; then making *exactly* 9 tricks results in 600 for bidding 3NT and only a 500 penalty. This should, however, be ignored as you cannot know that you are making exactly 9 tricks. Simply take the money.

And hand B? No game, but you should set 1NT, so simply pass.

With hand C, 1NT is likely to make. Your hand is probably going to produce 4 more tricks playing in ♣'s rather than NT, so bid 2♣. This is a *weak* bid and partner should pass.

Hand D is unfortunate. 1NT may well make (possibly with an overtrick), but with no long suit, it is better to pass. To bid would be asking for trouble. The bottom line is – only 'pull' partner's double if you have 5 or less points and a long (5+) suit.

Now for a bit of fun, I will give you a hand that I held a couple of years ago. A typical rubber bridge hand for me, but this time it was at the club. I was playing with John Gavens, an Englishman who plays traditional Acol. My LHO opened 2NT (20-22) and my partner

♠ 9864	doubled (20+). RHO passed as did I. Now everybody at the table knows
♥ 98754	that the points are distributed 20,20,0,0. Opener produced a 3♦ bid which
♦ 763	partner doubled, round to me. What do you do? What does this 2 nd double
♣ 6	mean? Take-out or penalty? The answer is overleaf. Now this would not
	be a particularly memorable hand (I tend to forget hands like this) except
	that it turned out to be a disaster. My partner said that he did not like my

choice of bid and that his partner in England would bid my hand differently. That may well be the case, but I maintain that my bid was correct and I told him so. The matter, however, did not rest there. Next week when he returned to the club, he simply pointed at me, saying 'you are wrong'. So what does partner's double mean and what should you do? Who was wrong?

Incidentally, the answer to what the 2nd double means is exactly the same as if the sequence had gone 1NT . dbl . pass . pass . 2♦ . dbl . pass . ?

Do not take this example too seriously. These 20-20-0-0 distributions do not occur that frequently. These days, most people play a double of a strong opening 2NT as some sort of distributional take-out.

The theory as to what this 2nd double means is important as it applies when the opening bid was just 1NT (i.e. this 2nd sequence). I could not find any literature to support my case (there is definitely a lack of suitable books covering these 20,20,0,0 distributions) but there is certainly loads of material covering the analogous case of a 1NT opening.

So back to the 20-20 problem. Partner has doubled a 2NT opening, indicating that both he and your LHO had exactly 20 points each. He subsequently doubled a retreat into 3♦. What is partner's hand type?

Hand A ?	Hand B ?	Hand C ?	Your Hand
♠ AQ2	♠ AQ72	♠ AK72	♠ 9864
♥ A62	♥ Q62	♥ KQ2	♥ 98754
♦ KJ4	♦ AQ	♦ Q4	♦ 763
♣ KQJ	♣ KQJ7	♣ KQJ7	♣ 6

With hand A, partner would expect to set 3♦ by 2, perhaps 3 tricks. A penalty double is clear.

With hand B, 3♦ will still be defeated and so a penalty double is best. Hand C is different. Assuming that opener has 5♦'s, then 3♦ may well make. So a take-out double is in order?? See the problem?

A double cannot mean two things. Anyway, I cannot see that a take-out double has any point whatsoever, a 3 level contract may well not make opposite a zero count. Now there is a good maxim in bridge: - Do not bid your hand twice.

Partner already knows that you have 20 points (he heard you the 1st time) and a double of 3♦ is (in my humble opinion) 100% for penalties. With hand C you should simply pass. Partner knows that your 20 points have not gone away, but are less useful against a ♦ contract. He will then either bid 3 of a major with a suitable hand (possibly 3♥ in this case) or simply pass. What really happened?

The doubler had hand C, I passed the double and 3♦ doubled rolled home.

Now obviously this case of two 20 point hands will never come up again, but the same philosophy is true when a 1NT opening bid is doubled. Any subsequent double of anything by anybody is for penalties.

Generally speaking, a double of a natural NT bid is for penalties, but there are exceptions. A notable one is when LHO opens 1 of a suit, partner passed and RHO bids 1NT. A double by you would then show a take-out double of opener's suit.

E.g. 1♥ - pass - 1NT - dbl is a take out of the 1♥ bid, showing tolerance for the other 3 suits. But be wary of using a take-out double in this situation. Opener is unlimited and knows his partner's points (6-10); you really do need a good shapely hand for this bid and 4♠'s are a must. To use this double on a relatively flat hand (e.g. 4243) would be asking for trouble. A redouble by opener here would show a very solid opener, 15+ (i.e. a certainty of the balance of the points) and a desire for you to get your wallet out; you would normally be doubled in a two level contract. Also be wary if the opponents play a forcing NT (as I do with Chuck or Chris) as the 1NT bid could easily be as many as 11 or even 12 points.

It really is worth knowing what doubles (and redoubles) are for penalties. Last week alone, I managed one 1100 and one 1400. I guess dbl is my favourite bid? It certainly is if playing for money. On one hand last week, I actually beat Alex's record (3 doubles) and used all 4 red cards – this was the 1400. My bidding partner (Martin) had no problem in the auction – he had opened (possibly light in 3rd seat – we all know Martin) but he appeared to be more amused every time one of my X cards hit the table.

Just as an aside, opening light in 3rd seat is a very sound tactic. In fact, it is done so frequently in the States that there is a convention (Drury) that asks partner if he has a real opener!

May I again remind people that we try to start the Monday session at 2.00 p.m. sharp. This means that people should be sitting at the table opposite their partner before 2.00 p.m. My general policy is that I will always try to obtain suitable partners for people without one. This is extremely difficult if people arrive at 2.00 p.m. exactly and without a partner. So, in future, I will only 'guarantee' a partner for people if they arrive well beforehand (say at least 10 mins). Now I wrote the last paragraph before I was made aware of the exact circumstances last Monday. Everything above is still absolutely valid, but I do apologise to Pierre in that I was unaware that he had arrived very early, dealt some boards, and then left (to appear just before 2.00 p.m.). It was very unfortunate, but I was unaware that he was available (I, myself arrive at about 12.45 and am always very busy setting everything up and may not notice everybody around). Basically, I again apologise to Pierre, but it really does make life much easier for me if everybody is seated (opposite their partner) by 1.50 p.m.

Welcome Back Chuck

I'm sure that everybody was pleased to see the return of Chuck. The club is not the same without him. He was kind enough to read all of the news sheets and give comments. Basically he agreed with just about everything I said but queried my 'persistent' knocking of America(ns). I agree. It really is uncalled for. After all, Elvis was American and they also invented 2/1 and the forcing NT. So no more US bashing (for a while).

Basically, there are very few nations which I have any tolerance for. I gave up French wine and brandy when they decided to blow up a Pacific island as a 'nuclear test' a few years ago. As far as I am concerned, anybody is free to have a go at the Brits and Tony's 'sucking up' to mr bush – it won't bother me at all. And if these guys do start a war, then Thailand is where I want to be.

Too Subtle?

Now I thought that I had been fairly clear in the last few news sheets, but it appears not. A phrase like 'a loud mouthed Norwegian' is ambiguous?? So, I will clarify the situation and mention names from now on (please don't sue me – it's not worth while). First, let's cover the 'on notice' people from news sheet 2. Let's be explicit about the Belgian, American and Australian. Now it appears that I was not too subtle here; and Geoff, Chuck and Ian all got the message. Geoff usually appears (just about) on time, has a nice new shirt and has learnt not to criticize Chuck or other players. Chuck is well mannered and relatively quiet (for an American) – sorry, scrub that last bit. He has even been known to be very polite to less experienced opponents, realizing that this is not a stratified event; and he has not walked out again. Ian has not called anybody else a rude pig (Tholief has gone now) and no longer tries to sneak in a fag behind by back at the Amari. I now consider these three to be back to 'normal' status (but keep it up and don't push it, guys). Did I really mean to say that?

Thorlief!

Now I did not elaborate in News sheet 5 as to why Thorlief was banned – I thought it was obvious; and the least said the better. It appears, however, that I need to justify it. Apparently Alex thought it harsh (John had provoked Thorlief) and Thorlief did not realize that he was 'on notice'?? I shall just summarize a few items from news-sheets 2-4:

'Cards (and bidding cards) should be placed on the table and not slapped down in an apparent show of anger. This is cheating (when showing displeasure at some action of partner's). If *two* opponents had asked you not to do this the previous week, then I can only assume that the offender is stupid or wants to cause problems. If his English is not up to reading this note then perhaps Alex will translate.'

'One such individual has been involved in a loud argument *three weeks running* (with 3 different opponents!)' – Thorlief had loud arguments with John, Chuck and Ian three weeks in succession. The very next week he even managed to get Bill to raise his voice.

'I can psyche as often and whenever I like' – sorry Thorlief, not repeatedly at our club.

'one particular member continually wishes to argue with me (and everybody else)'.

' – do these people realise that they are within 5mm of being thrown out? I really don't care who is to blame. This is the **LAST** warning. I will not risk the club's standing because of one loud mouthed Norwegian. It is simply more than pathetic.'

So what happened? The very next Monday, Thorlief got involved in a punch-up at the Monday club! Nothing like going out in style! Did he not have enough warnings? I think that I have to re-phrase what I said in news-sheet 2. If he did not realise that all of the above referred to him, then he is stupid *and* wants to cause problems. He should be aware that threatening somebody's life is a criminal offence in Thailand; and in front of numerous witnesses, could easily result in a jail sentence! Actually punching somebody in a Bridge club is way over the top. Needless to say, I feel that I was perhaps a bit too lenient earlier, but he is now certainly banned from the club.

Just to repeat a line from the news sheet issued on the day that he was requested to leave: –

‘I really don’t care who is to blame -This is the **LAST** warning.’ The bold capitals and underline were in the original. Most normal people would not take this to be a mild reprimand.

Incidentally, I believe that one other prominent club member (Martin) had approached Alex and cautioned him about his partner’s behaviour.

Now I fully realise that John may well have provoked Thorlief in the last ‘incident’, but I think that I had made it fairly plain that I just needed the slightest excuse to throw him (Thorlief) out. John presumably realised this and simply expedited the inevitable. As far as I am concerned, this is the end of the matter. I shall make it clear and totally unambiguous: - Thorlief is not welcome at either the Monday or Friday club ever again.

Virtually every member present congratulated me on the outcome and my swift reaction. I do not believe in parole and light sentences. If the prisons become overcrowded, – then hang ‘em all!

Just a friendly word to Alex: - Thorlief is a lost cause. You will not make many friends at the Bridge club by continuing to defend him or by suggesting that others have behaved anywhere near so badly. He has upset just about everybody at the club and been involved in every argument that I can remember. People must learn to be accountable for their own actions.

So, how about a little Bridge? Just room for a quickie.

Transfers over 1NT

Most people play transfers these days, so it is worthwhile mastering them. Let’s say you have Hand A and partner opens 1NT (strong 15-17). You transfer with 2♥ and partner obediently bids 2♠.

What now? You clearly want to be in game but a 4♠ bid is incorrect. Bid 3NT and give partner the choice (he knows that you have 5 ♠’s).

Hand A	Hand B
♠ AQ982	♠ AQ982
♥ A62	♥ AJ862
♦ 94	♦ 6
♣ J53	♣ 87

How do you bid Hand B? This is similar to a hand from last week that went wrong. The simplest way to bid the hand is to transfer initially (bid 2♥) and then bid 3♥ (natural and game forcing) over partner’s expected 2♠ response. If partner then bids 3NT, you bid 4♥, indicating at least 5-5 in the majors. Before the days of transfers (remember Elvis, the Beatles etc ?) this hand would have been bid using

extended Stayman (after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦, a 3♣ bid was used to ask for 3 card majors), but the transfer sequence is to be preferred these days. Now said ‘the simplest way to bid’, in actual fact modern bidding theory is that these hand types are bid via Stayman.

Editor’s note: this is fully described in news-sheet 33 and in the NT book.

The rule of Eleven

This is a request. One member asked me if I could explain the rule of eleven and the significance of 4th highest leads against NT contracts. I can certainly do no better than simply quote from probably the best book on card play ever written: - Card Play Technique, by Victor Mollo and Nico Gardener. It was written in 1955 and is considered a classic. Unlike bidding, playing technique has not changed over the years.

In the defence to NT section, the book covers all sorts of leads (leading honours from honour sequences and interior sequences etc.) against NT contracts. It then goes on to say that from a holding such as AKxxx(x), AQxxx(x) lead the 4th highest. Partner will then apply the rule of eleven. If you want to borrow it, let me know.

Bidding Quiz

♠ KQ10 This is a hand from last Friday. You are playing 5 card majors and a
♥ 85 15-17 NT. Partner deals and opens 1♥. What do you bid?
♦ AJ654 Perhaps this sort of hand is easier when playing a weak NT; 2♦ is then
♣ 832 ‘obvious’ as it promises only 9 pts. Playing a strong NT, things are different. A 2NT bid is
11-12 pts, 1NT is 6-9 and 2♦ is 11+. With a 10
point hand, you must evaluate whether the hand is closer to 11 or 9. So what would you bid? 1NT, 2♦ or
2NT? Answer (and the reasoning behind it) next week. If you really can’t wait that long, then ask me. If
you have a definite opinion, then let me know and I will include it in next week’s answer, especially if it
disagrees with the opinion of Chuck and myself (yes, we totally agreed on this one).

Let’s finish off with a hand type that is impossible to bid using traditional methods: -

♠ 75 Your partner opens 1♦. No problem, you simply bid 1♥ (you would not,
♥ AJ96 of course, even dream of bidding 1NT and suppressing the 4 card ♥ suit).
♦ Q4 Unfortunately, life is not always that simple, and RHO intervenes with
♣ 98732 1♠. So what do you bid now? You cannot support partner’s ♦’s with a doubleton. 2♥
would show a 5 card suit and 11+ (or 9+ if you play a weak
NT) points. The ♣ suit is too anaemic to bid and you are not strong enough to make a forcing bid at the two
level. So 1NT? Does not seem right with a small doubleton in opponents suit and with an undisclosed ♥ suit.
So that just leaves pass? Now it really would be sad to sell out to 1♠ when you know that your side has *at
least* 19 points (but I saw this happen with a similar hand last week). There is no sensible solution unless you
play negative (Sputnik) doubles. More next week.

Now one thing has come up in both of the above hands. Why does the point requirement for a two-level response depend upon whether you play a weak or strong NT? Answer next week.

Strong or Weak NT

The two most popular opening ranges of 1NT are 15-17 (strong) and 12-14 (weak). There are others but these two are the most practical and common. 16-18 has some followers, but really is unsatisfactory and out of date. The two main problems are that it comes up infrequently and also the 1NT rebid is then 12-15 which is really too large a range.

But how does your adopted NT strength affect the rest of your bidding? As indicated above, the NT rebid is affected (it is 12-14 using a strong NT and 15-16 with the weak NT), but that is not all. It affects the allowable strength for a new suit at the two level after partner has opened with a 1 level suit bid; and this holds whether or not the opponents have intervened.

♠ KQ10 This is last week's quiz. You are playing 5 card majors and a 15-17 NT.
 ♥ 85 Partner deals and opens 1♥. What do you bid? Playing a weak NT, 2♦
 ♦ AJ654 would be most people's choice (it only promises 8 or 9+ points). Playing a
 ♣ 832 strong NT, things are different (some might say not so good! – this really
 is an advantage of the weak NT). You cannot now bid 2♦ as this bid
 promises 11+ pts. Opposite a 1♥ opener, this hand is not worth anywhere near 11 points and so the best response is 1NT.

So now we come onto a major difference between the Strong and Weak NT systems. Playing a weak NT allows much more freedom for a two level response. Why? The answer is that you must consider opener's rebid. Let's assume he opens 1♥ with a relatively flat hand and the point range to rebid NT. If you play a weak NT, this rebid is 15-16 points and if your initial response is at the two level then partner must bid 2NT. The point is that if you 'force' partner to rebid NT at the two level, you need to be sure that it is a relatively safe contract; 8 + 15 should be OK. But with a Strong NT the rebid only promises 12-14 points, hence you need 11 pts for a new suit at the two level.

Two over One (2/1)

Playing a weak NT system such as Acol allows two level responses on 8+ points. Strong NT systems such as Standard American require 11+ points. A very popular system in the States is 2/1. With this system, the requirement for a two level response is increased from 11 to 12. This thus makes the bid game forcing and makes finding the correct game/slam much easier as nobody has to waste space making unnecessary jumps or forcing bids.

Negative (Sputnik) Doubles

♠ 75 Your partner opens 1♦. No problem, you simply bid 1♥ (you would not,
♥ AJ96 of course, not even dream of bidding 1NT and suppressing the 4 card ♥
♦ Q4 suit). Unfortunately, RHO intervenes with 1♠. So what do you bid now?
♣ 98732 Under traditional methods there is no sensible bid. You have to employ a
 negative double. There are various different ways of playing them, but I
think the easiest (and best) is that they simply promise unbid majors(s) and sufficient points to compete (but they are unlimited – just the same as a new suit if RHO had not intervened). So with this hand, a double of the 1♠ overcall promises a ♥ suit and enough points to compete to 2♥. And how should opener respond? - Just the same as he would have if his LHO had passed and partner had bid 1♥. So 2♥ by opener is non-forcing. Easy eh?

But some people may say ‘I like to have my nice juicy penalty double – especially if playing against Jeff or Martin’. The answer is that you *can* have your cake and eat it too. And very often you get a much bigger cake! All will be explained in next week’s exciting instalment.

Now don’t forget those new year resolutions guys (nice shirts, be polite, no arguments and be punctual). Happy new year to you all.

Transfers and Super-Accepts

This is a hand from 2 weeks ago at the Amari. There were 4 tables and the hand had been played 3 times in 4♥ (+2) before it came to our table. I was later asked (by Garry)

West	East	the easiest way to reach the good ♥ slam playing a strong NT. Obviously (!) West passes initially. You cannot pre-empt with another good major suit. East opens 1NT (15-17) and West? Simplest is to set the ball rolling with a 2♦ transfer to ♥'s. If East simply accepts (bids 2♥) then West does not know about the great fit. He can bid 2♠ (perhaps 3♠) - forcing and showing a 2 nd suit, depending upon your methods; but it really is better for East to show he really likes ♥'s and is max by breaking the transfer. Without prior agreement, the simplest is just to bid 3♥ at East's 2 nd turn. At our table (Chuck - me) the bidding was :-
♠ K9432	♠ A5	
♥ KJ10872	♥ AQ65	
♦ 3	♦ 1075	
♣ 7	♣ AQJ5	

West	East	The exact requirements for a super-accept are up to partnership agreement. I prefer to play 4 trumps and a non-min. 5♦ showed 3 key cards – RKCB (1430). Now I said that the easiest way was to transfer to ♥'s and then bid ♠'s. However, this sequence (1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠) is used by many to show a non-forcing 5-5 hand in the majors. I will bring out a separate booklet on transfer etc. later and it will completely cover these major two-suiters after a 1NT opening.
Pass	1NT	
2♦	3♥	
4NT	5♦	
6♥	pass	

Worth an Opening?

Hand 22 from two weeks ago on Monday.

West	East
♠ 863	♠ A109
♥ AJ3	♥ 642
♦ A754	♦ QJ92
♣ K83	♣ A95

Is this West and worth an opening? Very marginal!
I would perhaps open a weak NT if non-vul (get the heap of garbage off your chest) but if playing a Strong NT then I would pass. I believe that I am repeating myself when I say that totally flat hands lack trick making potential and should deduct 1 point. Anyway, my partner (Chuck) opened 1♦ (as did most players). What do you bid with

the East hand? 2NT (11 pts) is (obvious)? I do not agree. Again, deduct 1 point for a totally flat hand and bid 1NT. If your partner is prone to open garbage like this then you simply cannot afford to bid 2NT with the East hand. What actually happened? Two pairs passed the hand out for a 2nd top. Everybody else was in 2NT (-1) except us (yes, I did indeed practice what I preach and I bid 1NT with the East hand – I guess Chuck (my partner) would say that I know the limitations of my declarer play? Perhaps I should say that I know the garbage he opens on?

I subsequently discussed this hand with two of our leading players (Hans/Joe) and they also bid 1♦ - 2NT, and one of them noted that 2NT is not too bad as it will make 50% of the time (♦K on side). So, if you bid 2NT you get a tie score 50% if the king is onside and a poor score if offside – an average of about 25%. If you bid just 1NT your average is 75% or better. 75+% scores win tournaments. 25% scores do not. The bottom line is that 4333 shape hands are bad. Devalue them. If neither of you do, then you will get bad scores.

Incidentally, this West hand does not conform to the rule of 20 for an opening bid. I will cover this rule in a later news sheet.

Now last Friday was very interesting. We had 4 tables plus myself, so I sat at the best possible kibitzing position (behind Chuck who was partnering Hans). Now these two are undoubtedly our best two players, but I have chosen my words carefully here. Fortunately (or unfortunately for them) they have completely different/inflexible bidding styles and there were some interesting discussions over the disasters. I just loved it! Again, we are on the topic of what constitutes an opening bid.

Both of these hands were held by Chuck in 1st or 2nd seat. Do you open either, any or both? The Dutch style (Hans) is to open anything that resembles 11 points as long as you have a rebid, so Hans would open both (he also opened the West hand 22 above).

Hand A	Hand B
♠ AQJ96	♠ 109
♥ Q3	♥ K964
♦ J104	♦ AJ4
♣ Q97	♣ KJ75

The American style generally asks for sounder opening bids. Chuck passed Hand A but opened Hand B with 1♣. Now if Chuck is correct, and he can find another player who considers Hand B worth an opening and not hand A, then let me know (plus the name of his psychiatrist).

These American shrinks are certainly worth every \$ they earn if they can persuade people that hands B and 22W are openers but Hand A is not!

My personal opinion is that A is a sound opener, B is OK and 22W only if I can rely on my partner not to bid 2NT on a rubbish 11. Seems to be the reverse of Chuck. Both A and B conform to the rule of 20. Hans opens them all; and you?

Who should make the try?

Hans/Chuck missed an easy game on this board: -

Hans (W)	Chuck (E)	West	East
♠ 87	♠ AQ1064	1 ♣	1 ♠
♥ K6	♥ A8	2 ♣	2 ♦
♦ Q2	♦ J1065	3 ♣ (1)	pass (2)
♣ AKJ9632	♣ 108		

Now obviously when you kibitz these two, you get the cream of the cream. 3NT is lay down. So whose fault? Unfortunately these two guys have bidding styles that are so far apart that they could not even begin to discuss the problem. They may well be the club's two best players, but they are certainly not the best partnership! No sweat, I was at hand and told them what I thought. What do you think? Clearly either West's 3rd bid should be 2♥ or East's 3rd bid should be 3♥ (both are 4th suit – partner would bid 3NT with a stop). So who should have had a go? What do you think? I won't keep you in suspense, so my conclusion follows.

4th Suit forcing

So, let's look into this Chuck/Hans dual. Chuck thinks that Hans should have bid 2♥ at (1). Hans thinks that Chuck should have bid 3♥ at (2). Now I was sitting behind Chuck and as he tabled his hand, I muttered to him that I thought that his hand was worth a 3♥ (looking for 3NT) bid :- the 10-8 of ♣'s are golden and 3NT may well be on; 11 high cards with 3 tens must be worth a go? I stick by that, but I am afraid to say that I believe that Chuck is also correct. Hans should have made a try with 2♥. This is 4th suit forcing (in this case, looking for a ♥ stop), but having already limited his hand (with 2♣) it should not be game forcing. With a super max for his bidding so far, this is a good bid. So, actually, both made (in my humble opinion) bad bids (and, of course, both were correct with their criticism of their partner!!), but it greaves me to say that I believe that Hans made the worst bid. I would apportion the blame at about 80-20, with Hans more at fault. I know that Hans is man enough to accept this, but will Chuck?? It goes without saying that I would have reached 3NT with either hand/partner !! – excuse me while I choke.

Perhaps one or both (Hans and Chuck) will give some printable comments for next week's issue? I will happily print anything sensible from anyone. The opening bids from page 1 of this news-sheet anybody?

Negative doubles – the penalty pass

Now last issue I said that you do not lose your penalty double when you play negative doubles – you simply need a disciplined partner. And sometimes the opposition don't know what's happening until it's too late! In principle, opener should always re-open with a double (there are a few exceptions, but generally speaking, opener will double 95% of the time, just in case partner has a penalty pass). Occasionally this tactic can lead to a bonanza. This is a hand from 3 weeks ago. It is a typical penalty double of 2♣, so I passed awaiting partner's re-opening double. West did not like ♣'s so (unwisely) bid 2♠. Unaware of the mis-fit and impending disaster, East re-bid his ♣ suit. Who says you cannot give a penalty double when you have to pass initially? – I managed four having passed initially!! 1100 thank you.

South (me)	North	East	South	West
♠ AJ3	1♦	2♣	pass (1)	2♠ (2)
♥ 93	pass (3)	3♣ (4)	dbl (5)	3♠
♦ K75	pass	pass	dbl	4♥
♣ K8753	pass	pass	dbl	pass
	pass	4♠	dbl	pass
	pass	pass		

- (1) either a penalty double hand or a hand too weak for a forcing bid.
- (2) unwise with a mis-fit
- (3) no need to re-open now
- (4) unaware that south had a ♣ stack.
- (5) I wanted to play 2♣ doubled, so this is fine.

This bidding was a bit freakish, but you really do get the opponents one level higher quite often, and the penalty doubles are not often (never!) missed if opener re-opens with a double when he should (nearly always).

This last Friday at the Amari was a bit of a record recently in that we had 5 full tables (with me left over). Unfortunately, we all get wiser as we get older, and Chuck managed to manipulate himself into a stationary seat with his back to a pillar so that I was unable to kibitz him. No matter, I still got plenty of material.

A Complete Mis-fit.

Now there are a few golden rules once that you discover you have a glorious mis-fit: -

- 1) bail out – preferably in the partnership's longest suit, A.S.A.P.
- 2) NEVER play in no-trumps.
- 3) it is usually best for the weaker hand to be declarer, as otherwise there may be problems getting to his hand.

This is Board 3 from Friday.		Pairs A and B		Pair C	
West	East	West	East	West	East
♠ -	♠ KQ109842	1♥	1♠	1♥	1♠
♥ AK10854	♥ -	2♣	2♠	2♣	2♠
♦ J102	♦ Q973	3♥	3♠	3♥	4♠
♣ AK94	♣ 82	3NT	pass	4NT	5♣
				pass	

This hand should be played in ♠'s, so who was at fault? Obviously the first 4 bids are OK (but many would prefer 2♥ as West's first rebid), but what about West's 3♥. This obviously shows a non-min with 6♥'s. I suppose this is reasonable, but I would pass 2♠. Partner's bidding (2♠ is encouraging but not forcing) has not improved your hand any; it smells of a mis-fit. Anyway, I guess 3♥ is not unreasonable; but what after partner's 3rd ♠ bid? Pass is a must. It is a total mis-fit. Partner has bid ♠'s three times and you have shown your shape. Leave it there. Under no circumstances bid NT. What happens in real life? 3NT was reached twice (and West attempted to play in 4NT the third time!). Sure, you have all suits stopped, but where are the tricks coming from? Dummy makes zero tricks (six less than if the contract was in ♠'s!). 3NT was minus 2. 5♣ was more disastrous. As the cards lay 4♠ makes if you guess to play the ♠K then ♠Q (the jack is doubleton), but the correct contract is 2(or 3)♠.

West was at fault. He should probably pass 2♠ but should certainly pass next go.

Weak Twos

- ♠ 942 These are generally 6-10 points with a 6 card suit. How about Board 9
 - ♥ KJ8643 from Friday, would you open with a weak 2♥, 1st seat with favourable
 - ♦ 73 vulnerability? Certainly! This hand is ideal. What actually happened?
 - ♣ Q5 This hand passed, opponents bid to 3NT making +3. An initial ♥ lead
- is needed to restrict the contract to 9 tricks; and partner had no reason to lead ♥Q from ♥Q2 unless you bid the suit.

The Opening 1NT Bid

The opening bid of 1NT must have a clearly defined range, usually 3 points (e.g. 15-17 or 12-14). You may digress outside this range (+- 1 point) if the 'balance' of the hand, intermediates etc dictate. A NT bid of 2 or more points outside the advertised range is considered unacceptable, as is opening 1NT with a singleton. If you do this repeatedly and the director is called, then you will get an adjusted (unfavourable) score. So please simply bid what your system dictates. 15-17 means just that, 15 to 17 points (+- 1 if the hand warrants it).

First of all, let's start with a 'complaint' made by one of our leading players. Guess who? But, actually, I *totally* agree with Chuck. All partnerships have an agreed range for an opening 1NT (usually 15-17) – *please stick to it*. Repeated digressions could be construed as cheating. Now as you are all aware, I am a firm advocate of hand evaluation, and there are 'good' 14 and 'bad' 18 counts which are fine for a 1NT opener. Consider the following hands, three of which come from Friday: -

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D	Hand E
♠ KQ98	♠ KJ9	♠ AK6	♠ AQ7	♠ AK5
♥ K874	♥ K10	♥ KQ	♥ 107	♥ K1098
♦ J5	♦ AK1097	♦ KQJ	♦ AKQ84	♦ QJ7
♣ AK5	♣ 1087	♣ 86542	♣ K93	♣ AKJ

Hand A is a classic 1NT opener. You do not promise a stop in every suit when you open 1NT.

Hand B has only 14 high card points, but I would open 1NT. The decent 5 card suit, good intermediates and two kings that need 'protecting' all cry out for a 1NT opener.

Hand C is the exact opposite. If you can think of a 'garbage' 18 count, then this is it! It has no intermediates, all the points are in short suits and the long suit can hardly be called a suit. 1NT is certainly not an overbid on this hand.

Hand D is a hand from Friday that 'upset' Chuck. It opened 1NT (15-17). Now Chuck is one of these very annoying players who count the points during the play. If you have opened 1NT (15-17) and have already turned up with 15 points during the play, then Chuck will not play you for the missing king! He seems to get annoyed when this happens. Now most of us mere mortals lose count after 3 or 4 rounds of play (or do not even start counting), and so we cannot comprehend how annoying this must be for Chuck. So, just to humour him, can we please be vaguely realistic when bidding NT. This particular hand (Hand D) has far too much playing strength for a 1NT opener. Open 1♦ and subsequently jump in NT (showing 18-19 pts). Or, alternatively, state your actual opening range (15-18, 16-18, 15-21?, or whatever it really is).

Hand E is also from Friday, and I witnessed no less than 3 opening bids! Obviously the correct opening bid is 2NT (20-22 points). One player opened 2♣ and rebid 2NT (promising 23-24?). Another player actually opened 1NT (luckily not at Chuck's table).

Please do not open 1NT with hands that are way outside your declared opening 1NT range. It really does make it a lottery for everybody at the table, and a nightmare for me if somebody calls the director. I do not get paid enough for these sorts of headaches.

Incidentally, I mentioned a few weeks back that 3rd seat should often open 'light'. This does not apply to a 1NT opener. An opening 1NT in 3rd seat needs to be well up to strength and opening a weak NT in 3rd seat is very dangerous – I would not do it at teams or rubber Bridge.

A New Suit at the two level

Now I was just directing the session, and I was called over by Chuck after he had completed bidding board 24. Suspecting the normal lead out of turn, revoke or whatever (by opps), I was relieved to know that he just wanted me to comment on his bidding. Partner opens 1♦ and RHO bids 1♥.

What do you bid? Now this is a theme that I have been developing over the last few news-sheets. There really is just one sensible bid – Chuck's 1NT. A two level bid (2♣ or 2NT) may well get your partnership too high. Normally 2NT is recommended with 11 points, but this hand is not worth 11 points – you should deduct a point for the totally flat shape.

Simple common sense really, but I would not have covered this hand if I had not just seen it bid at Hans' table. Hans' partner again opened 1♦ but this time RHO doubled. Now there are more 'reasonable' options. Pass, re-dbl, 1NT, 2♣, 2♦ or 2NT. Hans, Chuck and myself had a lively discussion at the end of the session! Now I have very strong feelings about this. I would always bid 1NT. When you can describe your hand in one go – then do so! Pass (letting LHO bid his best major) has no merit whatsoever. Redouble shows 9+ points; generally no fit with partner and a desire to double the opponents in at least one of their majors. This flat heap does not qualify. This is, I guess, the 2nd best bid; all other options get zero brownie points, including Hans' choice of 2♣. 2♣ here is a weak bid, 6-9 points, a mis-fit for partner and a good 5+ card ♣ suit. I guess that you could play it as ignoring the double (11+ points) – but that is certainly not standard (re-double).

This brings me on to what I think is a fatal flaw in the 'Dutch Acol' philosophy (no double): – responding in a new suit at the two level with a flat 10 or 11 points. This is not a good idea – especially if you play 4 card majors – as opener's rebid may be 2NT on a flat 12 or 13 points. Quite how the Dutch are such a good international team really baffles me if they adopt this policy. I am afraid to say that I believe that the Americans are light-years ahead by playing 2/1 (Actually, I believe that many Dutch internationals play 2/1). I guess Hans is good enough to make 2NT when the rest of us struggle in 1NT, but why make life difficult? Incidentally, you will hardly ever miss 3NT as if you have a poor 10-11 points, you will only make 3NT if partner could have opened a strong NT. Those of you who know me will know that I spend most of my life reading Bridge books – and a small % sinks in. I can certainly find plenty of material that states that a new suit at the two level on 10-11 points is losing Bridge – it is not just me. If you really like to respond at the two level with weak hands, then take up the weak NT (where you only need about 9 points).

DONT

So what is DONT. Yes, I know that it was a 1958 Elvis hit (Don't, baby don't say don't) but these days it is a defence to opponent's 1NT opening. Basically, somebody thought that a penalty double of opponents strong NT is not needed and so double is used conventionally. I don't like DONT – why should you not be able to double opponents? Let's look at hand 23 from Friday: -

Both vul: dealer	West	West	North	East	South
	♠ AK74	pass	pass	1NT (1)	2♥ (2)
E	♥ Q2	pass	2♠	pass	2NT
S	♦ A1042	pass	pass	pass	
	♣ Q62				

- ♠ 83
♥ AKJ64
♦ KQ7
♣ K75
- (1) Perhaps a dubious 1NT opener, vul in 3rd seat? (but OK if opponents play DONT !)
- (2) This hand is unbiddable playing DONT. You simply have to pass and collect an undoubled penalty. Double (playing DONT) is a one-suited hand and 'forces' partner to bid and does not promise such a strong hand.

Anyway, South made the poor (and systematically incorrect) bid of 2♥ which North (correctly) alerted as ♥'s and ♠'s. North corrected to 2♠ and South retreated into 2NT. He made +2. Now playing in 2NT after opponents have opened 1NT really is silly. Assuming you make, then you score +120 as opposed to +500 that you get for doubling the opponents. Making 2NT + 2 is even more silly; why not collect the 1100 penalty? Wouldn't it have been nice to have chalked up +1100 against Hans and Joe?

So, the conclusion? Only overcall over 1NT with shapely hands. Flat hands (like this one) either pass or double (for penalties). Do not play DONT. Multi-Landy really is far superior (Chris, Hans and myself all play this). I will describe it in a later news-sheet. (*Editor's note: news-sheet 15*). Some more experienced players play Multi-Landy (or similar – Hamilton/Cappelletti) directly over the 1NT bidder and DONT in the protective seat (as a penalty double is less likely when under the opener) or by a passed hand. Excellent I guess – as long as you and your partner have good memories.

Who's in charge?

What a silly question – I am, of course. But what I mean is at the table; it is North (or East if E-W are a stationary pair). The board should be placed on the table (in the correct orientation) by North and remain there throughout the duration of bidding and play.

Pierre please note. Please leave the empty board in the middle of the table during play – this leads to less mis-scoring, mis-boarding and possible unethical questions about vulnerability etc during play. Now this is not just something that I made up, it is Law 7a:

‘When a board is to be played it is placed in the centre of the table until play is completed.’

Opening 1NT with a 5 card major?

One of our more flamboyant players suggested to Malgosia that she should have opened 1NT on a hand that contained a 5 card major; I was asked to comment. First of all, there is no ‘should’ about it. Expert opinion is divided. It is up to the individual/partnership style and understanding. Opening 1NT with a 5 card major is by no means that popular; the ACBL system cards, so kindly provided by Chuck, have a box that you need to tick for ‘5-card major common’.

There is obviously no problem in opening 1NT with a balanced hand and a 5 card minor. However, a 5 card major is more controversial. Opinion is divided on this subject; some never open 1NT with a 5 card major, some will allow a weak suit such as Q10543, while others will allow virtually any 5 card major suit. Which philosophy do I adopt? All three probably have equal merit, but I prefer the last (providing the hand *is balanced* in terms of both distribution (only 5332 acceptable) and location of high cards, i.e. the doubleton is Ax, Kx or Qx and the major is not top-heavy) for a number of reasons:

- 1- If you open 1♥/♠, then you will usually never be able to play in possibly the best contract of 1NT if you play 2/1 and a Forcing NT (my preferred system).
- 2- It is usually best to limit your hand as soon as possible, especially if relatively flat.
- 3- Once you open 1NT you never have a rebid problem. The hand is off your chest.
- 4- If you play 3♣ Puppet Stayman (a convention that locates both 4 and 5 card majors), you will never get into the wrong *game* contract.
- 5- 1NT (and most other contracts) will be played from the strong hand.
- 6- The defenders do not have it so easy defending against a 1NT contract as they do not know if declarer has a 5 card major or not.
- 7- There is also the negative inference, that a major suit opening within our 1NT range is usually a good suit and/or unbalanced.

Examples (of my preference) when playing a strong NT:

♠ AJ9	♥ AQ984	♦ K7	♣ Q93	Open 1NT
♠ AJ9	♥ Q10974	♦ AK7	♣ Q3	Open 1NT
♠ Q97	♥ AKQ104	♦ A7	♣ J93	Open 1♥, the ♥'s are top-heavy
♠ AK9	♥ AQ984	♦ J7	♣ Q93	Open 1♥, the doubleton is not good enough (and the points are concentrated in two suits). The hand is not balanced (point-wise)

As I said, the experts disagree and many will open 1NT even if top-heavy, and there are certainly many who would open the last hand 1NT. You do not guarantee a stopper for in every suit for a 1NT opening, but the major suit contract may well be better if 5 card with a very weak doubleton. Let's have an example of what I consider to be an unsuitable 1NT opening. But who am I to disagree with Zia Mahmood (South)? The hand is from the 1998 Macallan International Bridge pairs. You have to be a top class player to even be invited to this tournament, and these players were 4 of the World's best.

Dealer:	♠ 1072	West	North	East	South
South	♥ K2	-	-	-	1NT
Both vul	♦ 875	-	-	-	1NT
	♣ 97654	dbl	pass	pass	pass

♠ 6	N	♠ J983	West cashed the first 6 ♦ tricks, followed by the ♣A and then 6 ♥ tricks took the remainder. 7 down in a 1 level contract! Perhaps rather a graphic example, but the South hand really is unsuitable for 1NT. I guess you have to be a top international to make zero tricks in a doubled contract and come away smiling?
♥ 108	W E	♥ AQJ973	
♦ AKQ1096	S	♦ 2	
♣ AJ103		♣ 82	
	♠ AKQ54		
	♥ 654		
	♦ J43		
	♣ KQ		

The NT Rebid

Now over the last few weeks I have been pounding away at introducing a new suit at the two level with insufficient values, but apparently a few people have not realised what I am getting at.

You are playing a strong NT and so you open 1♦, planning to rebid 1NT over partner's 1♥/♠. Unfortunately, partner responds 2♣ and so your rebid is now 2NT. This does not show any extras, it is still a non-jump and is 12-14 points. Now if partner had (unwisely in my view) chosen to bid 2♣ on a flat 10 count then the final contract of 2NT may be too high. This scenario is only a problem if you play a strong NT, as in the analogous case of the weak NT the 2NT rebid here would show 15-16 points and there is never a problem. There is also a problem (when playing a strong NT) of bidding a new suit on a decent 11 points. If your partner (the opener) is flat with 12-14 points then he will bid 2NT. You (the 11 point hand) are then left with the decision whether to go on to 3NT or not. You have no idea! The decision should be made by the hand with the 3 point high card spread. With this hand, for example, do not bid 2♣ over a 1♦/♥ opening as you have no idea what to do when partner rebids 2NT (12-14). Best is to bid 2NT yourself (showing 11 / bad 12 points) and allowing partner to pass with a min and bid 3NT with a max (14+). Now some people are loathe to respond 2NT as it takes up so much space. This is true over a major suit opening, but over a 1♦ opening it really is very descriptive. 11 points and no 4 card major.

Opening 1NT with a 6 card minor?

♠ 96 This may seem a silly question, but somebody actually did open 1NT with
♥ A3 this hand on Friday. Perhaps the person in question (Chuck) should re-
♦ A72 consider his request to me about typing up something on alerts (he says that
♣ AKJ975 a 1♣ opening with a possible 2 card ♣ suit should be alerted). I would be loathe to have to
alert a 1NT bid as possibly a good six card suit with a
useless doubleton and no tenace to protect! This hand is far too good for a strong NT – open 1♣ and rebid 3♣ over partner's 1♦/♥/♠. If 3NT is to be the final contract, you want partner to be declarer. This hand has no tenace (such as Kx) to protect, and partner may well have. Aces belong on table. Wouldn't it be sad if partner had ♣Q, a red king and ♠K and the opponents took the first 5 ♠ tricks in 3NT? What actually happened? Partner had a 7 count and passed 1NT, it made 12 tricks! Everybody else was in 3NT.

♠ KJ Now this is more like it! I would certainly have no problems with
♥ K3 somebody opening a strong NT with this hand. The ♣ suit is not so
♦ Q92 robust and a rebid of 3♣ having opened 1♣ would be an overbid.
♣ AQ9875 These tenaces cry out for a 1NT opener.

So, 9 full tables last week, not bad eh? And something else remarkable, Chuck not only managed to read all the way through my last news-sheet, but he actually agreed with everything I said. I guess we really do get older as we get wiser, or vice-versa?

Blackwood

Now ‘everybody’ plays Blackwood; but having mastered the standard version, many improving pairs move on to a more sophisticated variation. There are numerous variants around, but there really is no doubt that the best is Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB). Alex has asked me if I could describe it (presumably he likes my free-flowing style?), and so I have obediently put the basic concepts in this news-sheet. I will bring out something more comprehensive later.

Roman Key Card Blackwood

So what is so special about RKCB? The major difference between RKCB and ordinary Blackwood is that the king and queen of trumps are given extra importance. If you are in a suit contract then the king of trumps is every bit as important as an ace. So it is counted in with the aces, giving us a total of five ‘aces’ or ‘key cards’. Special attention is also given to the trump queen, its possession is either given with the first reply to 4NT or it may be asked for on the following bid. RKCB really is far better than normal Blackwood on most occasions and is used by most advanced pairs. RKCB is at its finest when trumps have been agreed.

When the trump suit is agreed, we use the 4 aces and the king of trumps as the ‘key’ cards. When the trump suit is not agreed, the ‘key’ suit is the last suit bid. The responses to 4NT are as follows:

5♣	= 0 or 3 key cards
5♦	= 1 or 4 key cards
5♥	= 2 or 5 key cards without queen of key suit
5♠	= 2 or 5 key cards + queen of key suit

These responses are unaffected by any earlier cue bid, i.e. show the correct number of key cards even if you have previously cue bid an ace. Very occasionally asker may not be sure if responder is showing 0 or 3 (or 1 or 4). In that case he errs on the side of caution and responder will correct.

Higher responses show a void, and I shall be covering them in a later news-sheet.

Note When indicating the absence or presence of the key queen, we also indicate having the queen if we have extra length in trumps. By extra length, we usually mean more cards than the Blackwood bidder expects, such that it brings the total number of trumps to 10 or more. Again, I will cover this later.

Now the (or 5) key cards is usually left out of the definition. I shall just give one example and then also always leave it out of our explanations.

	West	East	West	East
(1) transfer	♠ A95	♠ KQ2	2NT	3♦ (1)
(2) simple accept	♥ AK8	♥ QJ1032	3♥ (2)	4NT (3)
(3) RKCB for ♥'s	♦ A97	♦ KQJ3	5♥ (4)	7NT
(4) 2 or 5 key cards without ♥Q	♣ AJ42	♣ 6		

Let's have an example (slightly modified) from the club. Now you may have heard Chuck wandering around muttering '1430'. What is that? – Yes, I know that it is the score for a major suit vulnerable small slam. RKCB is a superb piece of machinery, but as with anything that works well, somebody has to tinker with it. With 1430 the meanings of the 5♣/♦ replies are reversed. The advantage of this is minimal and I may cover it later. But really it is simplest to play standard RKCB as Chris and Chuck were on this deal from a Friday session a couple of months back.

	Chris	Chuck	Chris (W)	Chuck (E)
(1) A good rebid, do not overvalue hands that may be a complete mis-fit.	♠ 9	♠ A632	1♥	1♠
(2) RKCB	♥ Q108754	♥ AK63	2♦ (1)	4♥
(3) 3 (or 0) key cards	♦ AKJ9	♦ Q5	4NT (2)	5♣ (3)
	♣ AJ	♣ 432	7♥	pass

A good grand slam on minimum values. Note how easy it is using RKCB. Ordinary Blackwood bidders would find it much more difficult, especially if East had the ♠K or ♣K (or both!) in place of the ♥K. This is a perfect example of why the key king is just as important as an ace and should be considered apart from the other kings. You may be able to avoid losing an outside king but you can rarely avoid losing the trump king if it is guarded offside.

There are a number of interesting points in this auction. West's hand is perhaps close to a jump rebid, but a singleton in partner's suit is not usually an asset. A non-jump response is called for. But 2♦ or 2♥? Both are reasonable, but I prefer 2♦ as this is more flexible and is where the points are.

Note also that Chuck did not bid 4♥ at his first turn. This was not because he really wanted to show his lovely ♠ suit, or that he had desires to play the contract himself. A direct bid of 4♥ would show a much less powerful hand. Bidding another suit and then raising partner's major to the 4 level (a delayed game raise) is a simple way to show a solid raise to 4. Of course, with a singleton/void you can splinter. There are other methods (Jacoby 2NT, Bergen raises etc) but without prior agreement, this delayed game raise is how to show a good (rather than more pre-emptive) raise and denies a singleton/void.

Having used RKCB, 5NT asks for kings (there are now only 3). There are various options for the reply - either show specific king(s) or just the number (0-3). Simplest is to show the number, but I will describe the other options (and how to ask about the trump queen after a 5♣/♦ response) in a subsequent news-sheet, perhaps a booklet.

Raising Partner's Minor

This is a hand from last Monday. Your partner opens 1♦, what do you respond?

A totally flat 10 count without any intermediates. Let's assume that partner's opening promises 4+♦'s, what is your bid? 2♦, 3♦, 1NT or 2NT? First of all let's

- ♠ K85 consider a raise of partner's suit. Now all the books say to support partner
- ♥ Q73 whenever possible, but this does not apply to a minor suit. With this
- ♦ J874 actual hand it makes no difference if you play inverted minors or not,
- ♣ A75 neither 2♦ or 3♦ are correct with no ruffing values. You have to go for No Trumps. But 1NT or 2NT? If you have read my previous news-sheets, you

will know that this hand is only worth 1NT. The 3♦ bid found at the table was not a success.

Don't go out of your way to play in minor suit contracts, NT usually scores more and this is especially important at pairs scoring. This also applies when you have a good long minor suit. I have scored up enough sessions to know that 5♦ making scores less than 3NT +1.

What's happening? 9 tables again on Monday and 7 on Friday! Perhaps I should take up Chuck on that offer of a computer scoring program? Not quite sure what the offer was – is he going to donate a lab-top *and* program? I may have got it wrong, but I think that he said the 'computer' in my head was not up to the task – in America they have the results 10 mins after completion of the last round. I guess that if I charged \$10 a session I could get a computer? Or perhaps we should all be satisfied with my woefully inadequate brain cells and be happy with getting the results the next week? Anyway, let's all wish Chuck a pleasant trip back to the USA and hope that the World is much the same when he returns.

Now there's nothing like a compliment to get what you want. One of our regular visitors (Bob) told me that he loved the news-sheets and thought that I could maybe include the names of the previous week's winners. Everybody likes to have their name in print, don't they? So, here goes: -

Monday 27/01/03	N-S winners Paul/Kas	57%	E-W winners Alex/Jeff	59%
Monday 20/01/03	N-S winners= Don/Garry	59%	E-W winners Odd/Bjarne	71%
	N-S winners= Per/Prim	59%		
Friday 31/1/03	winners Malgosia/Ian	61%		
Friday 24/1/03	winners Chuck/Terry	71%		

Passed Out

Now the rules are pretty clear here. If all 4 players pass then the hands should be restored to the wallet and 'passed out' entered on the score sheet. However, this is a social club; and rather than having loads of people twiddling their thumbs it is obviously sensible to deal again if the board had not been played before. Against the rules! – so sue me.

With this philosophy we don't get too many pass-outs, so it was a bit of a surprise to me when I saw Malgosia sitting all alone after 8 minutes of a round on Friday. Two of their three boards had been passed out and everybody else had gone outside for a puff. As the boards had been *played* before, I had a look at them. In both cases, it was the 2nd player who perhaps should have opened.

East 25	South 26	Let's consider South 26 first. 12 points, a fairly decent 5 Card suit and reasonable shape. A clear 1♣ opener, especially as you have an easy rebid (1♠). Hand 25E has one more point but is much closer to a pass. All the points are concentrated in two short suits. Pass may well work out best (although I probably would open – but not if my partner is likely to leap off to 2♣ or 2NT on a flat 10-11 points). It really depends upon the style of your partner. I would open 1♦ playing with Chuck but pass playing with Hans (I would be too afraid of one of Hans' 10 point 2♣ bids). Playing a weak NT I would open 1NT opposite anybody – you have no rebid problem.
♠ 732	♠ A432	
♥ AK9	♥ A8	
♦ 86432	♦ 97	
♣ AQ	♣ A10954	

Roman Key Card Blackwood.

East 5 At the end of the Friday session, Chuck wandered up to me and asked how I would have bid this hand after partner had opened 1♠ (five card major).
♠ AQ54 The opponents may interfere by bidding in the red suits.
♥ 6
♦ K
♣ AK108532 Now Bridge really can be a simple game: -

Terry: I bid 4NT and then 5,6 or 7♠ depending upon how many key cards my partner has.
Chuck: Your partner bids 5♥ - two aces, he does not play RKCB.
Terry: Oh dear. Then I guess you have to ask for kings, so 5NT.
Chuck: 6♦ - one king.
Terry: The hand is unbidable. It is now a lottery. 6♠ or 7♠? Who has ♠K?
Chuck: So what do you do?
Terry: Give partner a copy of last week's news sheet where RKCB is explained.

There really is no excuse for people well past the beginner's stage not to play RKCB. If you can last 20 boards playing with Chuck then you are certainly good enough to play RKCB – give it a go!

Responding to Partner's 1♣ Opening.

When partner opens the bidding with one of a suit, you generally need 6+ points to reply. However, when you play 5 card majors (and particularly if you play the prepared ♣ as Malgosia, Alex/Jeff, most of our European visitors and myself all prefer) then you sometimes have to stretch in order to avoid partner playing in a silly 1♣ contract.

West - Alex	East - Jeff	Alex opened 1♣ (absolutely the correct bid) and Jeff passed. 4♠ was bid and made at other tables and 1♣ was passed out on one other occasion. So, unlucky?
♠ QJ53	♠ A10984	I commented that I would respond 1♠. The ♠ suit is excellent, you have a singleton and a fit. This hand is well worth a bid because you have a fit. Bbbbu...but what fit?
♥ AQ65	♥ 9	Partner may have a doubleton ♣! This is where some people do not understand the prepared ♣ system.
♦ AQ9	♦ 843	
♣ A9	♣ 10732	

If opener has 2 ♣'s then he must have 4 ♠'s. If opener has 3 ♣'s then he must have at least 3 ♠'s. You *must* have at least an 8 card fit in a black suit. And with a singleton ♥, a black suit contract (hopefully ♠'s) is where you want to play. Now partner may not have such a big hand. Again, a very good argument for bidding. Your side may well be able to out-bid the opponent's ♥'s if partner has 3 or 4 ♠'s; and bidding 1♠ may make it difficult for the next player.

Now I firmly believe that you should not pass with this hand. I gave it to Hans and he passed like a shot. When I gave it to Chuck he said he would bid 1♠ over any opening 1 bid. I believe I have mentioned earlier that these two guys are poles apart in their bidding styles. On this particular occasion I am with Chuck (at least over a 1♣ opening – when you are assured of a fit).

Incidentally, one West player opened the hand 1NT (16-18) - against Chuck! I really can see no 'excuse' for this. It is a respectable 19 points. If you do this often, then you should state your correct 1NT range (16-19?). Please do not open 1NT outside your declared range. Especially against Chuck.

Note. Playing a prepared 1♣, a 1♣ opener is only 2 card when exactly 4432 (♠♥♦♣). And a 1♦ opening is always 4+ cards. I definitely prefer this to 'better minor' where both 1♣ and 1♦ openings may be 3 card. The Prepared ♣ is more popular on mainland Europe and Better Minor is more common in the States. Brits have no problem – they play Acol.

The word is spreading – 7 ½ tables on Friday! And Chuck likes the game here so much that he is staying another week; or is it just that with all the American airlines going bust, he cannot get a flight? Best to get home before the war starts? Especially if you want to check up on the well-being of your commander-in-chief. Year of the goat – should be a good year? Is there a year of the ass?

Last week's winners:

Monday 3/2/03			Friday 7/2/03		
winner	Malgosia/Chuck	64%	N-S winners	Hans/Bob	65%
2 nd	Joe/Martin	61%	E-W winners	Chuck/Terry	69%

My apologies to John/Ralph. I printed incorrect results for the Monday 27th session. They won N-S with 58.5%, guess I'm getting cross-eyed. This partnership is interesting: - John plays traditional Acol, Ralph has probably never heard of Acol or a weak NT. Their two sessions together are 58.5% and 58.7%. Not bad.

Responding to Partner's Pre-empt Another hand from Friday: -

West - Terry	East - Chuck	West	East
♠ A9	♠ Q10543	2♥	2♠
♥ QJ10643	♥ -	3♥	pass
♦ 987	♦ AKJ3		
♣ Q8	♣ KJ32		

East's 2♠ bid is natural and forcing, asking partner to bid a feature (ace, king or singleton) in support of ♠'s, with 4♠ in mind as a final contract. Again, I am virtually speechless! I told Chuck exactly what I thought of his bid - you should pass like a shot on mis-fits like this (and hope that the opponents compete). This time Hans was 100% (and more) on my side. Chuck is not the only one who over-bids hands like this – two pairs reached 4♥. We got, of course, the predictable reaction from Chuck – he said that I should not open a weak two with such 'poor' trumps. Again – 'you *cannot* be serious'. This is virtually a text book weak two; if this does not qualify, then don't play weak two's. 3♥ went down. Let's quote Marty Bergen (10 time US national champion) - MARTY SEZ... Vol 2 page 85 - 'The most attractive suit for a pre-empt is topless, but nicely filled out'. 'QJ10987 is an excellent trump suit' – far better than Q105432 !!!

The Prepared ♣

I prefer this to better minor as I stated last week.

Interesting to note that Bob and Hans have switched to this system. Anything to do with them winning N-S on Friday? And, of course, Malgosia plays a prepared ♣ and Malgosia/Chuck won on Monday. Perhaps Chuck will come round to playing a sensible system with me? Now Chuck told me that he used to play prepared ♣ and then changed. I think I have to take back what I said a couple of weeks ago about getting older and wiser. If there is any interest, I can run off a couple of pages as to why the prepared ♣ is far superior to better minor. It's in the data bank.

Hand Evaluation

An interesting hand from Friday.

West - Terry	East - Chuck	West	East
♠ J	♠ KQ102	1♥	1♠
♥ Q8732	♥ 1095	2♦	3♥
♦ K1092	♦ Q75	pass	
♣ AQ6	♣ K104		

A fairly standard auction – but is it? 3♥ stood no chance. 2♥ is a good contract. Anybody to blame?

I said that I did not think that Chuck's hand was worth 3♥. Totally flat, no ruffing values, poor trumps. Now when you get to know Chuck, you know that his reply will always be on the offensive. He said that my hand was not worth an opening bid. Now even knowing Chuck as well as I do, it is sometimes difficult to know if he is joking or not. There are not many Americans that I would care to quote, but the words of one distinguished tennis player are apt: - 'you *cannot* be serious'. I could not find a single player who would pass the West hand. Maybe Chuck can find one in USA? So, accepting that the opening bid is fine, as are the next two bids, what about East's 2nd bid? What should East bid over 2♦? Opener has shown 9 (possibly 10) red cards. You need a good 10 - bad 12 to raise to 3♥. I believe that 3♥ is way off here. 2♥ is the bid (you have just 10 points, your values are in the wrong suits - the ♠ honours are useless, only 3 trumps, no trump honour, no ruffing possibilities, no ace). So I asked Hans. Obviously he approved of the opening bid but said that he would bid as Chuck did at the 2nd turn. What's more, he said he would bid 4♥ (as did two pairs on Friday – minus 2 and 3 doubled) at teams – afraid of missing game! I am speechless; just because it's teams, no need to give away 500. Usually we have Hans on one extreme and Chuck on the other with me in the middle. I think they have both lost their marbles here – or have I? I'll just check, seems OK, everything functional.

After the session, Hans studied the hands for several minutes. Presumably wondering why 3♥ is hopeless with that 'great' East hand!? I have my own definition of a sound opener – a hand that can withstand a limit (11 point) raise to the 3 level with a *good* expectation of making. This deal does not, so either the opening is unsound or the limit raise is – take your pick. This is what gave Hans such a dilemma – he thinks both hands are good (or very good) yet you end up in a bad contract. The answer is that the East hand is not that good for the reasons stated above. It is nowhere near a limit raise.

How many times must I re-iterate that 4333 shapes are bad and should deduct 1 point? Which leaves the hand a clear 2 points shy of the requirement for a limit raise to 3♥. 10 minus 1 = 9, not 11.

After Partner Reverses

East	West	East	This time we have a hand from Friday that was held by our opponents. Not a particularly spectacular hand, but I know that this is an area where I disagree with Chuck. What do you bid?
♠ 10863	1♦	1♠	The 2♥ bid is a reverse and should show 16+ points with 5+ ♦'s and 4 ♥'s. I asked Chuck what he would bid. He said that he would bid Lebensohl 2NT
♥ Q76	2♥	?	
♦ 953			
♣ A87			

(a convention that enables you to bail out below game – in this case after partner has reversed). The bidding then goes 2NT - 3♣ - 3♦ (or 3♥) - pass. Where 3♣ is simply a forced bid enabling partner to pass or sign off below game. I asked Chuck if opener should pass the 3♦/♥ bid and he said yes. Of course I knew all of this and was just baiting him. I simply said ‘wouldn't it be simpler to just pass 2♥?’. A moment's hesitation... then he said that opener does not have to pass 3♥ if he has a rock crusher. My answer is to simply find a hand that can open only 1♦ yet make game opposite this heap. Something to think about if you have a few hours to spare. Where are you going? 4♥ on a 4-3 fit? 5♦? 3NT with inadequate cover in the black suits? Game is remote. Of course, with solid ♦'s, top ♥'s and ♠A, partner makes 3NT. However, with *solid* ♦'s it is usually better to rebid 3NT or 2NT (which I would raise to 3 with this East hand). The reverse *usually* implies a lesser hand without solid ♦'s. Even if it is possible to construct a hand that makes game, you will lose more all the times you go down in 3♥, 4♥ or whatever when you end up in when partner has a standard 17-19 point reverse.

What this all really boils down to is, is a reverse after a one level response forcing? I maintain that it is *virtually* forcing. If you have stretched for your initial response, then you can pass. After all, a reverse *is* a limit bid. On this particular deal you have a totally flat 6 count that is only worth an initial response because partner may have a ♠ suit. Once partner has denied ♠'s then I would pass a 2♥ reverse – because without a ♠ fit the hand was not worth an initial response. Just look at this East hand – it is flat garbage. How many times must I re-iterate that 4333 shapes are bad and should deduct 1 point? Heard that before somewhere? Any bid over 2♥ is bound to get you into trouble. What actually happened? 4♥ went down 3 for a bottom. I totally disagree with Chuck on this one – a reverse after a 1 level response is not absolutely forcing. Interesting to hear Hans' (and your) opinion. Incidentally, the experts disagree on this – I can provide support for either view.

Just as an aside, it may appear that I 'pick on' Chuck and Hans. Not really, I just reproduce interesting hands and state people's views - perhaps with a little more emphasis on my own?

But these are the big guys and they can take it. They are welcome (and I have asked them) to contribute to the news-sheet (I promise that I will not censure any contributions). What am I going to do when Chuck leaves us? Hans is nowhere near controversial enough to supply enough amusing material. Perhaps you will be next in the spotlight? So just bid sensibly! Please ask if you want any particular bidding topic covered. I am currently working on RKCB.

Multi Landy - A Defence to 1NT

When the opponents open 1NT it is best to overcall only on shapely hands (especially over a strong NT). Since you are already at the two level, you really need something more sophisticated than simple natural overcalls in order to show two suited hands. There are numerous different defences to 1NT around, but the most popular by more advanced players in USA is Cappelletti (also known as Hamilton – depends on which coast of the USA you are on). This defence is not quite so common in Europe; but a popular defence is Multi-Landy, which is the same as Cappelletti except that the meanings of 2♣ and 2♦ are reversed. Multi-Landy definitely is an improvement over Cappelletti and so it is what I shall describe here. Hans and Bob play Multi-Landy, as (I believe) do Joe and Martin. Chuck, of course, plays Cappelletti.

Playing Multi-Landy, over a 1NT opening by opponents the bids are :-

- 2♣ = both majors (9+ cards)
- 2♦ = a single suited hand (6+ cards, could be any of the 4 suits, but usually a major)
- 2♥ = 5 ♥'s + a minor suit
- 2♠ = 5 ♠'s + a minor suit
- 2NT = both minors (at least 5-5)
- dbl = penalties (15+ pts).

Over 2♣, responder bids his best major or 2♦ if he is equal length. This is the big advantage over Cappelletti - when responder is equal length the overcaller can bid his longer major, with Cappelletti it is a lottery as responder must choose a major. Obviously when responder has one major longer than the other, he bids the longer.

2♦ is usually a major suit. If you have a decent minor suit, it will often pay to defend 1NT – especially if you are on lead with a suit that is good to lead from. Also, if your suit is a minor, then you have to play at the 3 level so it is usually best to defend. Thus this 2♦ is usually (but not always) a major suit.

Responder bids using the same philosophy as with a multi 2♦ opening, ie :-

responder normally bids 2♥, but bids 2♠ if he is prepared to go to 3♥ or more opposite a ♥ suit. Bear in mind that overcaller is limited to 14 high card points (with more, he would have doubled). Of course, nothing is lost on the odd occasion where overcaller has a long minor (you will always be at the 3 level).

Over a 2♥/♠ opening, responder either passes or bids 2NT which asks over-caller to bid his minor.

2NT should be corrected to best minor.

dbl should be passed unless responder has a very weak hand (4- points), in which case he should attempt to bail out by bidding a 5 card suit. With a very flat weak hand, it is usually best to pass; partner may just have 1NT set in his own hand, and even if 1NT doubled makes it is usually not a disaster (it is not a game contract).

10 full tables on Monday, and we got through the complete movement of 27 boards! And 7 full table on Friday, it won't last – but 4 or 5 tables through the low season will be fine. Mind you, we have picked up a number of residents lately (Hans, Don (US), Don(UK), Chris, Jan; to name but a few).

Last week's winners: Monday 10/2/03

Friday 14/2/03

N-S winners	John/Ralph	61%	winners	Alex/Jeff	65%
E-W winners	Chuck/Terry	63%	2 nd	Mike/Philip	63%

I've received a couple of requests. One was to explain the reverse, and the other to indicate which doubles are for penalties and which are for take out. I'll deal with the reverse this week and try to cover doubles next week.

We also have a few interesting hands from last week. Chuck's finally gone (did I hear a sigh?), so this will be the last chance to feature him for a month or so.

The Reverse

A reverse is defined as an unforced rebid at the level of two (or more) in a higher ranking suit than bid originally. Now as partner will have to go to the three level to give preference to your 1st suit, you obviously need a strong hand. 17+ points is the norm. Also, a reverse *guarantees* more cards in the 1st bid suit. Let's have a few examples (and check that you would bid them as I suggest), in all cases you play a strong NT and 5 card major system: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ Q7	♠ 2	♠ A	♠ -	♠ AQ	♠ A
♥ KQ87	♥ AK864	♥ AQ74	♥ K765	♥ KJ75	♥ AKJ4
♦ A10964	♦ AKJ74	♦ AQJ763	♦ K765	♦ K9875	♦ AKQ964
♣ Q4	♣ K9	♣ J5	♣ AQ954	♣ KJ	♣ 105

1. Open 1♦. If partner responds with a black suit or 1NT, do not bid 2♥. That would be a reverse, advertising values that you do not have. Pass 1NT, over 1♠ bid 1NT and over 2♣ bid 2♦.
2. This time you have values for the reverse, but it is incorrect as opening 1♦ and rebidding 2♥ *promises* more ♦'s than ♥'s. Correct is to open 1♥ and then jump to 3♦.
3. A classic reverse. Open 1♦ and rebid 2♥ over 1♠, 1NT or 2♣.
4. Here is where I disagree with many people. I open 1♣ and then support a red suit and bid 2♣ over 1♠. Over 1NT it's not so easy, but 2♣ is still best. Insufficient values to reverse.
5. You have the values for a reverse, but with the high cards outside the long suits, I prefer a (strong) 1NT opening. Two doubletons, but that's where the points are.
6. This is tricky. It is really too strong for a 1♦ opening. If you play strong two's, then fine. Otherwise it has to be a 2♣ opener (also fine). A 2NT opener is out with two short suits and the hand has too much playing strength.

So, got the hang of it? How would you bid hand 18 from Monday? A *very* interesting hand with umpteen different ways to bid it, depending upon your system and style. The hand was played 9 times and, *with no opposition bidding*, there were 7 different final contracts! That must be a record for a non-slam hand. The correct contract was reached just once. Let's start with Chuck/Me:

East, Terry	West, Chuck	East	West	(1) a reverse
				(2) Lebensohl, East must bid
♠ A	♠ 109762	1♦	1♠	3♣ and await developments
♥ AQ74	♥ 8532	2♥ (1)	2NT (2)	(3) forced
♦ AKQJ64	♦ 8	3♣ (3)	3♥ (4)	(4) a very weak hand with ♥'s
♣ 105	♣ A84	4♥ (5)	pass	(5) a very strong hand with ♥'s

This is where I agree with Chuck and disagree with Hans. Chuck plays better minor, and he thought that bidding was better than playing in a possible 3-1 fit in 1♦. 1♦ is very unlikely to be a good final contract when you have 9 cards in the majors and a singleton ♦. Hans would always pass the West hand – he insists that the auction will get out of control if partner has a very strong hand. Best to check the Lebensohl convention. Who is correct? I agree with Chuck, but it is really a matter of style; neither is wrong or right, up to you and your partner. Also, it depends to an extent on your opening two strategy. So, would I have been passed out in 1♦ if playing with Hans? No.

I know that Hans will not respond with sub-minimal values and with Hans I play Benjamin two's - I would open the East hand 2♣ - in this case a strong 2♦ opener.

Let's consider how to bid this hand in detail. First of all, the opening bid. If your partnership style is that you need 6 points to bid over a possible short minor (as with Hans), then you cannot open this hand 1♦. The second point to consider is if you do open 1♦, then would partner take a reverse (1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥) as forcing? :-

With Hans, I would open a Benjamin 2♣.

With John, I would open an Acol 2♦ (strong and forcing).

With a partner who does not play a strong 2 structure and who is likely to pass 1♦, then you simply have to open 2♣.

If partner will bid over 1♦ with minimal values but would pass a reverse (my style, and that of Gary/Don), then you have to open 2♣ if you do not have a strong two structure.

Now I said that my preferred style is to play the reverse as non-forcing; however, Chuck had made it very plain to me that he plays it as 100% forcing (I tend to go along with whatever my partner plays). I also know that Chuck (unlike Hans) will not pass an opening of 1 of a minor with an unsuitable hand, thus I was able to open 1♦ and we had the bidding mechanism to easily reach the correct contract. If partner is likely to pass the reverse, then a rebid of 2 or 3NT looks reasonable – partner should not pass this. The problem is not only that 3NT may not make if partner has no ♣ stop (OK in this case) but also, you may miss a superior ♥ game (as is the case here). If you go along with my preferred style of responding to a minor with sub-minimal values and perhaps passing a reverse, it may be worth considering playing Benjamin two's (you still have a weak opening 2♥/♠).

What happened on this board? 4♥(+1), 5♦ and 3NT were all bid and made once. 1♦ was passed out twice. The 2♥ reverse was passed once and there were three other ♦ partscore contracts. I don't really understand these ♦ partscores. As I mentioned a couple of weeks back, do not go out of your way to play in a minor (even a very good minor) – especially when you have a 4-4 major fit (with no major fit, go for 3NT!).

A jump rebid in ♦'s is incorrect on this hand as it denies a 4 card major. A sequence like 1♦ - 1♠ - 3♦ is wrong. I checked the scores, and all of these were played by East, so they did not open 2♣.

So, two things you have to clarify with your partner. Do you bid on minimal values over partner's 1♣/♦ opening? And, if so, is a reverse over a 1 level response forcing?

Up to you. If you feel that you need to play the reverse as forcing but don't know how to show opener that you have a very weak hand and don't know how to stop below game, then ask me or Chuck about Lebensohl.

One final hand from Monday, the North hand from Board 17. What do you open?

♠ AQJ32 Hans and I were tidying up after the session and Jan asked what we
♥ 975432 would open. Normally one opens the longer major, but there is a problem
♦ KJ here. If you open 1♥ and partner responds 1NT, 2♣ or 2♦, then you are
♣ - not strong enough to reverse into 2♠ (partner will expect 17+ points).

Hans and I were in agreement that you should open 1♠ and rebid 2♥. Partner will not take you for 6♥'s, but that is better than failing to mention that great ♠ suit. The ♥'s are weak and may be treated like a 5 card suit. With 5-5 you always open the higher ranking suit.

Pre-empt Only Once

Board 8 from Monday was interesting: -

Dealer: ♠ AQ
West ♥ 1092
Love all ♦ KJ1032
♣ 932

♠ 9	N	♠ 542
♥ Q73	W E	♥ AKJ854
♦ A8654	S	♦ Q97
♣ AQ86		♣ 10
	♠ KJ108763	
	♥ 6	
	♦ -	
	♣ KJ754	

West	North	East	South
Chuck	Hans	Me	Bob

1♦	pass	1♥	3♠
pass	pass	4♥	4♠
5♥	dbl	all pass	

South led a ♠ to North's ♠A and North returned a cunning ♦J. I covered with the queen and South ruffed. It did not look too good when South placed a low ♣ on the table. After some thought, I played ♣Q (I now needed the ♣ finesse to make the contract). When this held it was ♥ to the ♥A, ruff a ♠ low, back to hand with a ♣ ruff, ruff the last ♠ with dummy's ♥Q, back to hand with

another ♣ ruff, draw the last 2 trumps, over to the ♦A and finally pitch the last losing ♦ on ♣A. Hans said well played; Chuck simply asked why I took so long in a lay-down contract – that's about as close to a compliment as you will ever get from Chuck. So what is the moral here?

South should have bid 4♠ at his first turn. The rule when pre-empting is that you decide how high you are prepared to go and then bid to that level immediately. Over an initial 4♠, it would be difficult for East to bid 5♥. The South hand has only 7 ♠'s, but it is worth an initial 4♠ because of the good 'body' in ♠'s and because of the 2nd suit. Note that you will never get a chance to bid this 2nd suit – opponents will compete in a red suit which is then too high to mention ♣'s. Most of the field were in 4♠ making. One E-W pair were in 6♥ minus 1; I suspect that this happened when South initially bid 4♠ and East bid 5♥ which West raised to 6♥ (perhaps after North raised to 5♠?). An initial 4♠ bid really does make life difficult for E-W.

This general rule applies to all pre-empts, either openings or overcalls – pre-empt just once (as high as is wise) and do not bid again unless partner invites. Bidding twice allows the opponents to find a fit and to gauge their combined strength. The only possible exception is when you have a weak two-suiter *and you are able to bid both suits*.

Finally, what can we say about North's final double? The opponents have been pushed up into 5♥. Maybe it makes, maybe not. Assuming that 4♥ makes and that a fair % of the field will be in 4♥ then there is absolutely no % in doubling. If 5♥ makes then you convert an average into a bottom, if there are only 10 tricks then you get a top anyway. No, the only reasonable bid other than pass is 5♠! Since 6 of North's points are in partner's suit it seems very likely that 5♥ makes (perhaps the calibre of the opposition should be taken into account?!), and if 5♥ does not actually make then 5♠ may well! Give South a ♥ void (very likely on the bidding) and 5♠ could well make. In this actual case 5♥ makes but 5♠ would go minus one – an excellent result for N-S.

Raising Partner's Pre-empt

Board 18 from Friday. N-S vul.

♠ J96 Now, onto an associated topic. Partner pre-empts, should you raise the
 ♥ A76 pre-empt? This is West hand 18 from Friday. At favourable vulnerability
 ♦ K1085 your partner has dealt and opened 3♥, passed to you. What do you do?
 ♣ 975 two reasonable alternatives: - with ½ your points in partner's suit,
 I would up the anti and bid 4♥ - make it difficult for the opponents to
 reach 4♠, which stands good chances looking at this hand; pass is a rather feeble alternative. What you
 should not do is pass, hear the next hand bid 3♠ passed round to you and then bid 4♥! Why push them
 into game which they were incapable of bidding on their own? Partner was max (9 points), yet 4♠ made
 – Alex played it very well.

East	South	West	North	This was the actual bidding. At the end of play, West suggested that North was lucky – indeed he was, lucky that West kept the auction alive and lucky that South woke up in time to make the 4♠ bid that he should have made on the previous round. I'll give you the complete deal later.
3♥	pass	pass	3♠	
pass	pass	4♥	pass	
pass	4♠	all pass		

So, a similar theme. If you wish to raise partner's pre-empt, do so immediately; before opponents can gauge their combined strength and fit. Under no circumstances do it later.

Spot the Correct Bid!

	West	North	East	South
♠ K1097	N	1NT (1)	pass	2♣ (2)
♥ AK7	W E	2♠	pass	3♣
♦ A1086	S	dbl	pass	pass
♣ A9				
Dealer:	♠ 85		(1) 15-17 ?!	
West	♥ 86		(2) ♣'s and another suit (playing DONT)	
E-W vul	♦ KJ2			
	♣ KQJ864			

Board 16 from Friday. So here comes the question: can you spot a single bid that is remotely sensible? Send answers on a postcard. Obviously both players deserve a zero, unfortunately the scoring system is such that one of them must get a good score. Perhaps I can arrange for them to partner each other. The bottom lines? Once you have opened 1NT you have said it all. Do not bid again uninvited. Do not open 1NT outside your range. Do not double with just two trumps when you have already said your hand (twice). Bridge is a partnership game. Understand your defence to a strong NT. Do not bid twice with a weak hand under a strong NT. I've run out of space.....this really iswell, not Bridge.

What happened? I shall not dignify this with a result. They both deserve zero minus. How should you bid the South hand? DONT is just about the only defence to a NT that allows you to play in 2♣, shame South forgot the system (sic). You double (showing a single suited hand) and then pass partner's expected 2♣ response. Playing Multi Landy you could bid 2♦ to show a single suited hand (and then bid 3♣), but pass is probably best. West should, of course, open 1♦ playing a 15-17 NT.

Spot the Correct Bid, part 2

Board 17 from Friday, yes – the very next hand: -

♠ Q96	N	West	North	East	South
♥ A82	W E				
♦ 9765	S	-	pass	1♣	1♥
♣ A74		dbl (1)	pass	1♠	3♦
	♠ J10	3NT	pass	4♠	5♦
Dealer:	♥ KQ973	5♠	pass	pass	pass
North	♦ AKQJ32				
Love all	♣ -			(1) negative, 4♠'s	

So here comes the question: can you spot a single bid by West or South that is remotely sensible? Send answers on Obviously both players deserve.....

I have a lot of problems with West's bids here. Obviously the initial bid should be 1NT, it is a flat heap. Quite why it is later worth 3NT after South has shown a strong hand baffles me – as does a five level bid when partner has shown a minimum opener and simply corrected! People who bid like South deserve to be chopped, gifting them tops like this only spurs them on. 5♠ on the 4-3 fit was not a roaring success. 5♦ would be two off.

How do you bid the South hand? You could double and then convert a ♠ bid by partner to ♦'s. Alternatively, overcall 2♦ followed by a ♥ reverse bid. There are also conventional ways to show two-suiters (Ghestem, Michaels). The sequence chosen shows 5-5 or longer ♥'s than ♦'s; it invites partner to give preference to ♥'s. West, of course, should bid 1NT and pass thereafter.

Spot the Correct Bid - A Complete Hat-trick!

Friday's movement entailed playing 3 boards against each opponent. After the previous two fiascos it seems fitting to study the last board of the set. We've seen it before, so let's look at the complete deal. Hand 18 from Friday: -

		West	North	East	South
Dealer:	♠ K10832				
East	♥ J	-	-	3♥	pass
N-S vul	♦ A64	pass (1)	3♠ (2)	pass	pass (3)
	♣ A842	4♥ (4)	pass	pass	4♠ (5)
		all pass			
♠ J96	N	♠ Q5			
♥ A76	W E	♥ KQ109432	(1) I prefer 4♥ to pass.		
♦ K1085	S	♦ 72	(2) easy, but not so easy if West had bid 4♥		
♣ 975		♣ Q10	(3) I'm sleeping		
	♠ A74		(4) a really silly bid		
	♥ 85		(5) OK, I'll bid what I should have last go		
	♦ QJ93		since you push me into it.		
	♣ KJ63				

A note about West's 1st pass. I prefer 4♥. 4♥ is an excellent bid as opponents do not know if it is weak or very strong. It would take a very bold (reckless?) North to compete over 4♥.

How do you bid the South hand? An initial pass is correct as a double would show a stronger hand and guarantee 4♠'s. When partner bids 3♠, a raise to 4♠ is automatic. West should, of course, bid 4♥ immediately in which case the pre-empt works and N-S will probably not find the ♠ game.

This deal is slightly different from the last two outings of West/South. This time they managed just three really bad bids before South finally got it right. These two cowboys were the same as the two previous hands. I just cannot wait to see what mayhem ensues if I can get them to partner each other. I shall certainly be kibitzing. Between them they made a total of 14 silly bids on just three boards. Now

these two guys are not beginners – they have both won and recorded other good scores in recent weeks. Doubtless these three tops helped Alex/Jeff to their 65% win! I don't really want to drop any names, but Alex's bids were impeccable throughout. Alex is going back soon, no problem; I have a perfect partner in mind for Jeff.

It's all about Shape

36-24-36 is fine, 48-24-38 is considered preferable by Dolly Parton fans. But let's be serious. Hans told me of a sorry tale where one of our members had a 5332 shape and downgraded it (I believe he mis-understood what I said about flat hands). This is not a bad shape, it is average + (if partner has bid your doubleton, it is still reasonable; if partner has bid one of your 3 card suits it is good). But let's assume partner has not bid yet. Then 4333 is bad (deduct 1 point), 4432 is average, any other shape is good (add on a bit according to how shapely it is). 5332 is goodish (add on ½ a point). But remember, you need to have honours in long suits.

Last week's winners: Monday 17/2/03

Friday 21/2/03

winner John/Ralph 64%
2nd Ian/Jon 61%

winner Lis/Finn 63%
2nd Bob/Hans 62%

Doubles

Heard this two weeks ago?

Ian: How could you pass my take-out double?

Ian's Pard: But I only had 3 points!

Ian: You must bid.

Ian's Pard: But I was not sure it was for take-out, and with just 3 points.....

An all-too-familiar story.

Ian asked me to try to clarify (for the benefit of all) which doubles are for take-out and which for penalties. To some extent, this is up to partnership agreement; but the following is a good general guideline:

-

A double by us is normally for penalties if -

- 1) We double a natural no-trump bid.
- 2) Anybody at the table had made a natural no-trump bid.
- 3) Either of us has made an earlier penalty double or penalty pass of a take out double.
- 4) Either of us had made a value showing double or re-double earlier.
- 5) Either of us has pre-empted.
- 6) Either of us has made a lead directing double of an artificial bid.
- 7) Either of us has made a strong 2♣ or other strong 2 bid.
- 8) There are no unbid suits (suits that have not been bid naturally or implied).
- 9) We have already found our fit.
- 10) The doubler's partner has already accurately described his strength and distribution.
- 11) One opponent is Jeff and he has obviously over-bid.
- 12) When both opponents have limited their hands and yet reach a pushy game.
- 13) Partner has made a take-out double and RHO introduces a new suit.

A double by us is for take-out if -

- a) A double of an opening suit bid
- b) A double at a low level (below game) when the opponents have agreed a suit.
- c) You previously made a take-out double of the same suit.

There are a number of further things that we need to know. What sort of hand type do we need for a take-out double? What should doubler's partner respond? What if doubler's partner is virtually bust? Obviously there are volumes of material here and it will take me a few weeks (months?). So for this week I'll concentrate on the meanings of doubles - take-out or penalty.

So, let's cover the points mentioned above.

1) **We double a natural no-trump bid.**

A double of an opening 1NT or a 1NT overcall is for penalties.

2) **Anybody at the table had made a natural no-trump bid.**

Self-explanatory: - 1NT dbl 2♦ dbl both doubles are for penalties

But an exception is a sequence like 1♦ pass 1NT dbl where the double is a take-out of ♦'s.

3) **Either of us has made an earlier penalty double or pass of a take out double.**

2♠	pass	pass	dbl (1)	(1) take-out
pass	pass (2)	3♣	dbl (3)	(2) penalty pass
				(3) penalties

4) **Either of us had made a value showing double or re-double earlier.**

For example, when partner opens 1 of a suit and the next hand doubles (take-out), a re-double does *not* show support for partner's suit (with support for partner, raise to the appropriate level). A re-double should show 9+ points and a mis-fit for partner, i.e. we want to defend and are out for blood. We have the balance of the points and hope to set the opponents. Any pass by the bloodsuckers (us) is forcing and any subsequent double is to satisfy the vampire urge.

1♠	dbl	redbl (1)	pass	(1) 9+ points, usually poor ♠ support.
pass	2♥	dbl (2)		(2) penalties (a pass at (2) is forcing).

5) **Either of us has pre-empted.**

3♥	dbl (1)	4♥	4♠	(1) take-out
pass	pass	dbl (2)		(2) penalties

Opener should never pull this penalty double. The 4♥ bid is totally ambiguous; it could be a weak pre-emptive raise or a hand just short of slam. In this situation it was obviously a rock crusher.

Note that a subsequent double (of a game contract) by the pre-empter shows a better defensive hand than the initial pre-empt told - indicating that partner should not sacrifice unless necessary.

6) **Either of us has made a lead directing double of an artificial bid.**

1♠	2♣	3♦ (1)	dbl (2)	(1) splinter
3♠	pass	4♠	dbl (3)	(2) please lead a ♦
				(3) penalties

7) **Either of us has made a strong 2♣ or other strong opening 2 bid.**

e.g. 2♣ - 2♥ - dbl dbl indicates that responder considers 2♥ doubled will deliver a better score than a game if opener has a balanced 23+.

8) **There are no unbid suits (suits that have not been bid naturally or implied).**

1♣	dbl	1♥	pass	the last double is penalties, partner has shown a big hand with ♦'s; so dbl cannot be take-out – no suit(s) left.
1♠	2♦	pass	pass	
2♥	pass	pass	dbl	

1♥	2♣	dbl	2♠	the 1st double is negative, showing the two unbid suits; so opener's dbl is penalties.
dbl				

9) **We have already found our fit.**

1♥	1♠	3♥	3♠	Penalties.
dbl				

There is one notable exception here. If the opponent's suit is ranking one below our major, then a double of a three level bid has to be a game try (there is no room left): -

				The opponents have robbed us of the space for a game try.
1♥	2♦	2♥	3♦	This double is a game try, inviting partner to bid 4♥ if max.
dbl				A 3♥ bid here would be competitive, not an invitation.

10) **The doubler's partner has already accurately described his strength and distribution.**

1♣	1♥	1♠	pass	Penalties. Cannot possibly be take-out (to what?). You know opener's hand: weakish with ♣'s.
2♣	2♥	dbl		

11) **One opponent is Jeff.**

	player A	Alex	player B	Jeff
(1) transfer	1NT	pass	2♦ (1)	2♠
(2) turning a big + into a big -, a penalty double was called for.	pass	pass	3♥	3♠
	pass	pass	4♥ (2)	dbl

This is a typical Jeff auction from 3 weeks ago. I have no idea why he gets away with it. Both 4♥ and 3♠ were 2 off. It was a partscore hand! Why give away 500 when 500 has been offered? When your partner opens 1NT and you have the balance of the points, look for the penalty - the NT bidder has said his (her) hand and often cannot double, so it's up to you. If it's Jeff, double!

12) **When both opponents have limited their hands and yet reach a pushy game.**

1♣	1♥	1♠	pass	Penalties. Probably with an unpleasant trump holding such as ♠QJ109 (you should double with this holding regardless of the rest of your hand) – 2 unexpected tricks.
2♠	pass	3♠	pass	
4♠	pass	pass	dbl	

13) **Partner has made a take-out double and RHO introduces a new suit.**

1♠ dbl 2♥ dbl

The first double is take-out, showing a willingness to play in ♥'s (I personally would insist on 4♥'s for a double of 1♠ unless a very big hand). The 2nd double is best played as penalties. This is a typical psyche situation and you need a double to expose a possible psyche (of course, nobody would psyche at our club – you all know the director's opinions).

And take-out doubles: -

a) A double of an opening suit bid

The standard take-out double. It should have at least 3 cards in the unbid suits with shortage in the suit bid, but there are exceptions which I will cover at a later date.

b) A double at a low level (below game) when the opponents have agreed a suit.

1♦ pass 3♦ pass take-out, too weak to bid first time. But when
pass dbl both opponents have limited their hands, partner
must have values.

c) You previously made a take-out double of the same suit.

1♦ dbl 2♦ pass both doubles are take-out.
pass dbl

There are other more specific doubles; negative (sputnik), responsive, support etc.
I will cover these in next week's exciting instalment.

d) A delayed double.

1♦ pass 1♥ pass take-out. He did not double first time as he did not
1NT dbl have ♥'s. This take-out double shows ♣'s and ♠'s

RKCB - A Matter of Logic

A hand from Monday 10th, Board 21 E-W. Yes, I still have a few Chuck hands in the archives.

West - Chuck	East - Terry	West	North	East	South
♠ Q98	♠ AJ102	1♣	2♦ (1)	2♥ (2)	pass
♥ A4	♥ KQ9652	4NT (3)	pass	5♠ (4)	pass
♦ A	♦ 96	6♣ (5)	pass	6♥	pass
♣ AKJ9874	♣ 10	pass	pass		

- (1) Weak
- (2) Forcing, 5+ ♥'s (Chuck and I do not play negative free bids, thank God).
- (3) RKCB with ♥'s as the key suit
- (4) 2 key cards (♠A and ♥K) plus ♥Q
- (5) An excellent suit, a suggestion for the final contract.

After the hand was over (it made +1, the ♠K was on-side with trumps 3-2), one opponent asked me how I could possibly bid 6♥ when partner had not supported the suit. This is where the subtleties of RKCB come into play. Partner has used RKCB for ♥'s when he does not have ♥K. Thus ♥K must be an important card for him (as important as an ace) – using RKCB, the key king is counted along with all the aces. Thus he must have at least two ♥'s. Now, especially as I hold ♥Q, in order for partner to use RKCB he must have the ♥A (with xx he would not use RKCB – or any type of Blackwood!). I know that Chuck does not have ♥Axx (I have shown 5 ♥'s including the ♥Q, with 3 card support he would probably bid the slam in ♥'s). Thus Chuck has exactly ♥Ax in ♥'s. Since I had a 6 card suit opposite Ax, and poor ♣'s, I thought 6♥ would be a superior contract (it also scores more). And so it was. The hand was bid 9 times and a slam reached on just 3 occasions (one was in 6♣, the other in a rather silly 6♠ which makes with the ♠'s 3-3 and ♠K onside – How did you reach 6♠, Alex/Jeff? – tell me about it!). I guess that if I keep it up (difficult sometimes), I will eventually get everybody to play RKCB?

p.s. Don't ask me what a negative free bid is, you don't want to know. Ask Hans if you must.

Responding to Partner's take-out double.

I will cover responses to a take out double in a later news-sheet, but two hands came up on Friday where I was asked the correct bid: -

This is the South board 22 from Friday. Bidding :- 1♦ dbl pass ?

♠ Q852 Your partner has doubled a 1♦ opening. What should you bid? The board
♥ KQ9 was played 5 times and game reached only twice. Alex's partner bid 2NT.
♦ K10 This is incorrect as it shows 10-12 points and is non-forcing. Also, of
♣ KQ86 course, it denies a 4 card major and so is doubly wrong. 1♠ and 2♠ are both also incorrect as they show 0-9 and 10-12 points resp and are non-forcing.
3♠ is a reasonable bid, but I prefer a 2♦ cue bid to establish a forcing auction. A subsequent ♠ bid would then be game forcing. I do not like a direct leap to 4♠ – partner may have only 3 ♠'s.

And the North board 20 from Friday. Bidding :- 1♥ dbl pass ?

♠ J73 Your partner has doubled a 1♥ opening. What should you bid? The board
♥ Q62 was played 5 times and 2♣ was bid twice. I can only repeat what I have
♦ KQ3 said in previous news-sheets; do not go out of your way to play in a minor
♣ J1063 suit. With this hand the correct bid is 1NT (6-9 pts). The hand is perfect for this bid. 2♣ went 1 down (a 4-3 fit). 1NT was bid just once and made with overtricks for a clear top.

The 4-4 Major Suit Fit

What can I say about this? It is what every bidding system is all about. It is all-important. It is the elixir of life. It is Buddha to a Thai, it is a cow to India, it is freedom to Palestine, it is Bin Ladin to a terrorist, it is George W Bush to America. Nothing else matters... It is worth going to war for, ... it is worth dying for! ... It simply is am I getting carried away?

♠ A942 This is the North hand from board 5 on Friday 14th. Partner opens 2♣
♥ 87 (23+ points), you respond 2♦ (negative, waiting, whatever) and partner
♦ 965 bids 2NT (balanced 23-24). What now? I bid 3♣ Stayman (as did Hans at
♣ J853 another table), partner bid 3♠ which we both raised to 4♠. 4♠ made exactly, despite an adverse 4-1 trump split (QJ86). Four other tables were in 3NT (minus 1) and one in 6NT (minus 3). There really is no excuse for this. Sam Stayman did not invent his convention for no reason. Quite simply, a 4-4 major fit is nearly always better than 3NT. It usually gets one more trick. On this particular deal it scored two more tricks despite the very bad 4-1 split. The NT bidders (every other N-S except Hans/Bob and us) got what they deserved.

Incidentally, over a 2NT opener (either directly or via 2♣) most players play Stayman and transfers. A popular alternative in UK is Baron 3♣ and Flint 3♦ (as played by John). Baron is designed to locate any 4-4 fit. When you are looking for slam (often the case opener) then any 4-4 fit (even a minor) will do.

The bottom line? With hands like this (and similar with more points when partner opens 1NT), bid Stayman. *Always* look for the 4-4 major fit. Do not be misled by the belief that 9 tricks are easier than 10. Do not be greedy and go for the extra 10 points at pairs. Go for the 4-4 major fit. Trust in Buddha, the cow, freedom, me or even George W Bush – no that would be going too far.

p.s. My word processor has underlined George in red, seems to think it warrants a capital letter? In this case, I don't think so. (Chuck's gone, so no holding back). p.p.s There is just one exception to playing in NT rather than the 4-4 major fit, that is when you have *plenty* of points to spare and at least a double stopper in each suit, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

Last week's winners: Monday 17/2/03

Friday 21/2/03

winner	Joe/Bengt	64%	winner	Mike/Ole	72%
2 nd =	John/Ralph; Hans/Bob	61%	2 nd	Kaj/Margit	59%

Take-Out Doubles

- A double of a Major opening always promises 4 cards in the other major (or a hand strong enough to cope with a jump in the other major).
- A double of a Minor opening always promises both majors – one may possibly be 3 card (or a hand strong enough to cope with a jump in either major).
- A double followed by a NT bid shows a hand too strong to overcall 1NT directly (so 19+).
- A double followed by a new suit after partner has responded shows a hand too good to simply overcall.

Let's have some examples of take-out doubles (and not). In all cases, an opponent has opened 1♦ in front of you. All these examples are for direct bids; bidding in the balancing seat is sometimes different.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4
♠ QJ87	♠ A2	♠ QJ8	♠ QJ8
♥ KQ87	♥ K864	♥ AQ764	♥ K96
♦ 4	♦ KJ7	♦ 4	♦ 85
♣ AQ42	♣ Q974	♣ AQ42	♣ AQJ54

Hand 1: The classic take out double.

Hand 2: Pass. You cannot double with only 2 ♠'s. You cannot overcall without a 5 card suit. You cannot overcall with 1NT as this shows 15-18 points. That just leaves pass!

Hand 3: With a 5 card suit, a 1♥ overcall is preferable to a double.

Hand 4: This hand is from a Dutch Magazine. In the article the hand doubled but there was no discussion of this bid. Perhaps it is standard practice in Holland? I would never double with two 3 card majors (one three card is acceptable). With this hand, overcall 2♣.

Hand 5	Hand 6	Hand 7	Hand 8
♠ AJ9	♠ A2	♠ AJ	♠ AQ
♥ AQ95	♥ AJ64	♥ AJ64	♥ AQJ1064
♦ 5	♦ KJ7	♦ KJ7	♦ J7
♣ Q8754	♣ K974	♣ KQJ4	♣ KQ4

Hand 5: Double is acceptable with this hand.

Hand 6: You cannot double with 3 cards in the opponent's suit and with just a doubleton in one major. With this hand, a 1NT overcall (15-18) is fine.

Hand 7: Double! This is the same as the previous hand except that it is too strong for 1NT. So you double first and then bid NT over partner's 1♠ or 2♣. Raise 1♥ to 3♥.

Hand 8: Double. And subsequently bid your ♥ suit. Too strong for an overcall.

One important point. I mention above that a 1NT overcall is 15-18. This is the case regardless of your opening 1NT range. Since an opponent has bid, you need a strong hand to intervene with 1NT. This 1NT overcall is less in the balancing seat (11-14).

Responses to Partner's take-out Double.

Response: -

- A non jump suit bid shows 0-9 pts * These 1st 4 responses are non-forcing.
- A jump suit bid shows 10-11 pts *
- 1NT shows 6-10 pts, denies 4 card major *
- 2NT shows 11-12 pts, denies 4 card major *
- A cue bid (bid of opponent's suit) makes the auction forcing (I prefer game forcing).
- 3 of an unbid major is game forcing showing a 5 card suit.
- Pass is for penalties

So, let's have a few examples. Partner has doubled a 1♦ opening in all cases:

Hand 9	Hand 10	Hand 11	Hand 12
♠ 954	♠ A92	♠ Q98	♠ QJ8
♥ Q72	♥ K864	♥ 764	♥ Q96
♦ 8742	♦ KJ7	♦ KJ7	♦ KJ107
♣ 842	♣ 974	♣ Q742	♣ Q87

Hand 9: Oh dear! Bid 1♥, do *not* pass, do not bid 1NT (insufficient values).

Hand 10: Bid 2♥, do not bid NT with a major

Hand 11: Bid 1NT

Hand 12: Bid 2NT

Hand 13	Hand 14	Hand 15	Hand 16
♠ Q852	♠ A2	♠ 72	♠ Q8
♥ KQ9	♥ AQJ64	♥ A6	♥ A96
♦ K10	♦ K7	♦ QJ1086	♦ KJ107
♣ KQ86	♣ Q974	♣ A982	♣ AQ86

Hand 13: Bid 2♦. A subsequent bid of 2♠ over a 2♥ reply would then show a 4 card ♠ suit and game forcing values. Of course you raise a 2♠ bid to 4♠.

Hand 14: Bid 3♥. Game forcing with 5 ♥'s.

Hand 15: Pass. Declarer will have a tough time.

Hand 16: Bid 3NT. Obviously where you want to play, and better played from your hand.

Next week we will have a look at a few specific types of doubles.

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	You have Hand A and open 1♣. Partner responds 1♠. What is your rebid? (you are playing a strong NT if that affects your decision). What do you open with Hand B? Plan your rebid if you choose 1♠ and partner responds 2♥.
♠ 6	♠ A7432	
♥ AQ32	♥ 10	
♦ K76	♦ AQJ106	
♣ A10765	♣ 65	Answers later in this news-sheet.

Penalty Double?

1♦ pass 1♠ dbl
2♦ dbl

Hans asked my opinion on the meaning of the 2nd double. It is penalties. Partner's double promised both rounded suits, and so this falls into categories 8 (no unbid suit) and also 10 (doubler's partner has described his hand) mentioned last week and is for penalties.

The No-trump rebid.

Hand C	Hand D	Let's suppose you play a strong NT (15-17). Then you would open Hand C with 1NT. With hand D you open 1♣ and rebid 1NT (12-14) over any one-level suit response. If you play a weak NT, then it is the other way round. You would open Hand C with 1♣ (with a 1NT rebid in mind) and you open Hand D with a weak 1NT (12-14). Simple, n'est pas? I always thought so, but it appears not? I had a very interesting time discussing two of Monday's hands with Hans:
♠ QJ8	♠ QJ8	
♥ KQ	♥ K8	
♦ Q942	♦ Q942	
♣ AQ42	♣ AJ42	

Let's start with the South hand from Board 6: -

♠ QJ954 So, do you open? And if so, with what? I believe that most people (even
♥ - Chuck?) would open. If you open 1♦ then you are fixed over a 1NT or 2♣
♦ A9432 response. You cannot rebid 2♠ as that would be a reverse showing a much
♣ A102 stronger hand and more ♦'s than ♠'s and it would be difficult to convince
partner that you have 5 ♠'s (the hand is not strong enough to open 1♦ and
subsequently bid ♠'s twice). So we open 1♠ and partner (of course) replies 2♥. What now? I see no
alternative to bidding 2♠. 3♦ would show a much stronger hand. Hans suggested that I should rebid 2NT.
At first I assumed he was joking, but it turned out he was serious. Rebidding a 5 card major suit is not
ideal, but I much prefer it to bidding 2NT (this bid would never even cross my mind) with a void in
partner's suit! As it happens we were playing Acoll with 4 card majors, but I would bid the same playing
SAYC. Hans said that he would not open the hand playing 5 card majors because of the possible rebid
problem - so what do you do if you have a similar hand with a couple of more points? I feel that this hand
has far too much playing strength to pass. Playing 2/1 there is absolutely no problem; partner's 2♥ is then
game forcing and a 3♦ rebid does not show extra values. A good hand for the 2/1 system, you never have
a rebid problem.

At the end of the session, Hans gave me another hand - the West hand from Board 1: -

♠ - You open 1♣ and of course partner responds 1♠. What is your rebid. To
♥ K874 me, 2♣ is obvious, especially as Hans/Bob play a prepared ♣ (could be 3
♦ KQ86 or 2 card). You cannot rebid a red suit as that would be a reverse, showing
♣ AK653 a much stronger hand (your hand is not good enough, especially once
partner bids your void). Apparently Bob rebid 1NT (a bid with which Hans
is in total agreement). I am aghast! In my opinion, a NT rebid should be similar to a 1NT opener (as
indicated at the start of this section) but the other point range. *Very* occasionally you may be fixed and have
to respond 1NT with a singleton in partner's suit (specifically 1444), but *never* with a void. This is a total
distortion. Hans disagrees, stating that you cannot rebid a 5 card suit. I have another objection to rebidding
1NT with this hand; the bid shows 12-14 points, this hand is too strong. True, partner's 1♠ bid has not
improved the hand, but with an excellent ♣ suit and decent ♦'s it is still worth 15 points; too strong for a
1NT rebid. So, who's right? Let's delve into the library, a few quotes should suffice:

Paul Marston's Introduction to Bridge: - *A 1NT rebid shows a balanced hand without a fit.*

Zia Mahmood – Bridge for Beginners: - *Rebid NT with a balanced hand after a new suit response.*

Max Hardy – Standard Bridge Bidding for the 21st Century: -

When opener has rebid 1NT to show 12-14 HCP and a balanced hand.....

Note the key word *balanced*. So, a pretty comprehensive argument? But let's just put the icing on the cake
and quote Paul Thurston – 25 steps to learning 2/1. No embellishment, this is an **exact** quote: -

*' There are some players (no-trump hogs) who think it's OK to rebid 1NT or 2NT with a singleton –
sometimes even with a void(!) – in partner's suit. I believe you really should try to avoid doing this; it
makes the auction very difficult if you tell partner you're balanced and then try to change the
message later on. Typically this comes up when you open 1♣ with something like*

♠ 6 ♥ AQ32 ♦ K76 ♣ A10765

*and partner is inconsiderate enough to respond 1♠. You lack the strength to reverse into 2♥, but
rather than rebid 1NT and promise a balanced hand, I would recommend you bid 2♣.'*

I could not have put it better myself (although I would never call a club member a no-trump hog). I
hate to think what this author would say about a similar hand with a void and a better ♣ suit rebidding 1NT
(such as West board 1)! I guess it would be unprintable?

Let's have a really silly bidding sequence: -

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ -	♠ AKQ10876432	1♣	pass	1♠	pass
♥ AJ54	♥ 8	1NT (1)	pass	4♣ (2)	pass
♦ A752	♦ J	5♠ (3)	pass	7NT (4)	all pass
♣ A9642	♣ 3				

- (1) silly, 'nuff said
- (2) Gerber, asking for aces
- (3) 3 aces
- (4) We have 13 top tricks, so NT scores more. What a great bid! And no danger of an initial ruff. Maybe we will get a prize for the best bid hand?

I guess South can make 3NT, but 9 or 10 down is unlikely to be a good score for E-W when 7♠ is cold.

This example may be extreme, but the examples of the bidding going astray because partner assumes that you probably have 2 of his suit are too numerous to mention. Indeed, it really is '*difficult to change the message*'. Playing game/slam contracts with 6-0 or whatever fits takes a lot of skill. Even taking a simple finesse is difficult, to say nothing about communication. Are you up to it?

Incidentally, if you and your partner still believe that it is OK to rebid NT with a void, then this is not standard practice and is a partnership understanding. As such, it must be alerted. It misleads opponents if you show a balanced hand when you have a void. I'm not even sure if it's allowed. Hate to think what Chuck would say, he would most certainly (correctly) call the director if there was no alert. If you find that it is tedious to alert every time your partner rebids NT, then play a sensible system. If you are unhappy rebidding a 5 card major, then one excellent option is to play 2/1. It is not just chance that most experts play this – it is far superior to Standard American. I have a few 2/1 books if anybody wants to borrow one.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A	Hand B	
♠ 6	♠ A7432	Hand A is the Paul Thurston example. You open 1♣ and if partner responds 1♠ then your rebid is 2♣.
♥ AQ32	♥ 10	Hand B is from a Marty Bergen bidding book. You open 1♠.
♦ K76	♦ AQJ106	If partner responds 2♥ then bid 3♦ if this does not show extra values (playing 2/1). He goes on to say that if 3♦
♣ A10765	♣ 65	shows extra values (e.g. if playing Standard American) then you have to rebid 2♠. 2NT is out with a singleton in partner's suit <i>and</i> a worthless doubleton.

And now onto Friday, a couple of interesting hands: -

Friday Bidding Quiz

Hand E	Hand F	What do you open with Hand E? 21 points.
♠ AK1084 ♥ KQ7 ♦ AJ92 ♣ A	♠ AK8 ♥ 109 ♦ KJ10943 ♣ A5	You have Hand F, what do you open? If you choose 1♦ then what is your rebid over a 1♥ response? (you are playing a strong NT if that affects your decision).

No Sensible Opening Bid?

Let's look at Hand E, South hand 6 from Friday. It looks a bit too strong for 1♠. Yet is too weak for 2♣ followed by 2♠ which most people play as game forcing. So pass? (only joking). Obviously a problem hand for all except Michael and his partner back in Germany (easy – open a precision 1♣!). For those of us who play SAYC, Acol or any similar natural system with weak twos this hand is a headache. The first time I saw it played it was 1♠ passed out (making +3). This is the problem with opening 1♠, if partner has very little it is much more likely to be passed out than a lower ranking 1 level bid (opponents need to compete at the two level and may not wish to).

So, a 2♣ opening then? I don't like this either. As mentioned above, the sequence is normally played as game forcing and this hand is simply not good enough.

I did a poll of many present on Friday. It was 50-50. 4 people opened 1♠ and the other 4 that I asked opened 2♣. What would be your choice? Nobody voted for my preferred bid; as I indicated, nothing is ideal, but I would open 2NT (20-22). Not so nice with a singleton, but a singleton ace is certainly acceptable. I believe that this is probably the best of a bad set of choices. If you don't like 2NT, then 1♠ is best, however ...

If playing strong twos (either direct or Benjamin) then there is no problem. The hand qualifies for a strong 2♠ opening. A good advert for Benjamin twos? Hans plays them with me, as does Chris. So do Martin and Rosemary and Gerry (and most Brits).

Die-hards like John Gavens play traditional Acol strong twos as do a few of the less experienced players. All the rest who have 'moved on' to weak twos will have extreme difficulty with this hand!

Way too strong for a 1NT Rebid?

Hand F	Hand F is North hand 12 from Friday. Everybody opened 1♦. The hand first caught my attention when held by Hans.
♠ AK8	Partner responded 1♥ and Hans rebid 1NT, passed out.
♥ 109	Before dummy hit the table, I asked Hans if he was happy with his 1NT
♦ KJ10943	rebid and he said yes. It made +2. Please check on the previous pages to
♣ A5	see if this hand qualifies for a 1NT rebid.

It is *way* too strong – 15 HCP with a decent 6 card suit and excellent intermediates. Everybody else I asked would rebid 3♦. Joe commented that it was closer to a 2NT (18-19) rebid than 1NT but that 3♦ was ‘obvious’. I believe that the hand is worth a 3♦ rebid but Hans disagrees. However, if the hand is not worth a 3♦ rebid, you *cannot* rebid 1NT (12-14). If you won’t rebid 3♦ then there is no choice but to open an off-beat 1NT. The hand is far too strong for a 2♦ or 1NT rebid after partner has responded. Hans claimed that if game is on, partner will bid on over the 1NT rebid. Not true. The 1NT rebid is a limit bid. Partner will normally need invitational values or better (11+) to bid on. You may well miss game (as in this case) if he has 8-10.

That was not the end of the matter, however. I followed the hand around the room (I was not playing) and saw some equally atrocious bidding! I spectated the hand 3 more times, each time it was totally different with a multitude of bids that simply have to be commented upon. The other tables had intervention, so it’s best to see the complete deal:

Friday board 12: -

Table A:		West	North	East	South
Dealer:	♠ AK8	pass	1♦	pass	1♥
West	♥ 109	pass	1NT	all pass	
N-S vul	♦ KJ10943				
	♣ A5				
Table B:		West	North	East	South
♠ 1097653	N				
♥ 76	W E	pass	1♦	1♥ (1)	pass (2)
♦ Q7	S	pass	2♦ (3)	all pass	
♣ K73					
	♠ Q2				
	♥ AQ853				
	♦ 62				
	♣ 9862				
Table C:		West	North	East	South
		pass	1♦	pass	1♥
		1♠ (4)	3♦ (5)	pass	3♥
		pass	4♥ (6)	all pass	
Table D:		West	North	East	South
		pass	1♦	1♥ (1)	pass (2)
		1♠	2♦ (7)	pass	pass
		2♠	3♦ (8)	3♠	pass (9)

None of these auctions are anything to be proud of. Let's examine them all in detail.

Table A : This was the auction at Hans' table. West, East and South all bid sensibly, unfortunately North's rebid of 1NT was appalling. Hans continues to say that the bid is correct, funny how he can find nobody who thinks it is remotely sensible.

Table B: What do you think of the 1♥ (1) overcall? (it was also chosen at table D).

Appalling is an understatement, it deserve to go for 1100 or more, read on – in fact it can go six down (see table C). Now south loved it and, (2) playing negative doubles, passed; awaiting partner's 'automatic' re-opening double. Unfortunately North either forgot how to play negative doubles or has been listening to the wrong people (the penalty pass and re-opening double are explained in news-sheet 10). Now the N-S pair at table C were Joe/Jeff, obviously not beginners. I think Joe's 2♦ bid (3) is a poor bid, so I checked with Hans. He would bid the same as Joe!! Hans maintains that a double by opener shows strength. This is *absolutely* not true. It shows a fundamental mis-understanding of negative doubles. The re-opening double is simply a courtesy bid just in case partner has a penalty pass (unable to double for penalties because you play negative doubles) – it is *not* a penalty double. If partner does not have a penalty pass (so a heap with less than 6 points) then he will pull this double and opener can then simply convert to 2♦. The re-opening double costs absolutely nothing here. Either partner has a penalty pass (and your hand is ideal for defending) or he has a heap (in which case you reach 2♦ anyway). There is absolutely no % in bidding 2♦ rather than the 'automatic' double. A failure to penalise overcalls like this simply encourages them. If Hans/Joe doubt the wisdom of my words, refer to 'Bieden met Berry' deel 2, page 249 – 'Als hij kort is in de kleur van de tegenpartij zal hij anticiperen op een strafpas en het openhouden met een doublet. Gezien de hartenholding is een strafpas goed mogelijk'. And what about South's (Jeff) bidding? The initial pass (2) is fine playing negative doubles, and when opener simply rebids 2♦ (showing a weakish hand unhappy to defend!) then Jeff can take no further action. His bidding was beyond reproach.

Table C: The bidding here was more sensible. East passed (correct) and South bid the obvious 1♥.

West then entered the lists with a rather dubious 1♠ (4) and the rest of the auction was sensible. I like the 3♦ rebid (5) although I would perhaps consider 3NT rather than 4♥ at (6) – but 4♥ turned out better. The 4♥ contract made +2! Well played Ole! This result demonstrates the power of the North hand. Only 23 HCPs, but game is a doddle. You have to up-grade with a good long suit and excellent intermediates. Incidentally, a weak 2♠ opening at this vulnerability is not too bad (better than a 1♠ overcall). But it is not everybody's cup of tea with no honour (always pass playing with Chuck).

Table D: Both East and West got carried away here. Opposite a passed hand, North's bids (7&8) show a strong hand, so South's final pass (9) was feeble.

I guess everybody is eagerly awaiting Chuck's return so that they are not in the spotlight quite so often?



Last week's winners: Monday 3/3/03

Friday 7/3/03

winner	Mike/Ole	58%	winner	Mike/Peter-M	67%
2 nd	Per/Tomas	55%	2 nd	Per/Tomas	60%

Same winners and runner-ups, except that Ole has gone home.

Your 2nd bid having transferred

Many people play transfers to majors over 1NT by partner, but what do you do after partner has completed the transfer? The following is a general guideline, where invitational is 11/12 points when playing a weak NT and 8/9 points when playing a strong NT. Game forcing is 13+ playing a weak NT and 10 + playing a strong NT.

Having transferred, your 2nd bid is: -

Pass	5 card suit or longer, insufficient values for an invitation.
2NT	5 card suit, invitational values; opener may pass, sign off in 3 of the major or bid game (3NT or 4 of the major).
3 of the major	6+ card suit, invitational values; opener normally passes or bids 4 of the major.
3NT	5 card suit, game forcing values; opener may pass or bid 4 of the major.
4 of the major	6+ card suit, game forcing values; opener should pass (unless also playing Texas transfers, in which case the bid is mildly slam interest).
a new suit	at least 5-4 shape, game forcing.

On Monday I was asked to comment on the following auction. It was board 27.

West	East	West opened 1NT, East bid 2♦ (transfer to ♥), West completed the transfer and then East bid 4♥. Both players thought that their partner had misbid the hand and I was asked to comment. Of course they were both correct (their partner had mis-bid the hand). First of all, the opening bid. I am simply repeating myself when I say do not open 1NT with a singleton. It is a psyche and is not appreciated in this club where we have a number of beginners and people trying to improve their game. This hand should simply open with 1♦ and rebid 3♦. Apart from being totally the wrong shape, the hand is far too strong for a strong 1NT. Now what about East's bidding? You simply have to refer to the guidelines above about responding to transfers to see that this is totally incorrect. This pair are two of our leading players and really should know better than to bid like this. It sets a bad example. Quite how 2 other pairs finished in a lousy 6♥ baffles me, perhaps they have been taking lessons from our two stars here? The bidding should go 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦ - 3NT - pass; or 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3NT - pass. East has a very powerful hand but, in view of the mis-fit, should settle for 3NT.
♠ AJ6	♠ Q73	
♥ A	♥ KJ872	
♦ AQJ987	♦ 2	
♣ J92	♣ AK87	

The Power of the 4-4 fit

One of our members asked me to explain why the 4-4 fit is so desirable. He added that since 5 card majors systems are becoming ever more popular, surely that implies that the 5-3 fit is just as good? Not so. Standard American and similar systems are not designed specifically to locate 5-3 fits. If opener opens 1♥, responder will normally reply 1♠ with a 4 card suit, looking for a 4-4 ♠ fit. If opener opens a minor, then 4 card majors are subsequently bid up the line, looking for the 4-4 fit. Playing 5 card majors may take one bid longer than Acol to locate a 4-4 major fit, but it does get there. The thing about a

West

East

♠ KJ86

♥ AQ1084

♦ A9

♣ 72

♠ AQ105

♥ KJ97

♦ Q5

♣ AJ8

4-4 fit is that you can normally draw trumps in three rounds and get an extra trick with a ruff. Even on the occasions when trumps are 4-1 you can still normally get a ruff. The 4-4 fit has flexibility (you can often choose which hand to take a ruff in). With a 5-3 fit, a ruff with the 5 card suit does not give an extra trick. Look at this hand, 31 points. What contract would you prefer to be in? 3NT, 4♥, 6NT, or 6♥? Answer at the bottom of this page.

What's Your Bid?

East hand 1 from Friday

♠ J

♥ J42

♦ AK64

♣ AKJ97

Your RHO deals and opens 1♠, what is your bid? Hans held this hand and

doubled, with the intention of bidding 3♣ over West's probable 2♥ reply?

Not for the first time, I disagree with Hans on this one. As I stated last

week, I prefer a double of 1♠ to virtually guarantee 4♥'s. A 2♣ overcall is quite adequate on this hand. If you have a ♥ game, then partner will

reply 2♥ to a 2♣ overcall. I would hate to suggest ♥'s as trumps (by doubling 1♠) with such an anaemic ♥ suit. Finally, I would definitely prefer a six card ♣ suit for the double followed by a bid at the 3 level, I do not consider this hand good enough. Hans' opinion is that you may miss a ♥ game if you don't double. To each their own. I am not adverse to Moysian (4-3) fits but I do not go out of my way to reach them, and I would definitely prefer a suit better than J42.

The Power of the 4-4 fit – Answer

I guess you spotted the trap question? The answer is that 6♠ is the correct contract. A good 4-4 fit is often better than even a 5-4 fit. The reason is that you get an *extra* trick with a ruff (whichever hand you take it in). There is only a problem if you get an unlucky 4-1 or 5-0 ♠ split, but there are still good chances with the bad 4-1 split: - draw two rounds of trumps, discovering the bad break, and then play ♣A and another ♣. If the opponents do not ruff a ♥ then you are home. Ruff a ♣ and draw trumps. You make 4 trumps, one ruff, 5♥'s, one ♣ and one ♦. Total 12. Note that if you discover a 4-1 split after drawing two rounds of trumps, you cannot afford to draw another round – the ♣K may be with the outstanding trump and he will pull your remaining trumps, leaving you a trick short. With the expected 3-2 trump split there is no problem, simply draw all the trumps before going for your ruff. With a ♦ lead the play is slightly different. You then need the 3-2 trump split as you have to pitch the losing ♦ before the opponents get in with ♣K. So pull trumps and run the ♥'s, pitching the losing ♦ on the 5th ♥. Note that this is impossible if ♥'s are trumps (you have no trump left!).

Specific Types of Doubles

W	N	E	S
1♦	dbl	2♦	dbl

This double by South is **RESPONSIVE**, and asks North to pick the suit.

W	N	E	S
1♦	pass	1♠	2♣
dbl			

This double by West is a **SUPPORT DOUBLE** and shows 3 card support for partner. Many people play a penalty double here – i.e. South stole your rebid. Up to you if you play support doubles.

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	2♦	dbl

This double by South is a **COMPETITIVE DOUBLE** and asks partner to choose between the other two suits.

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	2♦	2♠
pass	pass	dbl	

This double by East is a **COOPERATIVE DOUBLE** and gives partner the choice of passing for penalties or bidding on. Since East has limited values, it cannot be strictly penalties.

W	N	E	S
1♠	pass	2♠	3♥
dbl			

This double by West is a game try, a **MAXIMAL OVERCALL DOUBLE**. There is no room left for any other game try, 3♠ would just be competitive.

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	dbl	

This double by East is **NEGATIVE**, in theory it shows the other 2 suits. In practice, it generally promises 4 cards in any unbid major(s) and may not have the other minor. See news-sheets 9 & 10.

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	pass	pass
dbl	pass	?	

If East fails to bid or double the overcall and South passes, then West should normally re-open with a double so that East can pass for penalties. Of course, if East cannot make a penalty pass, any other bid by him is weak.

The only exceptions when opener is allowed another bid but double are: -

- (1) when opener has a very shapely/weak opener and cannot stand to defend the doubled contract, in which case he either rebids his suit or bids another suit.
- (2) when opener has a very shapely very strong hand (a near 2♣ opener). A jump rebid.
- (3) a weak hand with 3 or 4 of the overcaller's suit. With length in overcaller's suit it is less likely that partner has a penalty pass and some partnerships allow opener to pass under these circumstances.

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♥	pass	2♥
pass	pass	dbl	

This double by East is penalties. Presumably he was happy to have passed a re-opening double by West. This is just an extra 2 or 3 hundred. It is a notable exception to the rule about opponents bidding and

agreeing a suit. Negative doubles really are fun. Incidentally, I had this exact sequence a few years ago playing with an excellent Australian partner (remember Carol?). She bid 3♣ over my double, contending that my double was for take-out. Absolute nonsense, if I had a hand that could bid for take out over 2♥ I certainly would not have passed over 1♥ (a negative double?). Bridge is quite often simply a matter of logic.

A double of opponents after they have found a fit is usually for take out.

A double of any bid after anyone at the table has bid no trumps naturally is usually for penalties.

W	N	E	S
1♥	pass	1NT	dbl

This is a notable exception, the double is for take out of ♥'s. But be wary, you need a good hand as partner has passed, East has shown values and West is unlimited.

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	2♠	4♠
4NT	pass	5♦	dbl

This double by South is for penalties. In reality it is unlikely that South can set 5♦. It is, in fact, a **STRIPED-TAIL APE DOUBLE**. The theory is that if you feel the opponents have a sure slam, they

may settle for a doubled game that scores less even with an overtrick. If you hear a re-double, you run like a striped-tail ape to 5♠ and opponents may double you there instead of bidding their certain slam (again good for you). Am I serious or not? Double Dutch?

4NT Quantitative

This is board 16 from Friday. Two pairs reached a very optimistic 6NT and I was asked how the hand should be bid: -

North	South	North	South	
♠ KQ32	♠ A75	1NT (1)	2♣ (2)	(1) 15-17
♥ QJ7	♥ AK85	2♠ (3)	4NT (4)	(2) Stayman
♦ K1093	♦ QJ4	pass		(3) denies 4♥'s
♣ A2	♣ Q93			(4) invitational

South knows that there are a combined 31-33 points but no fit. If North is max, then 6NT is a reasonable proposition. Even if you normally play 4NT as ace-asking it is invitational in this sequence where no trump suit has been bid (4♣ would be Gerber). With a minimum opening North should decline the invitation. I guess that Hans agrees with me on this one (we don't always disagree – it's just that when we do it is usually very interesting) as I note that they were the only pair to reach 4NT. In this example, if North had a couple more points, he would bid 5♦, just in case there is a 4-4 ♦ fit and 6♦ was a better contract than 6NT.

The 2NT Response to a suit bid.

- ♠ 52 South hand 17 from Friday. Partner opens 1♠, what do you bid? You
- ♥ A975 cannot bid 2♥ as that promises a 5 card suit, so 1NT (6-9) or 2NT(11-12)?
- ♦ AJ9 I sincerely hope that nobody out there would consider 2♣? It really is a
- ♣ J742 lousy bid but I'm sure that it would be the choice of a couple of people?
With 10 points you have to evaluate to see if it is worth 2NT or just 1NT.

Two aces are a plus feature, but with poor support for partner's suit, poor intermediates and a very bad shape after partner's 1♠, the hand is only worth 1NT. You need a *really* good 10 points for 2NT. What happened? At our table, South bid 2NT, North bid Blackwood and ended in a hopeless 6♠.

If you think that 2♣ is a reasonable bid, have a word with me and I will type up a sheet or so as to why it is so bad – no room left in this news sheet.

Last week's winners: Monday 10/3/03 Friday 14/3/03

Winners	Hans/Bob	66%	winners	Paul/Terry	61%
2 nd	Joe/Jeff	65%	2 nd	Hans/Bob	60%

Raising Partner's 1NT response.

♠ K7432 This is North hand 14 from Monday. What do you open? If you play a
 ♥ 87 strong NT this is certainly a hand where you should consider opening 1NT,
 ♦ AKQ it shows the strength and balance of the hand all in one go. I also prefer
 ♣ KJ8 1NT because you have tenaces in two suits that need protecting. If you
 open 1♠ you will have a rebid problem over 2♣/♦/♥ (the ♠ suit is too ropey to rebid
 and 2NT shows 12-14 points). If you play a weak NT there

is no problem, open 1♠ and rebid 2NT (15-16) over partner's 2♣/♦/♥. But what if partner responds 1NT (6-9) to your opening of 1♠? Regardless of if you play a strong or weak NT, you cannot now bid 2NT as you need a good 17-18 points for this bid (partner may have only 6 points). This hand is a very poor 16 points (with a bad 5 card suit and 13 points concentrated in two 3 card suits). My preference would be to pass, Hans expressed some sympathy with a 2♦ rebid (I don't like this). What actually happened? The hand rebid 2NT. This is an overbid and is likely played by the wrong hand (note what I said about tenaces). And then? 2NT was raised to 3NT (South had a decent 8 points) and this drifted two off (this happened at two tables). If North had opened 1NT then South would have raised to 2NT and this North hand should then pass (a poor 16). The moral? :-

- 1) Don't worry about weak doubletons. If 1NT describes your hand – open 1NT.
- 2) Don't worry about bad 5 card major suits. If 1NT describes your hand – open 1NT.
- 3) The sequence 1any – 1NT – 2NT promises a good 17-18 points playing a strong NT. It would be a hand that was too strong for a strong 1NT opening.
- 4) If you play a weak NT and have 15 – bad 16 points (a NT rebid) and partner replies 1NT to your opening suit bid, then pass. Bid 2NT with 16-17, 3NT with 18+.
- 5) Read up on hand evaluation. This hand is not worth 16 points unless partner supports ♠'s. It is certainly not worth 16 points in a NT contract. I have a few pages on hand evaluation, ask me if you would like a copy.

The 1NT Response

In news-sheet 18 I stated that a rebid of 1NT with a singleton in partner's suit should be avoided – and *never* with a void. A response of 1NT to partner's opening is different: - Ideally, a 1NT response is 6-9 points and denies a 4 card major that is by-passed. It would be nice to also be balanced but is not always possible and the higher the opening bid, the less balanced a 1NT reply may be. Over partner's 1♣ opening everything is easy (it is in fact possible to split the point range by utilising both 1♦ and 1NT to mean the same thing but different points). The higher the opening bid the more difficult it becomes for responder if he has insufficient values to bid at the two level (one reason why I prefer 5 card majors and a prepared 1♣ – keep the opening bid low). Just look at these two hands, partner has opened 1♠.

Hand A	Hand B	It may seem like a bit of a distortion, but there is really no alternative but to respond 1NT to partner's 1♠ opening. Not very nice, but both hands are too weak to respond at the two level (especially if you play a strong NT). Hands like this are one reason why I prefer to play 5 card majors (partner is less likely to open 1♠!). If playing a strong NT I prefer to
♠ -	♠ -	
♥ QJ107	♥ QJ10985	
♦ K10974	♦ QJ4	Incidentally, if you play 2/1 and a forcing NT play 2/1 (as I
♣ J962	♣ J932	do with Chuck) then these Hands are easy. Playing a forcing NT, the 1NT response to a major suit opening is 6-12 points, forcing, and <i>any</i> shape; two level suit responses are game forcing.

Dealer:	♠ Q984	West	North	East	South
East	♥ QJ107				
Both vul	♦ 95	-	-	2♥	2♠
	♣ AQ8	pass	3NT	pass	4♠
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ 10	N				
♥ 42	W E				
♦ AK765	S				
♣ KJ953					

You are West and lead the ♦A, partner follows with the ♦Q. What next?

Dummy is somewhat depressing, the ♣AQ sit well for declarer and he has found good 4 card trump support opposite. It looks like just three tricks (two ♦'s and hopefully the ♥A from partner (declarer can have just one ♥). Is there a chance of a 4th trick? Partner's ♦Q can be a singleton or from ♦QJ, but does continuing ♦'s do any good?

Answer overleaf.

Go For the Only Chance - Solution

Dealer:	♠ Q984	West	North	East	South
East	♥ QJ107				
Both vul	♦ 95	-	-	2♥	2♠
	♣ AQ8	pass	3NT	pass	4♠
		pass	pass	pass	

♠ 10	N	♠ K5
♥ 42	W E	♥ A98653
♦ AK765	S	♦ Q
♣ KJ953		♣ 10642
	♠ AJ7632	
	♥ K	
	♦ J10832	
	♣ 7	

West has to continue ♦'s. The only hope of setting the contract is if East can over-ruff dummy in the 3rd round of ♦'s.

If East plays a small ♦ at trick two or switches then the contract makes.

Bridge Magazines

Every now and again members give me a Bridge magazine from their home country (much appreciated Joe, John, Chuck). I mentioned to Joe a few months back that I thought the Dutch magazine to be superior to the British (he just said 'of course'). Anyway, last week John gave me the xmas 2002 copy of 'Bridge'. It contained various articles of varying quality, but the one that struck me was by Anthony Cusk about his 'Holt Weekends', in which he gives lectures.

Dealer:	♠ J10984	Table A:				
West	♥ 962					
E-W vul	♦ J	West	North	East	South	
	♣ 10632	1NT (1)	pass	3NT (2)	all pass	
♠ Q3	N	♠ AK2	Table B:			
♥ AK84	W E	♥ QJ73				
♦ Q643	S	♦ A8	West	North	East	South
♣ K84		♣ AJ95	1NT (1)	pass	4NT (3)	pass
	♠ 765		6NT	all pass		
	♥ 105					
	♦ K109752					
	♣ Q7					

- (1) 12-14
- (2) pathetic
- (3) Quantitative

The article goes on to say that it was a pair of old ladies who stopped in 3NT at table A but got a good score because the rest of the field got to 6NT (by bidding as table B) which 'unluckily?!' stands little chance. So who was correct? My only question is if the Bridge scene in UK is now run by beginners? When I lived in UK (20 years ago) most players had heard of Stayman. I would certainly fancy my chances in 6♥ on this hand. This is simply another example of the good 4-4 fit yielding an extra trick. There are a few reasonable lines of play; all succeed as you get an extra trick with a ♦ ruff.

So, a pretty silly article by somebody who wants you to spend £169 ++ for a weekend of his lectures. But it does not stop there, the very next hand: -

Contract:	♠ A763		
4♠ by S	♥ 6		
Lead: ♦K	♦ A432		
	♣ AK87		
♠ K10	N	♠ QJ5	
♥ KQ853	W E	♥ J109	
♦ KQJ10	S	♦ 9865	
♣ Q5		♣ J106	
	♠ 9842		
	♥ A742		
	♦ 7		
	♣ 9432		

The bidding was not given, how do you make the contract? Apparently if you book yourself into a Holt weekend then you will be told. This is a cross-ruff hand. Typical technique is to cash ♣AK, the two red aces, two ruffs in each red suit and hope that the final ruff holds up. If you have a clue from the bidding, then you can arrange to take the final ruff in the suit that is more likely to split 4-4. With no clue, I believe that the best line is to arrange to be in hand at trick 9 (cross to the ♥A before you ruff anything) and to try to ruff a 3rd ♥ at trick 9 (this is best as you can over-ruff West with the ♠A if he has 3 ♥'s). This line works if ♥'s are 4-4 or if West has 3 ♥'s and ♦'s are 4-4. It fails on the actual lay-out where the inferior

line of being in dummy and ruffing a 3rd ♦ works. I can only assume that west bid ♥'s at some juncture. It is silly to set problems that depend upon bidding that is not given! Incidentally, on this particular deal it is better not to cash the ♣AK at the start as you then have a back-up entry to North if the ♥'s misbehave – you may still be able to ruff a 3rd ♦ even if a ♥ is over-ruffed. I would be fascinated to see Mr. Cusk's analysis (please save the next issue John), but I would certainly not pay £169 for it. Perhaps I should look for a job as Editor of a UK magazine?



Last week's winners: Monday 17/3/03

Friday 21/3/03

winners	John/Jim	60%	winners	Ian/Peter-M	63%
2 nd	Hans/Bill	59%	2 nd	Chuck/Terry	59%

No Partner?

Now I generally try to ensure that everybody gets a game, with me sitting out if necessary. However, that is not always possible. A couple of members have been particularly rude to me recently and I have no desire to ever play with either of them again. Also, Chuck has returned and you may realise that it is not always easy to get a suitable partner for him (would you believe that more than one member has said that they will not play with him?). Anyway, I quite enjoy playing with Chuck (I can take it) and unless I see another suitable candidate, I will partner him. This may just mean that somebody does not get a game. My advice is to get to the club early if you have no partner.

What Does Partner Need?

Plan the play with this East hand.

♠ J52	Dealer:	West	North	East	South
♥ AK8	South	-	-	-	2♥
♦ AQJ3	E-W vul	pass	4♥	all pass	
♣ KQ9					

N	♠ K	West leads the ♣7 and Dummy's ♣Q is played. You take the ♣A but how do you then continue? Specifically, what card do you lead at trick 2? Answer overleaf.
W E	♥ 97	
S	♦ 764	
	♣ AJ108532	

Hand Evaluation

I have had a few requests, so I have produced a few sheets on this subject (*Appendix B*). How about this as a starter?

Hand A Hans and myself often have completely opposite bidding opinions. Consider this hand, one of us believes this to be a *very* good 23+ points and would open 2♣ followed by 2NT (showing 23-24 pts or 22-24 pts, however you play it). The other would downgrade the hand because of the relatively poor majors and bad ♠J and would open 2NT (showing 20-22 pts). A huge difference of opinion. What would you open? Who do you think would downgrade and who thinks 2♣ is fine? How well do you know me? I'll tell you who's who later.

♠ AJ
♥ A86
♦ AK94
♣ AK83

What Does Partner Need? - Solution

The opening lead could be a singleton or a doubleton, but even if it is a singleton and you give partner a ruff, the contract is not yet down.

Dealer: ♠ J52
South ♥ AK8
E-W vul ♦ AQJ3
♣ KQ9

If declarer has the ♠ A then he makes his contract (6 trumps, 2 ♦'s, ♣K and ♠ A). Thus West has to have the ♠ A to defeat the contract. East should play the ♠ K at trick 2.

♠ AQ10963	N	♠ K
♥ 43	W E	♥ 97
♦ 1082	S	♦ 764
♣ 76		♣ AJ108532
	♠ 874	
	♥ QJ10652	
	♦ K95	
	♣ 4	

If West did have a singleton ♣ then he would let the ♠ K hold the trick, ruff a ♣ and cash the ♠ A. If West does not have a singleton ♣ (as in this lay-out) then he overtakes the ♠ K, cashes the ♠ Q and gives East a ruff.

The 1NT overcall

♠ KQ102 Occasionally a few of us (Hans, Paul, myself) get together to discuss
♥ AJ8 hands etc. We were talking about an overcall of 1NT (15-18) and Hans
♦ K6 expressed the opinion that it should contain two 'stops' in the opener's suit.
♣ KJ54 I disagreed, and quoted this hand. What do you do when RHO opens 1♥.
 Hans said, well... OK, 1NT. Much to my surprise, Paul disagreed (it is usually Hans and myself in disagreement, with Paul adjudicating). Paul said that he would double (showing 4 ♠'s). I consider this to be a reasonable double but I prefer 1NT as I have too much in the opponent's suit – a double should be playable in the other three suits and implies shortage in opener's. Consider an analogous situation – you play 'Dutch/Australian Acol' – 4 card majors and a strong NT (a terrible system). Would you open 1♠ or 1NT? - 1NT obviously (I hope). If you can show your hand in one go – do so. A 1NT overcall does *not* deny a 4 card major and Stayman and transfers still apply. As with an opening 1NT, you will only miss your 4-4 major suit fit if partner is too weak to bid. Hans pointed out that you have problems if you double and partner bids 2♦ (you cannot now bid 2NT as that shows 19-20+ pts). Either bid could work out best on its day, but I prefer 1NT to double. If Hans and I actually agree on a bid, you can be sure that it has some merit.

To sum up. A 1NT overcall is 15-18 points and promises *a* stop in the enemy suit.

Hand Evaluation – The Answer

First of all, there are two common schemes for defining big balanced hands: -

School A 2NT = 20-22, 2♣ followed by 2NT = 23-24

School B 2NT = 20-21, 2♣ followed by 2NT = 22-24

Let's assume the slightly old fashioned school A.

♠ AJ So, back to hand A from the previous page. Is this worth a 2♣ (23+)
♥ A86 opener? There is absolutely no doubt in my mind, but let's look at a few
♦ AK94 possible hands for partner: -
♣ AK83

♠ 9742 You pick up this miserable collection. Partner's 2NT opening means that
♥ J2 you may get a + score (of course you pass). 2NT will make on a good day.
♦ 87 But what if partner opened 2♣ followed by 2NT(23-24) after your 2♦
♣ Q9542 response. Now you have good game prospects and should probably try Stayman and then
settle for 3NT with no fit. Fine with hand A.

♠ K74 And how about this hand? 9 points. Opposite a 2NT opener you should
♥ J74 simply raise to 3NT. If partner opens 2♣ and rebids 2NT, then you should
♦ QJ7 be looking for slam. 6♣ is an excellent contract opposite hand A.
♣ QJ54

♠ 9742 Let's be fair – the other side of the argument. This hand would pass a 2NT
♥ J2 opener but could reach a poor 3NT opposite a 2♣ opening. So in this case,
♦ Q752 a pessimistic view of hand A probably works.
♣ 542

The real question is, are you going to miss more games/slams by downgrading hand A as opposed to the occasions when you get too high with a 2♣ opener?

So, who's got it right? Am I the pessimist or the realist? Hand A is (in my opinion) a *very* sound 2♣ opener. Shame on you if you thought that it was I who would undervalue this hand! You add on a big plus for all four aces. You add on a big plus for a near quackless hand. You add on a big, big plus for *two* 4 card suits headed by the AK. Sure, a 5 card suit would be nice, but you cannot have *everything*! I can see no reason whatsoever to de-value this hand. If you do not open 2♣, you will miss games/slams. True, you may *occasionally* reach an unmakeable 3NT or 4♥, but are we men or mice? The ♠J is not a great card, but I would upgrade this hand to a 2♣ opener if it was replaced by a small x. If you are an eternal pessimist and agree with Hans (open 2NT) and do not accept my case, then you certainly need to read my booklet (*Appendix B*) on hand evaluation. Paul and Chuck totally agree with me.

Last week's winners: Monday 24/3/03

Friday 28/3/03

winner	Margit/Kaj	59%	winner	Gary/Jan (Nor)	61%
2 nd	Hans/Paul	57%	2 nd	Hans/Paul	60%

Partner has a Huge Balanced Hand

Hand A

Hand B

♠ 98632

♠ 9863

♥ 976

♥ 9764

♦ 32

♦ 32

♣ J42

♣ J43

You pick up these hands. But do not despair, in both cases partner has shown a balanced 25+ point hand. There are various possibilities for partner's bidding. Some play a 3NT opener, most open 2♣ followed by 3NT. But what do you do as responder? With hand A it is probably best to transfer, but this could work out badly; no room to find out. Hand B is worse; if partner has a 4 card major then 4 of that

suit is best; however, if you try 4♣ (Stayman) and partner replies 4♦ that is no good. So what is the solution? Basically, you have to keep the initial bidding at 2NT so that opener gets a choice (via either Stayman & transfers or Baron or Neimeijer – whatever you play over 2NT) and can still settle in 3NT with no fit. How? Answer later in this news-sheet.

Chuck takes his time - Plus one for Hans

♠ 96

As I mentioned last week, a few of us get together to discuss hands etc.

♥ 86

Last Wednesday there were 6 of us and we had a few rubbers. I held this

♦ A973

hand playing with Chuck against Hans and Paul. Chuck opened 1♠ and I

♣ AK982

had a decision. 2♣ would be game forcing in our system (2/1).

The other option was to effectively bid 2NT (via 1NT forcing). I decided that the lack of quacks, two good suits (including one 5-carder headed by AK) warranted a game forcing response. As it turned out, Chuck had a good 19 count and we ended with him declaring 6NT. When dummy appeared Chuck said what he thought (unprintable – he expected more). After an agonising few minutes he eventually made the contract on a squeeze. I simply said well played. But I obviously missed a tempo: Hans asked me why I did not ask Chuck why he took so long in a lay-down contract – refer to news sheet 16 for the subtleties of this remark. I clearly was a bit slow here.

RKCB – Asking about the trump Queen.

A hand from Friday 21st.

An interesting hand, especially in the bidding:-

North	South	West	North (Me)	East	South (Chuck)
♠ A104	♠ KQ985	-	-	2♦ (1)	pass (2)
♥ AKJ643	♥ Q5	pass	dbl (3)	pass	3♠ (4)
♦ A	♦ KQ76	pass	4NT (5)	pass	5♣ (6)
♣ AK7	♣ 65	pass	5♦ (7)	pass	5♥ (8)
		pass	6♠	all pass	

(1) weak (very!)

(2) 2♠ looks OK to me

(3) take-out

(4) I prefer 4♠

(5) RKCB (1430)

(6) Chuck plays 1430 and so this showed one key card (♠K).

(7) next suit up (skip trumps if necessary) asks for the queen of trumps.

(8) We had never discussed this, but I believe that most people play the cheapest bid denies the trump queen and any other bid acknowledges it. A bid of a suit shows that king and a return to the trump suit denies an additional king (or you can simply agree to bid the next up but one to acknowledge the queen and leave it to requester to ask for kings). Paul plays this way; unfortunately Chuck plays that a return to the trump suit denies the trump queen. We'll get it right next time (I'll play his version). With this hand Chuck should, of course, have bid 6♦ to show the trump queen and the ♦K.

Incidentally, Hans expressed an opinion that the next suit up asked for kings, with the trump queen counted as a king. This is nonsense. The trump queen has to be asked for separately. This hand is a good example of why; the ♦K was not important, all that's needed for the grand is the trump queen. 5NT is used to ask for kings and next suit up asks for the key queen (you may give additional king info in the reply if you have the queen). This hand also demonstrates the advantage of 1430. You are more likely to be looking for a grand if responder has one key card rather than zero. The 5♣ bid here gave oodles of space to ask for the trump queen. Shame we had not discussed the replies.

Just consider the same South hand but with the ♦K replaced by ♦J. Normal Blackwood is useless. RKCB enables you to locate both the ♠K and ♠Q without the useless ♦K clouding the issue.

The 2♦ Opening.

There are numerous common meanings for a 2♦ opening. What is the best use for this bid? I shall cover the most common meanings and give reasons for my preferred choice.

- 1- The weak 2♦
- 2- The strong 2♦
- 3- Flannery 2♦
- 4- The Multi 2♦
- 5- Benjamin Twos

-1- **The weak 2♦**

This is a 6 card suit and usually 6-10 points. The weak 2♦ is the most popular choice in USA for those who do not play Flannery. Nothing wrong with having a weak 2♦ opener, but does it really have much of a pre-emptive effect? I believe that there is a much better use for the bid.

Hand 1N	Hand 8W	These two hands are from Friday 21 st , in both cases you are non-vul. I held North hand 1 and was in first seat. Seems like a classic weak 2♦ opener to me (I play a weak 2♦ with Chuck – he is American), and that’s what I opened. Chuck said that he requires a much better suit in first or second seat; I still like the bid because of the solidity of the ♦ suit. What do you think? West hand 8 is also from Friday, one player opened 2♦.
♠ 1082	♠ 104	
♥ QJ9876	♥ Q5	
♦ Q3	♦ KJ109874	
♣ 32	♣ 103	

This is totally wrong. This is a superb 3♦ opening, especially non-vul.

-2- **The strong 2♦**

As used in classic Acol. There is no strict point range, but generally 15+. The important thing is that it must be a good suit (at *least* 5 card – normally 6+) and the hand must contain 8+ playing tricks (playing tricks are defined in the pages on hand evaluation).

♠ A6	This hand would qualify for a strong 2♦ opener. It is 8 ½ - 9 playing tricks. Nothing wrong with this system, but as we see later, I have a better use for the 2♦ opening and this hand can simply be opened with 1♦ (2NT would be a little too off-beat).
♥ AK6	
♦ AKJ763	
♣ 32	

-3- **Flannery 2♦**

♠ AJ76	Popular in the States. 11-15 points and specifically 4-5 in the majors. For some reason, some Americans seem to find this hand shape difficult. I simply don’t see the problem, open 1♥ and partner will bid 1♠ if there is a fit there. Agreed, a 2♦ opening is very specific and enables responder to enquire about your minor suit distribution, but this really is a waste of an otherwise very useful opening bid; read on.
♥ AK962	
♦ J7	
♣ 32	

-4- **The Multi 2♦**

Popular in Europe, not so popular in the States. There are a multitude of variants of the multi! Basically, a 2♦ opening is artificial and can mean one of (usually) three things from:

- A weak two in a major.
- A strong two in a minor.
- A strong (20+) balanced NT hand.
- A strong 4441 (any order) distribution hand.
- A strong two in a major.
- possibly some other variant.

The multi certainly is a formidable weapon. However, its use against less experienced opponents is perhaps suspect. It has been banned at some levels by some Bridge unions. Their reasoning is that a bid at the two level should be either totally weak or totally strong. Inexperienced opponents cannot cope with a mixture. I totally agree (in a competition with weaker opposition). So, let’s get onto my preferred 2♦ opening (it is always artificial and strong): -

-5- **Benjamin Twos**

Now I am one of those guys who like to have their cake and eat it (perhaps explains my weight?). I certainly like to be able to open a weak two in the majors, but I also like strong Acol type twos in the majors. Fortunately, this was all solved by Albert Benjamin. Playing Benjamin twos, the traditional 2♣ opening (23+ or a game forcing hand) is replaced by 2♦. This then leaves 2♣ free to show a strong two in either major (partner normally relays with 2♦ and you then bid 2♥/♠). Now there are numerous variants as to exactly what the 2♣ and 2♦ opening bids (and subsequent rebids) mean. I shall simply describe my preferred Benjamin variation etc.

- 2♣ Strong but not game forcing. Either 8-9 playing tricks in an unspecified suit or a balanced 23-24.
- 2♦ Game forcing. 25+ if balanced
- 2♥/♠ weak, 6 card suit, 6-10.
- 2NT 20-22 balanced.
- 3NT pre-emptive (gambling 3NT). long solid minor, nothing outside.

After a 2♣/♦ opening, I prefer an automatic relay of 2♦/♥. Rebids then mean: -

- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ 8 playing tricks – non-forcing (but rarely passed)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥/♠ 9 playing tricks – non-forcing (but very rarely passed)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣/♦ 9 playing tricks – non-forcing (generally an unbalanced hand)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT 23-24, balanced
- 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT 25+, balanced, game forcing
- 2♦ - 2♥ - any suit natural, game forcing

As I said, there are numerous variants of Benjamin twos, but I prefer this one because you never have to bid 3NT (this leaves partner the option of Stayman and transfers etc. when he is bust and you are 25+). There is a rather better/more complex variant based on this scheme which also includes 4441 type hands.

Note that a 2♦ opening is always game forcing.

Note also that an Acol two is normally forcing. Playing this version of Benjamin the sequence 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ is not forcing as a stronger opening hand would rebid at the 3 level.

Incidentally, Benjamin twos are normally associated with Acol – but there really is no dependence. You can play any variation of Benjamin twos with Standard American, 2/1 or any natural system.

Support Doubles

As far as I know, there is only one other player in the club who 'plays' support doubles.

W	N	E	S	
1♦	pass	1♠	2♥	This double by West is a SUPPORT DOUBLE and shows 3 card support for partner. Unfortunately, my partner (East, Chuck) was unable to recognise this and passed with a singleton ♥. The moral? I guess that sometimes even Americans have a bad day?
dbl				

In general, a support double only applies when you could have raised partner to the two level. However, if partner has promised a 5 card suit, then you can still (by agreement) play a support double; thus distinguishing between 3 and 4 card support. This is a support double, showing 3 card ♥ support.

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	2♥	2♠
dbl			

If responder bids a minor suit at the two level, there is little point in playing a support double because
(a) responder does not guarantee a five card suit and
(b) Who's interested in minor suit fits?

Since one of the best players (?) in the club cannot remember what a support double is, I cannot really recommend playing them unless you can remember.

The Snapdragon Double

With reference to the unfortunate (for us) hand above, Chuck muttered something about a

SNAPDRAGON DOUBLE. Now I realise that you don't really want to know what this, but just for the record it a double by the *non-opening* side in some competitive situations (it shows five cards in the unbid suit and 3 card support for overcaller). Can't see much use for it myself.

I guess that the KISS system really is best. No support doubles, snapdragons, striped-tail apes or whatever.

Double for take-out or penalties?

W	N	E	S
1♦	1NT	2♠	pass
pass	dbl		

Now it was Ian who asked me a few weeks ago to indicate which doubles are for penalties and which are for take-out (he was upset when his partner converted his take-out double into a penalty by passing). Ian is of the opinion that virtually any low-level double is for take-out. I believe that I

wrote a fair summary in new-sheet 17. Ian intended this doubles as take-out on Friday.

It is not. It is penalties. It is impossible to have a take-out double if you have bid a natural NT. And the moral here? I guess that if you specifically ask me to write up something in the news sheets – then read it?

Last week's winners: Monday 31/3/03

Friday 4/4/03

winners	Ian/Jim	63%	winners	Malgosia/Philip	71%
2 nd	Gary/Chuck	56%	2 nd	Chuck/Terry	62%

Well done Malgosia/Philip on Friday. What a score! And though I say it myself, not against poor opposition! Hans/Paul and Ian/Jim were also contending. I noticed that Malgosia carries around her copy of all the news-sheets with her, Philip has commented on how he avidly reads them and accepts friendly advice. Guess this result just goes to show!

Sorry, Anne, forgot your news-sheet last week (Anne has a copy sent to her every week) – hope everything's fine in Germany, it's hot here. Guess more than a few people enjoy my incessant chatter and occasional digs; being appreciated really does make it worthwhile.

Numbers are coming down now, but 4 ½ tables on Monday and 4 on Friday are pretty good for this time of year, especially considering the 'flu epidemic (SARS) and the war.

We (UK) were sensible enough to stay out of Vietnam, how *did* we get involved in this one? Guess Tony relied on American 'intelligence'? – sorry for the contradictory terminology. Nobody doubts that the allies are doing the right thing - do they? So, when it's over, we'll be cleaning up Zimbabwe, Burma and Tibet etc next, right? Certainly ruled by equally oppressive regimes with a better guarantee that the people will be behind an uprising. Pity that they have no oil! Do I hear some cynics? Shame on you.

Do you really think that mr bush (and America) have ulterior motives? Well, I guess that if somebody made a fool of my dad then I might be a bit peeved.... so kick their butts! What the hell, george has the biggest and best toys in the world, so let's play.

p.s. If you have something to contribute to the news sheet, then give it to me and it will be included (within reason). I would just love some American culture, some Irish baloney, some double Dutch,

These guys (Chuck, Paul, Hans) are far better bridge players than myself, so spread the word

Having mentioned these guys and bridge, let's have a contribution from them: -

West	East	Remember this combination from news-sheet 21 where I said that West should open 2♣ as otherwise the excellent 6♣ will be missed? (Hans opened 2NT). Hans came back on this one and queried how 6♣ could possibly be bid? Chuck and Paul both suggested: -
♠ AJ	♠ K74	2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 4NT - 5♣ - 6♣ .
♥ A86	♥ J74	4NT is quantitative and since West is non-min (in my/Chuck/Paul's view), he accepts (bidding a 4 card suit on the way). If you are at all in doubt as to whether West should accept a slam invitation, then consider this: - The West hand is bristling with controls and a suit contract is probably best; after East's quantitative 4NT bid there <i>must</i> be a minor suit fit (he did not use Stayman or transfer). West should most certainly be looking for a minor suit slam. Even with a totally flat hand opposite, 6♣ is cold.
♦ AK94	♦ QJ7	
♣ AK83	♣ QJ54	

Incidentally, when this hand first came up, I assumed that 2NT was 20-22 and that 2♣ followed by 2NT was 23-24. Apparently Hans bids 2♣ on 22+ points (2NT is 20-21). In news sheet 21 I stated that there was a huge difference of opinion. Apparently (if this hand is not worth 22 points!) there is a Grand Canyon.

Hans says that if the majors and minors are interchanged then the hand *is* worth 2♣.

I agree. But the hand given is also most certainly worth 2♣.

Referring back to the last news-sheet about Benjamin Acoll etc.; Hans and Chuck both prefer: -

2NT opening	= 20-21	A bit pedantic, but I'm an easy goin' guy (ho, ho), so OK.
2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT	= 22-24	(it's just that I was brought up on 2NT = 20-22). Guess I'm getting old and stuck in my ways? That's what Chuck says.

Denying a Four Card Major

- ♠ K876 -1- South hand 25 from Monday. Partner opens 1♣, what is your reply?
♥ A75 A totally flat 10 count, so 1NT? no, No, NO. Never deny a 4 card major
♦ K52 under these circumstances. Especially if you play 5 card majors, how will
♣ 1043 you ever find your glorious 4-4 fits? Refer to news-sheet 17 to refresh your
memory as to why you cannot afford to miss 4-4 major suit fits. This hand was played in NT
twice on Monday and they got what they deserved – a joint bottom. 2NT is, of course,
atrocious.
- ♠ K876 -2- This hand is different. Partner has opened 1♦, what do you respond?
♥ A7 The correct bid is 2♣, with the intention of bidding ♠'s next turn. This is
♦ 52 not denying a major (at least, only temporarily) as the 2♣ bid is forcing
♣ AKJ94 and you intend to bid ♠'s at your next turn. This recommended sequence
helps show your shape. If you bid ♠'s first and then bid ♣'s, then partner will expect 5 ♠'s
and the bidding is up a level. Paul and Chuck totally agree; Hans would bid 1♠ first, he is
most definitely in the minority.
- ♠ K876 -3- Another twist – a slightly weaker hand. Partner has again opened 1♦,
♥ 97 what do you respond? It would be nice to be able to bid 2♣ (with the
♦ 52 intention of bidding ♠'s next turn). However, this hand is not strong
♣ AJ943 enough for a two level response, so you have to settle for 1♠.
- ♠ K876 -4- And how about this variation? Partner has again opened 1♦. You have
♥ Q7 the values for a two-level response. So 2♣? Unfortunately, no. Agreed,
♦ J2 you have the values for a two level bid, unlike -3-, but you are not strong
♣ AJ943 enough to subsequently reverse into ♠'s as that would be game forcing.
You have to settle for an initial 1♠ bid and see what happens. If partner rebids 1NT (12-14)
then raise to 2NT (invitational). Not really worth 3NT.

The bottom line: - You can only 'deny' a 4 card major and bid out your shape if you
have game forcing values. At least, that's the way Paul, Chuck and myself play.

Opening 1NT and responses Hand 22 from Monday: -

West	East	This hand was brought to my attention three times on Monday. The first time I saw it West opened 1♣ and rebid 2NT after his partner's 1♠ response. Unfortunately, this sequence shows 18-19 points and it was fortunate that East did not seriously look for slam as he made just 10 tricks in 4♥. If you have a balanced hand within your 1NT opening range, then open 1NT. If you do not, you will have rebid problems (as in this case) – do not worry about a weak doubleton. Would you believe that this hand was played 4 times and it was in 3NT twice! Do 50% of the club not know about the Holy Grail, the source of life, the fountain of youth,the 4-4 major suit fit!?
♠ 42	♠ K9853	
♥ KQ93	♥ J542	
♦ AK2	♦ 9	
♣ KJ102	♣ AQ5	

Stayman after Intervention The same hand 22 as above.

So, you open the West hand 1NT (15-17); but this time there is a 2♦ overcall. This is what happened when Paul/Hans were W-E. What do you bid as East? Unfortunately you cannot now bid either Stayman or transfers. Hans (East) bid 3♦ and Paul bid 3NT. 3NT made but 4♥ is a superior contract. So what did Hans' 3♦ bid mean? It could be interpreted as asking for a ♦ stop (as Paul took it). But I believe (a rare occasion where I actually agree with Hans!) that the best use of this cue bid is Staymatic - how else would you bid a hand with one or two major suits after intervention?

Fine, but what do you do with a game-going hand with no stopper in the overcalled suit? If the cue bid is Stayman, how do you show that you have the values for 3NT but no stopper in the overcalled suit? Basically, we need a conventional bid. I will explain **Lebensohl** in a later news-sheet (this one is full up).

Now I said three times. I was asked how to bid the East hand 22 when West opens 1NT and there was no intervention. The traditional method using transfers is to transfer and then bid your 4 card suit (game forcing). This is certainly the recommended method with a 5 card major and a 4 or 5 card minor; with 5-4 (or 4-5) in the majors, most serious players these days employ Stayman (they use the transfer and bid sequences in the majors only when 5-5). So, with a game forcing 5-4 (or 4-5) in the majors opposite a 1NT opening you bid Stayman. If partner replies in a major then raise to game. What if partner replies 2♦? Normally you bid 3 of your 5 card major (game forcing) and give partner the choice between 4 of the major or 3NT. A slight improvement on this is the **Smolen** convention, whereby you bid 3 of your 4 card major, thus giving opener the same options but ensuring that the 1NT opener is declarer.

Editor's Note. Smolen has now been superseded by Quest transfers.

An Opener?

♠ K9	A 12 count and nearly flat. Do you open or pass (in 1 st or 2 nd seat)? – 3 rd seat may open light. Some will open, some not. What do the 'experts' say? Is there a simple 'rule'? (there is!). You will get the answer next week. If you have a strong opinion, then let me know and it will be included next week. You get 10 Brownie points for the correct answer.
♥ J95	
♦ A863	
♣ A1064	

Sitting under a Strong NT

Board 8 from Friday: -

Dealer:	♠ J108532	West	North	East	South
West	♥ Q4	(me)	(Hans)	(Chuck)	
	♦ 98				
	♣ 652	1NT	pass	2♦ (1)	dbl (2)
♠ Q6	N	redbl (3)	pass	pass	3♣ (4)
♥ K82	W E	dbl (5)	all pass		
♦ KJ1064	S	(1) transfer			
♣ AKJ		(2) I have a good hand with ♦'s			
	♠ A9	(3) So do I			
	♥ AJ6	(4) I have a good hand with ♣'s			
	♦ AQ7	(5) So do I			
	♣ Q10974				

This is a part-score hand, but N-S went for 300. Why? South has a good hand, but he knows that West has too. It is dangerous to enter the auction at this stage (2) sitting under a strong NT, and you really should have better ♦'s. Should North have rescued the redouble with 2♠? It would have turned out better, but I sympathise with North's pass as he had two reasonable ♦'s (texture!) and obviously expected a better 'suit' from partner, 6 tricks in ♦'s may be easier than 8 tricks in ♠'s – I (sort of) agree with Hans here! Also, he did not know if Chuck could stand the redouble and Chuck may have rescued him. What about West's final double? Normally you should keep quiet after opening 1NT when partner has not promised any values, in this case I felt that the cards were lying badly for South (I expected 4 or 5 ♦'s) and I figured the 3 level too high as I had good trumps. I was right on the second count. Three points to consider: -

- 1- The double of a cipher bid (Stayman or transfer) is usually for a lead. But be cautious. I cannot see that the South really wanted a ♦ lead on this hand. If you enter the auction here, you must have a good suit (usually the cipher suit) to play in. Q10974 is not good enough, especially at the 3 level.
- 2- Note Chuck's pass of the redouble. He did not initially expect to possibly be declarer in a ♦ game contract with ♦ 532 and a 3 count, but he is slowly learning to trust me! Of course, with an unsuitable ♦ holding, he would pull it to 2♥. No problem.
- 3- If South had not doubled, West has just two options; complete the transfer or super-accept. South's interference makes life so much easier for West, he now has two additional options (pass and re-double). So what do you do with the extra bidding room? How about: -

Re-double = I think that we can probably make 8 tricks in ♦'s, let's teach them a lesson!
 Pass = I have only two ♥'s
 2♥ = I have three ♥'s (possibly min with 4, depending upon how you play super-accepts).
 other = super accept, 4 ♥'s

The Jump Rebid in NT

You open a suit and then rebid NT at the cheapest level. This is 12-14 (playing a strong NT) and 15-16 (playing a weak NT). No problem. The jump NT rebid is even easier. It is 18-19 or 17-19 (weak NT). Let's pretend that you play a strong NT, open 1♦, and partner responds 2♣. You rebid 3NT. This shows 18-19 points (or an excellent suit). Bog standard? To me, yes. To Hans, no!

♠ Axxx Hans believes that the jump NT rebid may be made on lesser values if your
♥ Axx partner bids your shortage. I.e. you did not open 1NT because of a
♦ KQ10xx singleton, when partner bids your singleton then you jump rebid NT –
♣ K shame that you don't have the values. He quoted this hand. Obviously
 you open 1♦. Partner responds 2♣ (10 + points in his system). Clearly 3NT
is probably the best contract, so bid it?? No! This jump rebid shows 18-19 points. Hans disagrees and
asked how you bid this hand? I have no problem, I simply rebid 2♦ (too weak for a reverse), it would be
nice to have 6♦'s, but there is no other bid if you cannot reverse. Actually, you can reverse into 2♠ if you
have agreed that this does not show extra values after a two level response. I play this with Chuck, but this is
not standard. Incidentally, Hans is a great believer in rebidding NT with a singleton (or even void) in
partner's suit. I am not. Refer to news-sheet 18. This hand is an excellent example of why a two level
response should be up to strength. I believe that there is no other rebid but 2♦ (if the reverse shows extras),
but you do not expect partner to pass. I do not respond at the two level with crappy 10 counts because of
hands like this (and a multitude of other reasons). Hans and Paul do. Just a different style? I (and Chuck)
expect another bid after a two level response – even if not playing 2/1.

This hand is interesting. Obviously you would have liked to open a strong NT if you knew that partner
had ♣'s. With a singleton, you cannot. Unfortunately you cannot rebid either 2 or 3NT when partner bids
your problem suit as either will always show an incorrect point range. That is life. If you are unhappy with
it then check up on the Crowhurst convention (I don't like it – but it enables a variable range NT
response).

So, just to clarify everything. If you have a natural 1NT rebid but your partner responds at the two
level, then 2NT shows the same values (12-14 strong or 15-16 weak) – partner has forced you to the
two level and presumably has the values to anticipate a 2NT rebid. If your partner responds at the two
level and you jump rebid to 3NT then this shows 18-19 (strong NT) or 17-19 (weak NT). Paul agrees
with this, guess things are different in Holland? Certainly changed since I lived there.

♠ AK10 What prompted this debate between Hans and myself? This hand. What
♥ J74 do you open? It chose 1♦ and got a 2♣ response. The 2♣ reply has not
♦ KQ832 improved the hand, and clearly 3NT is probably the best contract. So
♣ A9 that's what this hand bid. Unfortunately, partner had a big hand and,
 assuming 18-19 points, bid 6♦. Open this hand 1NT and you have no problem. If you
 have a balanced hand within your 1NT range, then open 1NT! Think I've said that
 before!



Last week's winners:	Monday 7/4/03	Friday 11/4/03
winners	Hans/Paul 66%	winners Hans 67 IMPS
2 nd	Don(UK)/Sid 54%	2 nd Terry 56 IMPS

When Do You Open?

12 points, 13 points, 11 points? How much to add on for long suits? How much to add on for singletons and voids? It really is too much, everybody says something different; wish there was a simple rule to define an opening hand. Look no further: -

The Rule of 20 – 1st and 2nd seat openings

♠ K10 A hand from Wednesday. Do you open or pass? At the table this hand
♥ J108 passed in 3rd seat. I said that I would open the hand in any (1st, 2nd or 3rd
♦ A863 seat) position, Chuck and Paul agree. Hans said that he would only open it
♣ A1086 in 3rd seat. So who's right? What does the rule of 20 say? This rule
indicates which hands should be opened (as opposed to passed) in 1st or
2nd seat (3rd seat may open lighter). What you do is add the length of your two longest suits to your point count. If the total is 20 or more, then open. In this case; 12 pts +4 +4 = 20, so an opener. A similar (less robust) hand appeared at the end of last week, it was an opener. This particular hand may add on a plus for 3 tens, and with two in aces (in 4 card suits!) it is a clear opener. Guess they have other rules in Holland? Actually, Chuck does have a different rule. He would open last week's hand because it contains 2 ½ quick tricks (a quick trick is an ace, a king is ½ a quick trick), this is really just another way of saying that aces and kings are good cards, quacks are not. So, a good rule if you lack ten fingers and ten toes.

The Rule of 15 – 4th seat openings

So what do you do in 4th seat? Things are different here. Partner has passed, so you will not miss game if you pass dubious openers. Also, no need for light openers or pre-empts as you can simply pass out. If you have a doubtful opener, then the ♠ suit is all-important. If a part-score battle ensues then the side with ♠'s will win. This is taken into account by the rule of 15 for 4th seat openers. You add your point count to the number of ♠'s that you hold. If the total is 15 or more, then open. The previous hand qualifies for an opener in 1st – 3rd seat but not in 4th (12 pts + 2 ♠'s = 14).

What to open? – A weak NT in 3rd Seat?

The same hand as above. Obviously you open 1♣ with the intention of rebidding 1NT (12-14). Playing a weak NT you obviously open 1NT – always? That brings me to an interesting twist, I would not open this hand in 3rd seat if playing a weak NT! – especially if playing teams or for money. In 3rd seat you may open light (not 1NT), but a minimum value weak NT in 3rd seat is very dangerous – next hand may easily have a penalty double. If you wish to open this hand playing a weak NT then I guess 1♦ (with a 2♣ rebid) is best. This goes against my general advice of opening 1♣ whenever possible, but this is not a 'real' scenario as a 1NT rebid is unavailable (it shows 15-16).

Adjusting For Shape

I have frequently said that you should deduct 1pt for a totally flat (4333 type) hand. The rule of 20 just goes to prove it, a 12 count with 4333 is not an opener. 4432 is average shape. Any other shape is good.

Open 1 of a Suit or Pre-empt?

There was a hand on Monday which was opened with 3♠ - a bid which I did not like. So I wrote down a few hands for Hans, Paul and Chuck to comment. With both vulnerable, what do you open in 1st seat? :-

♠ AQ86532 All three chose 1♠ - the correct bid. The hand complies with the rule of
♥ 5 20 and is too good for a 3♠ pre-empt. So everybody in agreement so far.
♦ KJ4
♣ 64

♠ 5 And this 2nd hand? The answers were: - Chuck 4♣, Hans 3♣, Paul 1♣
♥ 53 (possibly 3♣). I totally agree with Paul on this one. I hate a pre-emptive
♦ J72 opening of 4-of- a-minor opposite a non-passed partner, especially with
♣ AKQ10865 such a good suit – you may *easily* miss 3NT. I would never open 4 or 5
a minor with a suit this good. This hand came from a book by Marty
Bergen. Marty says ‘do not open at the three level with a suit headed by
the AKQ. A solid 7 card suit is too good’. Chuck queried how ancient the book was – 1995. So a recent
book by a 10 times National American champion, how can Chuck possibly question his recommended bid of
1♣? Anyway, Paul and myself think it is close between 1♣ and 3♣, preferring 1♣. In 3rd seat, open 3♣
(partner has passed). Max Hardy quotes a virtually identical hand, - ♠ 103 ♥ 7 ♦ J82 ♣ AKQJ754, and
suggests either 1♣ or pass in 1st or 2nd seat and 3♣ in 3rd. 1♣/3♣ seems right to me, I would never pass.

♠ AKJ9753 I chose this hand because it is similar to the Monday hand. This hand is
♥ 62 from a recent Max Hardy book. Paul and Chuck both opened 3♠, Hans
♦ 7 passed. What does the book say? - 4♠ (except at unfavourable
♣ 543 vulnerability), too good for 3♠. Great offence, poor defence.

♠ AK109876 So now we come to the East hand 18 from Monday, very similar.
♥ J75 Indeed, our dynamic trio all chose the same bid as they had on the
♦ J7 previous hand. My partner chose 1♠ at the table (I much prefer it to
♣ – 3♠) but it is a bit weak in points not quite conforming to the rule of 20.
Actually, the recommended opening bid with a good suit like this is 4♠.

Hans, Paul and Chuck all disagree (with me and each other and my partner) but I have Max Hardy on my side. The problem is (as happened at our table), how do you bid the hand having opened 1♠? You cannot then convince partner that you have such a good hand without overstating the values. With an excellent offensive (and poor defensive) hand such as this, open 4♠, end of problem. If you open 3♠ then you may miss game – partner does not need much for 4♠ to make. If you chose to pass, then this would have been passed out at the table missing an easy part-score or even 4♠ making (partner had a ropey 11 count) – just goes to show the power of this hand, 20 combined points and 4♠ (luckily) made.

♠ J3 This is partner's hand (W18). Let's consider all of the opening options.
 ♥ A108 First, if partner passes, then most people would pass this hand in 3rd seat.
 ♦ 86542 4th seat would need a good hand to open (rule of 15 and he is short in
 ♣ AQ6 ♠'s), very likely to be passed out. Even if 4th seat does open, 4♠ is unlikely
 to be reached. So no good. If partner opens 1♠ then you will not reach game
 (as at our table). If partner opens 4♠ then you pass, absolutely no problem. But what if partner opens 3♠?
 Let's assume that partner has ♠KQ or ♠AQ with an honour outside. You can expect 2♦ losers (maybe
 3), 1♣ loser (maybe 2), 2♥ losers and 1♠ loser. So 6-7 losers. Partner's outside honour may cope with
 one of these and one will disappear with shortage in declarer's hand. But game is remote. Chuck seems to
 be proud of the fact that he bid 4♠ with this hand. Later, Paul and Hans both said that they would raise 3♠
 to 4♠ (how much was this influenced by the fact that they knew the hand?). Give opener a 'normal' 3♠
 pre-empt: ♠KQ108752 ♥96 ♦Q7 ♣43. Four or five losers. Would Chuck be so proud of his bid
 now? Would Hans and Paul be so quick to agree? On the actual hand, 4♠ makes because it is too good
 for a 3♠ opener – simple. Of course, ♠'s 2-2 and ♣K on-side also helped! Talk about result merchants.
 If you partner me and raise me to game on hands like this, I will go down 75% of the time – nothing to do
 with my poor declarer play, simply a lousy raise and a bad contract. Let's finish this hand off

♠ AK109876	♠ J3	with a discussion of the play. Even with this heavyweight opener, it is little better than 50% after the expected ♦ lead
♥ J75	♥ A108	– you need to bring in the ♠'s for no loser.
♦ J7	♦ 86542	Best to play for 2-2 (or singleton ♠Q). Just goes to show
♣ 3	♣ AQ6	what a poor raise to 4♠ this East hand is. Anyway, fortune smiles on you when you get the ♥K lead, obviously you

take this and then? At one table, declarer crossed to the ♠A and immediately tried the ♣finesse – it
 worked, he then pitched a ♦ on the ♣A; making +1 when the ♠'s split 2-2. This is not the best play as it
 risks going down unnecessarily if trumps split. The best line is to test trumps first; lead ♠J from table.
 Finesse or not? You cannot afford to lose the lead. If it is not covered, then rise with the ♠A. ♠K next and
 if they do not split then fall back on the ♣finesse. When trumps do split, do not risk the ♣finesse but
 simply concede 3 red suit losers (you can mess about a little, there is a very vague hope that you may be
 able to pitch a loser without resorting to the ♣finesse).

Raising Partner's Pre-empt?

- ♠ - There is just one thing in favour of raising to 4♠ on the previous East hand
- ♥ KQ105 – Chuck's point that it has two controls – you may just be lucky enough to
- ♦ KQ732 get all you losers away before the defence get going. What about this
- ♣ KQ85 hand? Again partner has opened 3♠. So 3NT or 4♠? You should pass!
Neither game contract will make.

NT rebids after a Two-level Response.

Let's suppose that we are playing a strong NT and the bidding starts 1♦ - 2♣. I stated last week that a 2NT rebid is 12-14 and 3NT is 18-19. Hans seems to have a very big problem with this and is trying to persuade Chuck and Paul that the 3NT rebid may be on lesser values with a shortage in partner's suit. He is, of course, absolutely correct – *your partnership* may define this jump to be whatever you choose. But a balanced 18-19 is standard. Let's quote a Mike Lawrence bidding book, *specifically* after this 1♦ - 2♣ sequence: -

2NT: 'this shows 12-14' (page 82)

3NT: 'Since opener would have opened 1NT with 15-17 points, his 1♦ bid denies a balanced hand in this range. Opener's 3NT bid has to show a range of some sort and the only one left is 18-19' (page 92).

So, after a 2-level response, a NT rebid shows the same hand as it would have over a 1 level response, but you simply make the bid one level higher. So how do you bid a 16 point hand with a singleton ♣? Easy, rebid 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠, depending upon your hand. What you do *not* do is lie both about the distribution *and* strength of the hand by rebidding 3NT. 3NT is *not* fast arrival or shut out (as Chuck says). It is *not* a 16 count with a singleton (as Hans says). It *is* a balanced 18-19 (as Paul and myself say). *This is standard*. If they play it differently in Holland I would be fascinated to read about it! Chuck, of course, is simply confused? Even if you are in a game forcing 2/1 situation then the 3NT rebid is still 18-19:

' This jump promises a balanced hand too good for a 1NT opening' – Better Bidding with Bergen.

' This shows a balanced hand with 18-19 points, one that would have jumped to 2NT if the response had been at the one level' – 2/1 quiz book – Max Hardy.

' Note that NT rebids do not reflect the principle of fast arrival' – 2/1 by Steve Bruno & Max Hardy.

Of course, you may play this 3NT rebid however you wish, ranging from an unbalanced 15 count to a balanced 19 count, shut-out or encouraging, but 18-19 balanced is the standard approach. That's what all the books say. What is the root cause of the disagreement between Hans and myself? Hans will freely rebid NT with a singleton (or void) in partner's suit – I will not. The *only* case where I have to resort to this is a 1444 hand (singleton ♠); i.e 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT. Hans' style has two major drawbacks – (1) his NT rebids are often not balanced and (2) they are often out-of-range.

Respond to Partner's Opening if Possible.

If you have 6 or more points and your partner opens a suit at the 1 level, then you should respond. As I stated in news-sheet 20, a 1NT response (6-9) may have to be a bit distorted in shape if opener's bid is a major. These two hands come from Friday.

West6	South19
♠ 3	♠ 85
♥ 109872	♥ 98432
♦ AK985	♦ AJ107
♣ 74	♣ Q6

In both cases, partner opened 1♠. You have insufficient values for a two level bid, so you have to fall back on 1NT. However, what actually happened with both hands was that RHO overcalled 2♣. What luck! Normally an overcall makes life difficult, playing negative doubles it often makes it easier. Simply double 2♣ (negative). This guarantees 4♥'s (could be 5 with a weak hand – as in these cases).

Some play that it also shows ♦'s. Either way, the negative double makes life easy with these hands. What actually happened? Both these hands passed. With 7 points, you really should say something, and negative doubles enable you to do this perfectly. Guess that these two guys do not play negative doubles the normal way? Incidentally, playing negative doubles, if you pass and then bid 2♥ over partner's 'likely' re-opening double then this shows 5♥'s but less than 6 points – i.e. insufficient values for an initial negative double. Of course, every partnership plays negative doubles differently; I am just stating what is standard. It's best to play standard with an unfamiliar partner?

Leading Against NT

I encountered a couple of really poor opening leads last Monday, so a few tips: -

AKxxx Lead 4th best. Especially if you have no other possible entry. Do not lead the ace to 'have a look at dummy'. This hand led the ace against us in 2NT redoubled – the only lead to let the contract make. His partner obtained the lead 3 times subsequently but there was no way for this hand to regain the lead as his partner had just two of this suit. Once the ace was led, it was too late. It did not matter if he continued with the king or not. If partner has xx, you have turned 4 tricks into 2. If partner has Qx, you have turned 5 tricks into 2. Simply banging out aces and kings is losing Bridge. Set things up, especially against NT (in a suit contract, of course, lead the ace from this holding).

J109x Lead the jack. Do not lead 4th best when you have a sequence or near sequence.

J108x Leading x from J109x gave declarer a trick with the 8 on Monday.

Now what do you lead if partner has bid a suit. Usually his suit – but which card? There are a few players in the club who say to always lead your highest card – this is incorrect.

Kxx, Kxxx etc Lead the smallest x. You will be donating a trick to a declarer with Qxx if you lead the K.

Axx, Qxx, Jxx etc Lead small from an honour, so the smallest x again. If you have no outside entry, then J from Jxx is OK.

Ax, Kx, Qx, Jx, Top from a doubleton. Otherwise you may block the suit and a lone honour will not. Usually trap declarer's honour.

And if partner has not bid? – often 4th best from longest and strongest: -

KQ432 Lead the three.

KQ1032 Lead the K, top from a sequence or near sequence.

Last week's winners: Monday 14/4/03

Friday 18/4/03

winners	Paul/Chuck	69%	cancelled due to water (Soncran).
2 nd	Rolf/Knut	54%	

No Friday session, but there were a few fairly interesting hands on Monday. Not really that interesting, but they caused some loud discussions.

As many of you may know, I consider my bidding to be flexible (I can cope with most systems) and above average, but my declarer play has a lot to be desired. Not usually a problem as I am adequate and my bidding often ensures that I reach a sensible contract that I am capable of making. Quite often, a 'superior' player will confront me on a bidding sequence – if they are not too polite about it, they get back what they have asked for, often in writing. Sometimes someone will comment on my poor declarer play, I am always willing to learn and gladly accept helpful/friendly advice when I have made a mistake, as I am sure everybody at the club is. Occasionally someone will sometimes utter a load of nonsense. I do not usually analyse the play, but my answer to the garbage directed at me last week is returned in this issue. Let's get the ball rolling with my usual comments on bidding, the discussion of these two hands could have been heard in Bangkok: -

The Take-out double of RHO's 1NT response

♠ A1087 In new-sheet 19 I stated that a double in a sequence like 1♥ - pass - 1NT -
♥ 8 dbl is for take-out of the opening suit but that you need a good hand as
♦ AJ97 LHO is unlimited and RHO has advertised (balanced) values. You are
♣ AKJ6 sticking your neck out. This is South hand 16. This hand is good enough
to compete and is a perfect example of a double in this sequence. As I
said, you really do need a good hand to double in this position, an ideal hand occurs once in a blue moon. Unfortunately, this hand bid 2♥! I am speechless (actually, I was the opposite). My limited vocabulary could not find enough words to describe the bid. This must be an undefined bid in this sequence; whatever it is meant to mean, this hand cannot qualify. The only sensible meaning that I can think of for the bid is Michaels – a two suited hand with ♠'s and a minor; or perhaps the more sophisticated version (Ghestem) – here specifically showing 5-5 in ♠'s and ♣'s. Of course, there was nothing sophisticated about this particular bid and the pair eventually wound up in 3NT doubled, 3 off. Got what they deserved?

Incidentally, if you do play Michaels cue bids (or Ghestem) then it is worth checking with your partner that they are still on in this sequence – makes sense to me.

The Take-out double

♠ 1096 South hand 17. RHO opens 1♣, what is your bid? Please check back to
♥ AQ64 new-sheet 18 if you think that this hand warrants a take-out double. 50
♦ AQ10 years ago, some people played that you double with any opening hand.
♣ J92 Only rank beginners do that these days. The only sensible bid is pass,
especially if your partner is one of the best visitors to our club and certainly knows all about
balancing. The holder made an appalling take-out double.

Hand Evaluation / Phantom Squeeze / Talking Garbage Board 22 from Monday

Dealer:	♠ J8643		West	North	East	South
East	♥ 762					
Both vul	♦ 73		-	-	pass	pass
	♣ KJ6		1♦	pass	1♥	pass
			1NT (1)	pass	2NT (2)	pass
♠ 972	N	♠ KQ	3NT	all pass		
♥ AQ5	W	E ♥ K983				
♦ AJ86	S	♦ Q542	(1) 12-14			
♣ A82		♣ 1075	(2) I cannot find the correct adjective for this bid			

♠ A105
♥ J104
♦ K109
♣ Q943

What a terrible contract! At the other tables West opened a strong NT and the poor game was also reached. Here, West correctly downgraded the flat hand with no intermediates to a 14 point hand. Shame that East totally over-valued his hand. After the ♠ 4 lead the contract is hopeless.

♠ J86
♥ -
♦ -
♣ KJ

A kibitzer suggested that the contract can be made. After winning the 2nd ♠, run the ♥'s (luckily they are 3-3) and then lead ♦Q to the ♦K and ♦A. Finally the ♦J and then the 6♦ to the ♦10 leaves North to find a discard in this position, with West needing two tricks. North is pseudo squeezed.

♠ - N ♠ -
♥ - W E ♥ -
♦ 86 S ♦ 54
♣ A82 ♣ 1075
♠ 5
♥ -
♦ 10
♣ Q94

With the auction given, West cannot possibly have ♣Q and ♣A, so the ♣J discard is easy. Actually, even if West had opened a strong NT (thus having room for both ♣Q and ♣A), then North should still pitch the ♣, the ♣Q is irrelevant. West has ♣A and has set up a winning ♦ - North should simply hold onto his good ♠'s. He knows partner is winning this 3rd ♦ trick and will return a ♠. But how does North know that South and not West has the last ♠? Really! If West had it then the ♠ would have been led at this

trick to end play North and, with 4 ♠'s, West probably would have bid them? Just one more point, if West had ♣Q and ♣A then he may well have tried a finesse earlier. There is absolutely no % in hanging onto the ♣J. QED.

As I said, what a silly contract. The suggested play is to find the ♦K onside, the ♥'s 3-3 and hope that North makes a discard mistake with a non-existent squeeze. I believe that my line of playing North for ♦K doubleton or singleton and hoping that the ♠'s are 4-4 or blocked and the ♥'s 3-3 is just as good. Both are pretty hopeless in this miserable contract. I guess Chuck is right, you should not talk so much if you don't know what you're talking about. But really, I prefer to simply bid correctly and get into contracts that stand a chance of making. Mind you, if everybody was sensible then I could not be so sarcastic and the news-sheets would not be such fun to read.

So who was this kibitzer who criticised me just because 3NT made against him at his table? Why, the very same individual who made a take-out double with a totally flat 13 count (South 17), who bid 2♥ instead of doubling with South 16 and who invited game with a poor 10 count opposite a 12-14 NT bid. What would Chuck say about somebody who bids, plays and talks like this? I really need to start giving lessons again. Just joking really – the culprit was Chuck!

Incidentally, this hand is just another example of why 4333 hands should be downgraded. A total of 25 high card points but 3NT is hopeless. If you re-read my paper on hand evaluation then you will realize that this opening hand must devalue because of the totally flat shape and lack of intermediates. Also, responder's KQ doubleton in a suit that opener has denied is certainly not worth 5 points (look at the play!).

'One advantage of bad bidding is that you get practice at playing atrocious contracts'

- Alfred Sheinwold.

Stayman/Transfer Sequences

I had an interesting bidding dilemma when partnering Paul on Wednesday, I opened a strong NT and the uninterrupted sequence (actually the 2♣ bid was doubled, but that is largely irrelevant) was: -

So which of these hand types does partner (responder) have?

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♦ - ? Weak (C), Invitational (D) or strong (E)? Is 3♦ forcing?

Hand C

Hand D

Hand E

♠ 63

♠ 63

♠ K7

♥ 10964

♥ K963

♥ A963

♦ AJ9763

♦ AJ9763

♦ AK9763

♣ 5

♣ 5

♣ 5

First of all, let's look at hand type E, game forcing with slam potential. The best way to bid this is to transfer to ♦'s (we play 4 way transfers – I think) and then bid 3♥, game forcing. So partner is weak (C) or invitational (D). Now either is possible, but with an invitational hand (like Hand D) it

may well be best to simply bid 3NT at the second turn as you will already be at the 3 level. Thus I deduced (it took me a while - we had no prior understanding) that partner had a weak hand, 4-6 in the red suits (as type C).

And so it was. I think that this is probably the best way to play this sequence, but if you play SID (Stayman in Doubt) then you simply have to transfer to ♦'s with the weak hand C and forget about a possible 4-4 ♥ fit (there is no game).

So, Paul intended this sequence as weak. Hans considered it forcing. Since these two guys are a fairly regular partnership this is something that needs to be discussed? You can play it however you like, as long as you are both on the same wavelength!

Which Suit to Develop?

North

South

North

South

♠ K92

♠ A75

-

1♣

(1) 12-14

♥ 863

♥ AKQ

1♦

1NT (1)

♦ AKJ84

♦ 63

3NT

pass

♣ Q9

♣ J10543

West leads the ♥J. How do you play the hand (which suit do you tackle)? Answer next week.

Last week's winners: Monday 21/4/03

Friday 25/4/03

winners Hans/Paul 60%
2nd Philip/Terry 58%

Hans/Paul 53 VP
Ian/Jan(Nor) 48 VP

Well, that's all over for another 51 weeks. I managed to hardly get wet at all – simple, simply get a crate of beer and stay at home typing up bridge things.

Chuck was conspicuous by his absences last week, guess he had a visa run or wanted to stay dry. I received a few comments about last week's sheet. Everybody agreed with my analysis and opinions.

Which Suit to Develop – The Answer to last week's problem

West leads the ♥J.

If South plays on ♦'s first then he obviously takes the finesse. If the ♦Q is offside then that's bad. If the ♦'s are then 4-2 then South is one down, that's very bad.

An unlucky lie of the cards?

No.

Dealer:	♠ K92	West	North	East	South
South	♥ 863	-	-	-	1♣
Both vul	♦ AKJ84	pass	1♦	pass	1NT
	♣ Q9	pass	3NT		
♠ 643	N	♠ QJ108			
♥ J10942	W E	♥ 75			
♦ 72	S	♦ Q1095			
♣ 65		♣ AK7			
	♠ A75				
	♥ AKQ				
	♦ 63				
	♣ J10543				

There is another suit - ♣'s - that can provide more than enough tricks. The development of a long is nearly always better than taking a finesse. Attacking ♣'s gives South 10 tricks – 2 ♠'s, 3 ♥'s, 2 ♦'s and 3 ♣'s.

Hand Evaluation – A (Strong) 1NT opener?

Hand A	Hand B	Remember Hand A from last week? I opened the hand 1♦ and rebid 1NT (showing 12-14 points – all it's worth).
♠ 972	♠ A72	Anyway, at our regular Wednesday meet, Hans, Paul and myself discussed the hand. Paul is adamant that it is 15
♥ AQ5	♥ A95	points and should open 1NT (I'll have to lend Paul a book on hand evaluation). Much to my surprise, Hans was totally
♦ AJ86	♦ A862	on my side (and even more so!). Hans quoted Hand B and
♣ A82	♣ A82	said that he would not open a strong NT. I am a great advocate of adjusting for shape, intermediates etc, but this (adjusting by 2 points) may be going a little too far? If you open 1♦ then partner will never place you with this shape and 16 points. I'm not sure what Hans' point was; maybe that a 4 ace hand is better suited to a trump contract? Probably true, but I cannot see how to continue the bidding if you do not open 1NT, the hand is too good for a 1NT (12-14) rebid.

Extended Stayman?

While discussing the previous hand, the sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - ? was mentioned. A few years back this was often Extended Stayman, asking for a 3 card major (responder is presumably 5-5 in the majors). Nobody plays this these days. It's been overtaken by developments in transfers and improved Stayman sequences. So this sequence would now normally show a weak hand with 6 ♣'s and a 4 card major (if you agree to play it that way!).

The Simple Overcall!

Yet another disagreement between Hans, Paul and myself on Wednesday.

Hand F	I held this hand and my RHO (Hans) opened 1♣. I overcalled 1♥.
♠ J32	Subsequently I was propelled into 4♥ by my partner who apparently expected more for a 1 level overcall.
♥ K9743	Now I agree that the hand is no thing of beauty, but I maintain that it is worth a 1 level overcall. Paul thinks it's reasonable, Hans disagrees (he would pass). Hans expressed the opinion that, as we play weak jump overcalls, a simple overcall guarantees 11+ points. Now I am getting used to
♦ 943	Hans, and so I was not speechless this time! However, I still never know if he is joking or not, but I believe that he is serious here. Jump overcalls are 6 card suits. You can play them as weak, intermediate or strong, however you wish; but they do not affect your simple overcalls (except that a simple overcall denies whatever you need for a jump overcall). So, playing weak jump overcalls does not preclude a normal 1 level overcall of 8-10 points on a 5 card suit that would jump overcall if the suit was 6 cards. Hans disagrees, I see absolutely no logic in what he says and it is certainly a concept that I have never encountered before. So, let's consult the library!
♣ A2	

Hand G	Hand H	Just for the record, all of these guys play weak jump overcalls (although I think it is irrelevant).
♠ 94	♠ KQJ93	Hand G overcalled a 1♣ opening with 1♠ – Better Bidding with Bergen, vol 2 page 12. Hand H is from 'Standard Bridge Bidding for the 21 st Century' by Max Hardy – he recommends a 1♠ overcall over any opening bid.
♥ KJ875	♥ 85	
♦ A1063	♦ 1096	
♣ 52	♣ 764	

Hand J	Hand K	Hans countered that I only read American books and that things are different in the real world. Good point! Now I would fully agree that Americans often have a limited approach to many things, but their Bridge theory is as good as anyone's. Anyway, point taken; but I do read other material. Hans can not pull the wool over my eyes by saying that they play things differently in Holland – I happen to be fairly adequate at Dutch! So let's look at a Dutch magazine. Hand J is van de Nederlands Maandblad Juli 2002, page 29, it overcalled a 1♣ opening with 1♠. Hand K is from an acknowledged Dutch expert, Bieden Met Berry, page 18, – 1♥, het absolute minimum voor een volgbod op éénniveau.
♠ Q9754	♠ 92	
♥ K76	♥ AK1093	
♦ K95	♦ 872	
♣ 74	♣ 943	

I checked with Hans and Paul on Friday, asking them if they would overcall on hands F-J. Hans said he would pass with all 4 hands (so he was not joking), Paul would overcall on all but Hand J (the Dutch overcalling hand). I agree 100% with Paul. Hand J is not as good as Hand F and is probably not really worth an overcall (so they do play things differently in Holland?) – Hand F has a better trump suit and an outside ace. Note hand H, a far cry from Hans' 11 point criteria; Paul and myself go along with Max Hardy, Berry Westra and Marty Bergen – points smoints. If you have a reasonable 5 card suit – then bid it, especially at the one level. As Berry says, a very good seven points is 'the absolute minimum for a 1 level overcall'. Eight points is fine. But be aware, you should have a reasonable suit – say 3 points or Q109xx. Quite often a hand is suitable for an overcall but unsuitable for an opening bid, and vica-versa. You certainly do not need 11 points for an overcall and you do not need a 5 card suit for an opening bid.



Last week's winners: Monday 28/4/03

Friday 2/5/03

= winners	Hans/Paul	58 %	1st	Paul/Chuck	59 VP
= winners	Bjorn/Nils	58 %	2 nd	Bill/Terry	54 VP

Numbers are going down now. Paul and Philip have both gone back so it's virtually down to the residents. Still, considering the season and the travel (SARS) problems, two tables at Amari and 4 on Mondays is still pretty good. Who knows – it may not be george that causes the end of the world, but a variety of the common cold?

A take-out double? Board 13 from Friday 25th

♠ AQ103 Your RHO opponent opens 1♣, what is your bid? Do you double? That's
♥ K8 what one player with this hand did. The end result was that the opponents
♦ Q10963 ended up in 4♥ doubled by your partner, making! So a disaster, what was
♣ Q6 the root cause? If you chose to double with this hand, then check back to
 news-sheet 18. This hand is not a doubling hand. The ♥ holding is
nowhere near good enough. Partner is entitled to expect 4♥'s or a very good 3 card suit.
Simply overcall 1♦. This overcall does *not* deny 4♠'s, but simply denies holding both majors.

Incidentally, what would you do if RHO's opening bid was 1♥? Not enough for 1NT. Some would choose a double, it would normally work out OK but not if partner bids 2♣. Actually, there are three reasonable alternatives: - pass, 1♠ or 2♦. I think nothing is perfect and would not argue too much if my partner chose any one of these four bids (I'm very easy going). I may come back to this hand if I have some helpful input from Hans, Chuck or anybody else who has a strong opinion.

Which Bidding System?

Are you sure that you are playing the bidding system that is best suited to your style? I have observed various individuals and pairs over the last few years and I am convinced that some of them are simply playing the wrong system!

Some die-hards will never change. Hans plays SAYC or Dutch Acol (always a strong NT), Chuck plays 2/1 or SAYC, John plays Acol (weak NT). Full Stop! It would need to start snowing in Pattaya before any of them considered playing another system. Others are far more flexible and forward going. Martin and Rosemary have experimented with just about every possibility of 4/5 card majors and weak/strong NT. I have far more respect for people who are prepared to experiment than those who simply say that their system is best (usually because they have played no other).

Anyway, are you sure that the system that you play is best suited to your style? Before you read on, consider these hands. Your partner has opened 1♠, what is your reply?

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Make a note of what your reply on each of these hands is. If your answer disagrees with mine for your particular system, then you are probably playing a system that is unsuitable for your style. The answers for both a weak and strong NT system are given later in this news sheet.
♠ 94	♠ K7	♠ A7	
♥ 95	♥ Q97	♥ Q94	
♦ A104	♦ 9864	♦ Q86	
♣ KJ9542	♣ KQ95	♣ K9752	

In this news sheet I will be concentrating on the difference between a weak NT system and the strong NT. In subsequent instalments I will cover: -

- 4 card majors or 5 card majors?
- When do you open a 4 card major when playing Acol?
- 2/1 or SAYC?
- Better minor or short/prepared ♣?

Strong NT vs Weak NT

A couple of weeks back, one of our distinguished members (Chuck) could have been heard wandering around the club muttering ‘why on earth would anybody want to play a weak NT?’ Now this guy probably has no idea what he was talking about – having never played a weak NT in his life? So let’s hear it from somebody who certainly does know what he is talking about, and who is equally at home playing either a Strong NT or a Weak NT – me!

An opening 1NT bid should be balanced (as should a NT rebid). No singleton or void. A Strong NT is 15-17 pts, a Weak NT is 12-14 pts. Which system is the best? If there was a simple answer to this, then everybody would play the same system. I (along with the rest of the enlightened world who have had experience in both systems) believe that there is not much in it, but we all have our own personal favourite – I will reveal mine at the end of this news-sheet.

What is the Weak NT?

Before we enter into the discussion of a Strong or Weak NT, I would like to clarify exactly what is meant by playing a Weak NT. A Weak NT is an *opening* bid with a balanced 12-14 pts. Playing a Weak NT, a 1NT overcall of an opponent’s 1 of a suit is still 15-18 etc (less in the balancing seat). The 1NT overcall is totally independent of whether you play a Strong or Weak opening 1NT. Now I mention this because a few people at our club were unfamiliar with the Weak NT and thought that it also applied to a 1NT overcall. Also, a few less experienced players have overcalled 1NT on balanced 12-14 counts – this is totally incorrect (you need 15-18); and if you do so, then you deserve the resulting 800 penalty.

Anyway, the point I am making is that the 1NT overcall has nothing to do with the strength of your 1NT opening. I repeat, a 1NT overcall is always 15-18 in the direct seat. Don (UK) please note. Incidentally, common practice is that if your side opens 1NT (either Strong or Weak), if the next hand overcalls then Stayman and transfers are all off. I like to play Lebensohl in this situation but it depends upon exactly what the overcall was and means (there are a lot of artificial overcalls). You need to discuss this with your partner. I have produced a separate leaflet on Lebensohl.

Strong or Weak NT ?

First of all, I would like to clear up a misnomer, a weak NT is not weak! It is simply weaker than a strong NT. If I was dealt 'weak' hands of 12-14 pts all the time, I would take up rubber bridge professionally. However, for clarity, I will continue to call it a weak NT.

Most bidding systems are based on the NT structure, typically –

	Strong NT	Weak NT
Opening bid	15-17	12-14
Rebid	12-14	15-16
Jump rebid	18-19	17-18 (19)

Now both systems have their advantages and disadvantages: -

With a weak NT, you have a good semi pre-emptive bid, it comes up more often and the structure is more orderly and precise. The side that gets in 1NT first often has an advantage. However, you do sometimes go for 800 and even 2 down undoubled when vulnerable is a bottom! Inverted minors and Walsh work much better with a weak NT (opener is far more likely to have a strong hand, 15+).

But playing a strong NT also has its advantages. You are less likely to be doubled for penalties when playing a strong NT and people interfere with your strong NT opening at their peril! Super-accepting (of transfers) is much safer playing a strong NT.

Now any time that you open 1NT with a 4 card major you run the risk of missing a 4-4 fit there is partner cannot respond. This happens more often with the weak NT as a weak NT opening comes up more often and partner needs more to respond.

So which system is best? A close call. I quite like a weak NT, but the strong NT works equally well and we must also consider that the majority of players worldwide prefer a strong NT.

When you add up all of the above pros and cons (the points that are usually discussed) there is not much in it. Basically a weak NT is good if you don't go down for a bad score. But, as far as I am concerned, the most important factor is usually not even addressed or even recognised – I have never seen this extremely important point discussed when considering the two systems: -

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	
♠ 94	♠ K7	♠ A7	Suppose that you are playing a strong NT and partner opens 1♠. What is your bid?
♥ 95	♥ Q97	♥ Q94	Clearly you would like to bid 2♣, the most
♦ A104	♦ 9864	♦ Q86	descriptive bid, with all 3 hands. But you
♣ KJ9542	♣ KQ95	♣ K9752	cannot (should not!).

Hand A is far too weak, a 2 level response promises 11+ pts. Bid 1NT.

And Hand B? close to a two level (2♣) response, but what when partner rebids 2NT? Usually it's OK, but you could well go down if partner is minimum. I have mentioned this over and over again in these news-sheets; playing a strong NT, a two level new suit response should be up to strength (11+ points). So, playing a strong NT, Hand B should reply 1NT (although I am sure that Hans and Paul would disagree – they bid at the two level when Chuck and myself would not even consider it). Anyway, take it from me (and Chuck) and the experts, playing a strong NT you need a decent 11 points to reply with a new suit at the two level. My personal approach when playing a system like this (Standard American) is that I will only introduce a new suit at the two level if I am prepared to bid again opposite a 2NT rebid.

And hand C? Enough values for a 2♣ response, but what when partner rebids 2NT (12-14)? You have no idea whether to bid game or not. With these 11 point hands, you have to leave the decision up to opener if he is 12-14. The solution? With Hand C, reply 2NT when playing a strong NT system.

So, all of these hand types are not ideal when playing a strong NT as you cannot bid 2♣. But what if you are playing a weak NT? Absolutely no problem at all! You simply reply 2♣ on all of these hands! Playing a strong NT you cannot because a 2NT rebid (12-14) from partner will embarrass you; playing a weak NT this is no problem, it is 15-16. When playing a weak NT, you only need 8+ points (many

players prefer 9+) to introduce a new suit at the two level.

The bottom line? If you listen to the usual arguments about strong/weak no-trumps, there is nothing in it. I believe that the weak NT is superior because you can bid at the two level much more freely. If you answered 2♣ for any of these hands and play SAYC – then why are you playing a strong NT system? Have you considered changing to a weak NT? If you prefer to bid a new suit at the 2 level with 9 or 10 points, then seriously consider changing to a weak NT – it really is a far better system for you.

Now those of you who know me will also know that my favourite system is 2/1 – which includes a strong NT! How is that? As I said, I believe the weak NT to be superior because the two level responses to a suit opening are more flexible. However, the 2/1 system has overcome this by means of the forcing NT. Bidding to the correct game (and slam) is so much easier playing 2/1.

So, my favourite system is 2/1. If my partner does not play 2/1 then I prefer to play a weak NT. I do not really like Standard American (SAYC) – I believe that if you play a strong NT, then play 2/1! Of course things are different in America – they have no idea about the advantages of a weak NT and everybody plays the strong NT (either SAYC or 2/1). And what about people just starting the game and average club players? Obviously if you live in the USA then you have to play a strong NT, but playing a weak NT really is much easier as two level responses can be made on less values (i.e. hands A,B,C)

And what about 4 or 5 card majors? Now here I really do have a strong preference. I'll cover this in a later news-sheet. Editor's note – No. 74.



Last week's winners:

Monday 5/5/03

Friday 9/5/03

1st Don (UK)/Sid 63 %
2nd Chuck/Gerry 57 %

1st Hans/Jan (Nor) 63 VP
2nd Per/Tomas = Ian/Bill 45 VP

Congratulations Don and Sid, a fine result. Could it be that the weak NT really is a viable system?

Chuck seems upset about my continual US and bush bashing, asking why I don't include the Brits.

Now I consider myself to be fair. I have the advantage over Chuck as he is a visitor and I have a computer, printer etc. I am, however, always willing to type up any contributions from anybody. Back in news-sheet 25 I stated that America was not playing cricket when it declared war on a small nation that had been under sanctions for a decade and had destroyed its missiles. Chuck gave me this reply, where 'you' is Chuck referring to me: -

'You have outdone yourself with stupidity. You have no proof that Iraq destroyed anything. And why don't you include the Brits? The inner fear since 1776?'

My response: - Iraq not destroying anything does not even warrant a reply, guess they don't show BBC in America? The answer as to why I don't include the Brits is that the vast majority of Americans were for the war, the vast majority of Brits were not. It has been very clear that Tony Blair went against public opinion (both UK and worldwide) in siding with the USA. I have no problem with anybody saying whatever they like about Tony. As to who's stupid (me, Chuck, bush), I will leave that up to you. This final point about 1776; seems a long while ago to me. So let's look at more recent events, America's non-action in 1939-41, Vietnam, agent orange, Bay of Pigs etc etc.... Best not to get me going here, but as they say in America, Chuck opened the door. Mind you, UK's record is not that much better; Northern Ireland, Palestine/Israel... Nuff said, it's all over now, ancient history. **I suggest we leave it there.** We have far more important matters to discuss than the relative glories of America and the UK and their contribution to mankind, onto bridge: -

Welcome back Gerry! Gerry is a part-time Bridge teacher from England. He normally plays Acol with a weak NT but is fairly flexible. He partnered Chuck on Monday – first time they had met. They played Standard American – certainly the table for me to kibitz!

How about another quote from Chuck (about me): - 'For a man who is always speechless you sure talk a lot to create controversy'. Agreed. But then I have a number of overseas readers and I have to keep them interested. They enjoy a bit of friendly bantering; it *is* friendly, isn't it? Would you rather read the Financial Times or the Sun? (the Sun is a UK gossip paper). Long time since I've been in the UK, do they still have page 3?

One final Chuck quote: - 'The better we feel about ourselves, the fewer times we have to knock somebody else down to feel tall – Odetta'. Seems fitting, I'll have to remember that one the next time somebody says anything at the table. Now who is it who keeps on commenting? Yes, I know, me but who else ...?

I Stand Corrected

Chuck seems to have got 'upset' with me saying that most Americans play SAYC. The main reason I thought this is that whenever I log on for an internet game, my partner always seems to play SAYC.

Anyway, Chuck is the undoubted expert in this field (what Americans play/do), so let's hear it from him: -

'SAYC is a very limited version of Standard American and very few play it.' Chuck's estimates of what Americans play (if anybody is interested) is: -

2/1	65%	Now at first sight this may appear not to add up. To be
weak NT	33%	fair, Precision includes a weakish NT (13-15) and so the
SAYC	2-3%	addition does come to 100% provided that nobody plays
Precision	15%	Standard American. I guess Chuck must be correct as I
Standard American	'the rest'	have never actually played bridge in America. I may not
		know who plays what in America, but I am quite good at math(s). More of
		this later.

Anyway, this is all totally irrelevant, I will be very careful to state 'Standard American' (even though nobody plays it?) instead of SAYC from now on. It was just that SAYC is quicker to type – I did not realise that it would be such an issue. I apologise. I promise to consult Chuck before I say anything about America(ns) ever again!

An Overcall?

♠ J32	Remember this Hand F from news-sheet 26? I overcalled a 1♣ opening
♥ K9743	with 1♥. I have Chuck's opinion: - <i>'Hand F is a poor overcall. Suit is</i>
♦ 943	<i>poor and a quack is not a good lead direction'</i> . My comment – what
♣ A2	quack? I would have preferred a better hand, but this hand with an ace
	and a 5 card suit to the king is what I was dealt.

To Stayman or not, that is the Question!

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Partner opens a strong NT (15-17), what do
♠ KQ53	♠ 74	♠ A107	you do? Obviously you have the values to try
♥ KJ74	♥ A1053	♥ A1053	game, but Stayman or a direct 3NT? Now
♦ 64	♦ A1074	♦ J42	'everybody' would bid Stayman with Hand A
♣ 1094	♣ J94	♣ 1094	– if there is a fit in either major that will be
			preferable to 3NT with this small doubleton ♦
			And Hand B? Again, use Stayman. If a 4-4 ♥

fit exists, then 4♥ will normally be a far superior contract to 3NT. But what about Hand C?

A direct 3NT on this flat hand or look for the 4-4 ♥ fit? This is North hand 9 from Monday. South (Chuck) opened 1NT, 15-17, and North (Gerry) raised immediately to 3NT with Hand C. Is this the recommended bidding? I said no, Chuck and Gerry disagreed and they challenged me to make my case in the news sheet – big mistake! I can (and do) type away for hours!

Now we all agree (I hope) that 4-4 major suit fits are usually better than 3NT, especially if one player has a weak doubleton. The argument for not bidding Stayman on Hand C is that it is totally flat – no ruffing values. I *totally* agree, no ruffing values in this hand – but what about partner? He has opened 1NT, promising a balanced 15-17. If he does not have a 4 (or 5!) card ♥ suit then there is no problem with bidding Stayman (you end up in 3NT anyway). So, let's consider the case where partner does have a 4 card ♥ suit, is 3NT best? – very unlikely! The point is that although you do not have ruffing potential, partner may well have! Partner's most likely shape is (any order) 4432. If he shows 4 ♥'s then, with this shape, you almost certainly belong in 4♥, not 3NT. Partner will have a doubleton opposite one of your 3 card suits – when opponents have 8 cards in a suit then that spells trouble for a non-max 3NT. And what if partner also happens to be exactly 3433? Nowhere near so likely, but 4♥ is still probably the best spot! In this case you have three 6 card suits with the opponents on lead. It only needs one of them to be

divided 5-2 (or worse) and 3NT is probably a disaster. The only case where it is preferable to play in 3NT rather than 4 of a major is when you have *ample* points (say 27+) and at least a double stop in every suit, even then, 4 of the major may be better. In this actual case you are nowhere near max for 3NT and both minor suits are suspect. Additionally, of course, if you are one of the enlightened pairs who may open 1NT with a 5 card major, then you will be the laughing stock of the club if you end up in 3NT missing a 5-4 ♥ fit!

Now I really can't wait to hear if Hans agrees with me on this one or not (he's off for a week or so). EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT, *Hans re-appeared on Friday and I gave him Hand C, He thought for a while and then said ... yes ... well ... I bid Stayman.*

I would really love a detailed analysis from Chuck or Gerry as to why they don't want to bid Stayman. Now if you change Hand C slightly, and swap the ♥A with the ♣4, thus having a very weak 4 card ♥ suit, then I would agree that there is a case for forgetting Stayman. With this actual hand (4 ½ points in ♥'s) the strong ♥ suit means that *all* the other suits *cannot* be adequately covered. Quite simply, a 4-4 ♥ fit will produce an extra trick and stops the rot of opponents running a suit. I have repeated this over and over again (the major suit 4-4 fit), but people still want to disagree

Never deny a 4 card major! (especially if you are American or a bridge teacher from England!). Will Chuck eat his words and accept that I am right (again)? Don't count on it, so how about some analysis? Let's look at possible bidding sequences a little more closely:

West	East	<u>Example 1</u>
♠ KQ63	♠ A74	You are playing a strong NT. Obviously you open 1♣, partner replies 1♥, you support with 2♥ and partner raises to 4♥. But who was dealer? Makes no difference, the bidding is the same. Actually instead of the final 4♥, 3NT is a better bid just in case opener has supported on a 3 card suit; either way, the correct 4♥ contract is easily reached. Now what happens if you are playing a weak NT? You open 1NT, partner bids Stayman and you again reach the simple 4♥. If East opens the bidding, that is certainly the case, but what if West is dealer? There are players out there who would not bid Stayman with 4333 type shape and just game values! 3NT is the wrong contract.
♥ KJ74	♥ AQ53	
♦ 63	♦ J74	
♣ KJ3	♣ Q94	

West	East	<u>Example 2</u>
♠ KQ63	♠ A74	Let's try a couple of strong NT openers. If you ignore Stayman then you reach 3NT making +2. You make 12 tricks in ♥'s. This shows (yet again) the power of a good 4-4 fit. Are there people out there who are trying to tell me that if East opens 1NT then they reach 4♥ but if West opens 1NT they play in 3NT?
♥ KJ74	♥ AQ53	
♦ K3	♦ A74	
♣ KJ3	♣ Q94	

West	East	<u>Example 3</u>
♠ KJ	♠ AQ4	So when does this policy of ignoring Stayman work? When you have an abundance of points <i>and</i> all the side suits well covered. Often, the weakest suit is the 'trump suit'. Here, ten top tricks, maybe also a ♥ trick in 3NT. And if ♥'s are trumps? Not so nice, you have to tackle ♥'s if they are trumps and it does not play so nicely.
♥ Q764	♥ 9532	
♦ KQ63	♦ AJ4	
♣ AJ4	♣ KQ9	

There – 'I told you so' shout Chuck and Gerry in unison – 'East should not bid Stayman on his 4333 shape'. Hogwash – it has little to do with being 4333. Consider what happens if East opens the bidding with 1NT. Presumably West then bids Stayman? Something is wrong – you reach 3NT if West is dealer but 4♥ when East is dealer? The answer is that deciding not to bid Stayman has little to do with being 4333, you must make the same decision if 4432! When the West hand opens 1NT in example 3, East could simply bid 3NT. And if East opens? - then West could simply bid 3NT. Being 4333 or 4432 is largely irrelevant to this decision to ignore Stayman, it is the quality of the 4-4 fit and having excellent cover in the outside suits that counts.

West	East	<u>Example 4</u>
♠ KJ92	♠ AQ84	One final example, loads of points, so 3NT with 4333 shape? This deal illustrates what I have just said ideally. Partner (either!) opens 1NT. If you simply bid 3NT because you are 4333 then you will be in an inferior contract. Go for the 4-4 fit when you have decent trumps, especially if all outside suits are not well covered. The 4333 shape is a red herring.
♥ Q104	♥ KJ2	
♦ AJ3	♦ KQ4	
♣ A64	♣ 732	

I must emphasise here that ignoring the 4-4 fit is very rarely a good decision. I have only brought it up because one (two) of our leading players has got it wrong. It only applies when the other three suits are *well* covered (with at least 27 combined pts) and usually only when the 'trump' suit is very poor. You will not be going far wrong if you ignore example 3 and always look for the 4-4 major suit fit.

Simple Math(s)

Hand D Remember this hand from news-sheet 25? I stated that dbl in the sequence 1♥ - pass - 1NT- dbl is for take-out of the opening suit but that you need a good hand as LHO is unlimited and RHO has advertised (balanced) values. You are sticking your neck out. Chuck maintains that this hand warrants a cue bid as it is worth 20 points in support of partner's suit when he bids it. Can't see it myself, looks like 4-5 tricks to me (partner is virtually bust). Don't see where the extra points come from. On the bidding, it's quite possible that partner's only 4 card suit is ♥'s. Chuck also says that if partner jumps (9-11 points) then this hand should bid on. Sorry, I am used to playing with just 40 points in the pack, partner can have at most 4 points – opener 13+, 1NT response 6+, this hand 17 leaves 4 -; check the math(s).

Hand E OK. So they were not playing Michaels, so what should a cue bid show? Obviously a *very* strong *distributional* hand. A 4144 17 count is nowhere near good enough. Now Hand E is more like it and is what I would expect. There is no point in raising the level by cue bidding if you do not stand a realistic chance of making game opposite partner's expected 0-4 count. Chuck says that I stand alone and that Paul and Hans agree with him. Really? I asked Hans what he would do with Hand D and he said double.

Simple. As for Paul, he was Chuck's partner but I would be very surprised if more than one person would find a cue bid with Hand D. Anyway, I would much prefer to stand alone than join the short bus queue.

How do you differentiate between hands D and E?

I gave Hand D to Gerry and he said either double or pass (double could spell trouble).

My sentiments exactly, but then we're both Brits.

The bottom line? This is not an ordinary scenario of a double of opener's bid. Here you know that your partner is virtually bust. Both opponents know that they probably have the balance of the points. Even a simple double with hand D could land you in deep water if either opener or responder is non-min. The only sensible alternative to a double with Hand D is pass, perhaps opponents will mis-play the hand if you keep quiet? Perhaps partner has a ♥ stack (as Gerry pointed out)? It is a partscore hand, why stick your neck too far out? Chuck is totally missing the point here; in the direct seat over a 1♥ opening, Hand D may be worth a cue bid as opposed to a take-out double (debatable – I would double). This is *not* the direct seat – you *know* that partner has nothing (at least, if they taught you math(s) at school). Talk about short busses. Don't ask me what that means, it is something peculiar for Americans. I certainly was not the one who first brought them up and we don't need them in the UK.

A Strong (15-17) 1NT opener?

Hand F	Hand G	Hand H
♠ KQ74	♠ 832	♠ A93
♥ Q54	♥ QJ2	♥ K5
♦ AJ9	♦ AKQ74	♦ AQJ106
♣ K43	♣ A9	♣ A102

A recurring topic? But these three hands are all from Friday. Hand F is hand 1 South from Friday. Gerry opened 1♣, I totally agree. Totally flat with poor intermediates, so not worth a strong 1NT opener. Hand G is Hand 5 West. It opened 2♦, strong I think. A strong two should be 8 playing tricks, this

hand is not good enough. The correct opening is 1NT (1♦ is reasonable but you may have a rebid problem). A 1NT opening does not promise a stop in every suit. Ian asked why Hand G should open 1NT and Hand F not, when it seems that it should be the other way round (F is balanced with cover in every suit). The answer is that a 1NT opening is specific about the point range (after adjusting for shape, intermediates etc.) Hand F is only worth 14 points. Hand G should be upgraded to 17 points. Of course, if you play a weak NT then you would open these hands the other way round.

And Hand H? This is Hand 19 South from Friday. It opened a strong NT. The hand is 18 HCP, and with the fine 5 card suit, the good intermediates and three aces, it is *far* too strong for a strong NT. The hand should open 1♦ and rebid 2NT over partner's 1♥/♠/NT (showing 18-19). Closer to a 2NT (20-21) opener than 1NT (15-17).

An Interesting Little Hand

North	South	North	South
♠ Q106	♠ AKJ85	1♦	1♠
♥ AK43	♥ 6	1NT	?
♦ KJ85	♦ 10732		
♣ 54	♣ 972		

This is Board 4 from Friday. I was kibitzing South (Gerry) and he bid 2♦. I totally agree with this bid (it was IMP scoring). The known 4-4 fit is safer than the probable 5-2 ♠ bid. At pairs the extra 20 points for making 2♠ is probably worth the risk. Now that was going to be

the extent of my commentary until I saw the North (Chuck's) hand. What do you think of that 1NT (12-14) rebid? I would have rebid 2♠ because of the small doubleton and excellent ♠ support. But then ensuring that I am declarer has never been a high priority with me as I play the hands so badly. Lucky that South had the shape to pull 1NT to 2♦.

An Interesting Big Hand

North	South	North	South
♠ AKQJ54	♠ 1093	2♣	2♦
♥ AKQ	♥ J10985	2♠	4♠
♦ -	♦ Q63	6♠	pass
♣ AQ32	♣ 95		

This is Board 15 from Friday. Obviously a very good contract, but what is the best line of play? You get a small trump lead. A reasonable knowledge of % splits is required, in this case for the ♥ and ♠ suits. Relevant info is given overleaf. More of this hand next week (Hans and myself are still analysing it!).



Last week's winners: Monday 12/5/03

Friday 16/5/03

1 st	Hans/Ian	63 %
2 nd	Chuck/Don	57 %

1 st =	Hans/Jan (Nor)	50 VP
1 st =	Chuck/Gerry	50 VP

How Do You Expect Suits to Split?

The thing to remember is that even numbers split badly, odd numbers split evenly. You need these little gems in order to follow the analysis given later.

3 out	3-0 = 22 %	2-1 = 78 %	
4 out	4-0 = 10 %	3-1 = 50 %	2-2 = 40 %
5 out	5-0 = 4 %	4-1 = 28 %	3-2 = 68 %

very important ___↑

Scoring

Ian asked to explain how the scoring works. For any of you who are not sure about vulnerability, doubled contracts (making and going down), game bonuses, slam bonuses and how I score up pairs or team events, I have produced a separate leaflet. One question that I am frequently asked is what score do you get for a passed out hand? Obviously zero, but do you get an average or something else in a pairs event? Sometimes zero is good! Everything is explained. Now when Ian asked me, I suspect that he was not really expecting 20 pages, but then I don't do things by halves.

Editor's Note. Appendix A.

If something is worth doing, then it's worth doing well. If I have an opinion, then I express it. Mind you, I am trying to tone it down. The 'war' is over so no 'politics' this week.

So what can we talk about (as well as bridge). The weather? Well into the rainy season now. Good stuff, the authorities no longer have an excuse to cut off the water supplies and the water truck pirates will have to find an honest living. No comment upon how well Pattaya's lovely new drainage system works when it rains. And what's blocking up all the drains? Why is it that it is impossible to buy anything in Pattaya without getting a plastic bag with it?

What Do You Lead?

West	North	South	
♠ A62	-	1♦	(1) 4 th suit forcing
♥ Q974	1♥	1♠	(3) looking for slam
♦ 5	2♣ (1)	2♥ (2)	(4) 3 key cards
♣ J1096	3♠ (3)	4NT	
	5♣ (4)	6♠	
	pass		

What is your opening lead? Answer overleaf.

What Do You Lead – Solution

Work out the distribution. South has four ♠'s and three ♥'s. He cannot have five ♠'s as he opened 1♦ - if he had six ♦'s and five ♠'s then he would not have supported ♥'s at (2). 2♥ at (2) promises 3 card support. North almost certainly does not have five ♠'s (he bid ♥'s before ♠'s, if he had five ♠'s then he must have six ♥'s). North is 4-4 or 4-5 (♠♥) in the majors. Thus East has two ♠'s and at most one ♥.

East must initially lead a ♥, take the first round of trumps with the ♠A and give East his ruff.

Dealer:	♠ J1074		West	North	East	South
South	♥ AJ62					
Both vul	♦ A2		-	-	-	1♦
	♣ AK4		pass	1♥	pass	1♠
			pass	2♣ (1)	pass	2♥ (2)
♠ A62	N	♠ 85	pass	3♠ (3)	pass	4NT
♥ Q9743	W E	♥ 5	pass	5♣ (4)	pass	6♠
♦ 5	S	♦ 108743	pass	pass	pass	
♣ J1096		♣ Q8752				
	♠ KQ93		(1) 4 th suit			
	♥ K108		(3) looking for slam			
	♦ KQJ96		(4) 3 key cards			
	♣ 3					

Many players will automatically start with a singleton. They hope for a ruff, but for that to happen their partner must gain the lead. Not only is that a very remote proposition here (why did South bid slam), but it is silly because if East does have a trick then the slam is down anyway.

A Response to 1NT ?

West	East	This is board 8 from Monday. At my table my partner (West) opened 1NT, 15-17. What should East bid? Many would say 8 points, so an invitational 2NT. But not those of you who have read my paper on hand evaluation? What happened in real life? I passed (of course), the hand is totally flat with poor intermediates and is not worth an invitation. And at the other tables? One reached 2NT and another 3NT. Both, obviously, going down. The only other player to pass the 1NT opening was Hans (so we don't always disagree). Passing with this flat garbage earns a joint top.
♠ AQJ5	♠ K83	
♥ K1064	♥ 982	
♦ KQ10	♦ 542	
♣ 95	♣ AJ43	

And the opening bid? A 'flat' 15. But this West hand is not totally flat; 4432 is far superior to 4333 and need not deduct for shape. The hand has two reasonable 4 card suits with good intermediates and is a perfect strong 1NT opener. Note that a small doubleton is always OK for a 1NT opener. However, if partner raises you to 2NT then this hand is little more than minimum and should pass. I guess both overbid at the table where 3NT

(-2) was reached. If I was vulnerable at teams with the West hand then I would *perhaps* have a shot at 3NT if partner raised to 2NT, but certainly not at pairs. Incidentally, Chuck would also pass with this East hand, Gerry would invite.

An Interesting Big Hand

As promised last week, Board 15 from Friday 9th.

Dealer:	♠ AKQJ54	West	North	East	South	
South	♥ AKQ	(Jan)	(Chuck)	(Hans)	(Gerry)	
N-S vul	♦ -					
	♣ AQ32	-	-	-	pass	
		pass	2♣	pass	2♦	
♠ 2	N	♠ 876	pass	2♠	pass	4♠
♥ 432	W E	♥ 76	pass	6♠	all pass	
♦ KJ875	S	♦ A10942				
♣ J876		♣ K104				
	♠ 1093					
	♥ J10985					
	♦ Q63					
	♣ 95					

Now how about the bidding? Seems OK to me.

As it happens, 6♥ is a better contract because of the entry problems to the South hand. But difficult to bid? 6♠ is a good contract.

First of all, let's look at the bidding. In particular South's 4♠ bid. Should he have bid 3♥? Chuck says yes, Hans says no. And what do I say? It is really up to your partnership style. Hans would prefer a much better suit for the bid. Also, 1093 with a doubleton is excellent support. 4♠ will often be the best contract. You cannot say that 4♠ is wrong (I guess you can – Chuck did!). But why 4♠ when 3♠ would be forcing? 4♠ shows a weaker hand (fast arrival) and is correct here (if you wish not to introduce your ♥ suit).

Anyway, 6♠ is a good contract; but how good? The play was fairly straightforward. Hans led a trump and Chuck drew another round. If trumps had split 2-2 he was home. They did not, and there is a blockage in the ♥ suit. So you now have to try ♥A, ♥K and ♥Q. Unfortunately, the ♥Q is ruffed. No problem, enter dummy with its last high trump, run the last two ♥'s (pitching ♣'s) and finally the ♣ finesse. Unfortunately this also fails, but a gallant effort. All would have been well had I not opened my big mouth! I said that the contract *can* be made! Think about it before you read on.

Chuck's line is certainly as good as any? It succeeds if trumps are 2-2. Failing that it succeeds if the hand with 3 trumps also has 3 or more ♥'s. Failing that it succeeds if the ♣ finesse works. Pretty good odds (about 80% by my reckoning).

Hans suggested another line. Win the lead in dummy and immediately finesse the ♣. If this works you are home, ruff a ♣ (high) in dummy – you then have just one ♣ loser and don't need the ♥'s to split. If the finesse fails then West will return another trump. You cannot now afford to ruff in dummy with the last trump and so you have to again lead ♥A, ♥K and ♥Q. This line suffers the same fate as Chuck's. At first sight it may seem superior but actually it is exactly the same (you just try the same things in a different order). It appears that Hans' line gives you another chance (ruff a ♣ in dummy) but actually that is an illusion. For that to happen then the finesse must work and Chuck's line also wins if the finesse works. Chuck's line is just as good (I believe).

Just one final very valid point. Hans prefers his finesse line because, if the finesse loses, then East may well not continue with another ♠, but try to cash ♦A. You are then OK as you can ruff two ♣'s in dummy. A very valid point. Perhaps this line is the best practical shot? I believe that East should return a trump because he can see ♣ ruffs looming in dummy. Some people, however, may not be able to resist the temptation to 'cash the setting(?) trick'. It is very unlikely that North would leap so majestically to 6♠ if he had a ♦ loser in addition to a ♣ loser. Anyway, let's assume perfect defence and that East will continue with trumps if he has one. So which line is best?

I have had a go at establishing the odds for these lines. It is a rough calculation and I have ignored a few unlikely factors (such as 5-0 ♥ splits, singleton ♣ etc.). Let's just check the maths (you have to do this by going through the cases that fail), the %'s given here are the ones when it is unfavourable for you: -

Chuck's line: -	%	Hans' line: -	%
no 2-2 trump split	60	♣ finesse	50
3 trumps has 3(+) ♥'s	70	no 2-2 trump split	60
♣ finesse	50	3 trumps has 3(+) ♥'s	70

To get the actual odds of this contract *failing*, you multiply these three percentages. So we get 21%, or a 79% success rate for both lines.

Now then, is the contract makable as the cards lie? And if so, is it, as Chuck suggests, just a double dummy line that is actually inferior? My (double dummy?) line is to win the first trick in dummy, lead a ♦ and pitch the ♥A! (Thus chucking a blocking ♥ on a 'loser'). You win any return, draw a 2nd round of trumps (if the return was not a trump). Cash ♥K and ♥Q, over to dummy with ♠10 and claim. The ♣K is irrelevant. Is this a better line? Close. Let's do the maths. This time the calculation is different. The contract always succeeds if trumps are 2-2. Failing that, it's also OK if ♥'s are 3-2; even a worse ♥ break is OK as long as the 3 trump hand has the ♥'s. I'll just take the simplistic calculation and ignore this last possibility. Again, these %'s are for the losing option: -

Terry's line: -	%	
no 2-2 trump split	60	Multiply these two and you get 19% failure, or an 81% success rate.
♥'s fail to split 3-2	32	

These %'s are very approximate, I'm not the mathematician I once was and don't go in for decimal points! I have also omitted a few less likely permutations. Hans and Chuck queried the 60 % figure above. They say that after 1 round of trumps then there are just two out which are then more likely to split evenly, and so this figure should be about 50%. This theory would make all my %'s wrong. I answer this incorrect reasoning in full later.

So nothing in it. I admit that I would probably have taken Chuck's (or Hans' line) had I not just seen the play. I guess if you are good enough to calculate these odds (more exactly than me) and select the best line at the table then you would not be playing in a Bridge club in Pattaya, but at the World championships. Hardly important at IMPs, but Chuck's line may be superior at pairs as he has chances of an overtrick. Hans' line has less chance of an overtrick, but gives the defence a chance to slip up. No chance of an overtrick with my line! But it *was* IMPs. Which line is best? Got a 3-sided coin?

Our News-Sheet

What topics should I cover? Hans and Chuck expressed the opinion that some of the material was a bit complex for most members. Sorry Hans/Chuck, I'll try to write things that you can understand in future (only joking guys!). Guess they're right, I will try to concentrate on areas of interest to the majority of the club. If you have a topic that you would like covered, or perhaps a hand that was difficult to bid then let me know (I am *still* working on RKCB).

A Take-Out Double?

South 18 from Friday

♠ AQ632 RHO deals and opens 1♣. What is your bid. A very experienced player
♥ Q107 doubled with this hand. I was shocked! Very occasionally it may be
♦ J52 correct to double with only 3 cards in one unbid major, but here you also
♣ KJ have a very bad holding in another unbid suit (♦'s). A take out double
 should show shortage in the suit bid and tolerance to play in the other 3
suits. This hand is totally unsuitable; because 4 of the points are in the opponent's suit, because it contains a
decent 5 card major and because two of the unbid suits are just 3 cards (with just 3 points between them).
A really appalling take-out double. Simply overcall 1♠. Hans and Chuck totally agree with me on this one.
If both Hans and Chuck agree with me, then this covers the whole spectrum and you can be pretty sure that
it is 100% correct.

Minor Suit Contracts? – NT is usually preferable

Board 21 from Monday.

I have frequently said that you should avoid minor suit contracts if NT is a viable option. NT scores
more, and at the game level, 9 tricks is usually easier than 11.

West	East	West	East	
♠ 1043	♠ AJ85	-	1♦	Obviously a very silly contract, so who's
♥ 9875	♥ A	2♦	4♦	fault? West said that his 2♦ bid showed
♦ K5	♦ A10976	all pass		a weak hand. This is a very poor bid
♣ KQ102	♣ AJ4			with a doubleton. Some players would

bid 1NT, I would never deny a 4 card
major and would prefer 1♥. And East's
2nd bid? If West had bid 1NT, then raise
to 3NT. If West had bid 1♥ then, again, I would never deny a 4 card major and would
bid either 1♠ or 2♠, depending upon your partnership style. West should then bid 1NT (which East
raises to 3NT) over 1♠ and West should bid 3NT over a 2♠ rebid by East. All sensible bidding
sequences lead to 3NT. What happened at the other tables? It was played 4 times, the final contracts
were 3NT, 5♦, 4♦, and 1♦! A pretty poor showing, only 3NT and 1♦ made. What more can I say? Do
not look for minor suit games (or partscores!) when 3NT is a distinct possibility. Anyway, a minor suit
game has to make 11 tricks and about 28 high card points is the expected norm. Not enough here. Keep
it simple and try 3NT. Remarkably easy on this hand if you stick to my advice and never deny 4 card
majors.

Incidentally, I said above that East's rebid should be '1♠ or 2♠, depending upon your partnership
style'. I know Chuck's and Hans' style pretty well, and they are different here. Chuck would rebid 2♠,
forcing. Hans would rebid 1♠, forcing.

Personally, I would go along with Chuck here (1♠ is not forcing, so bid 2♠) but it really is a
partnership agreement. In UK it is apparently the same as USA, Gerry would bid 2♠ as 1♠ is not forcing
in (English) Acol.

Keep the Dangerous Opponent out.

Board 8 from Friday

North

South

♠ 5

♠ A32

♥ A84

♥ Q10763

♦ AJ872

♦ K

♣ Q632

♣ AKJ10

At the table where I was kibitzing, West dealt and opened 2♠ (weak). Now 6♣ or 6♥ are both reasonable propositions, but perhaps not too easy to reach, especially after the pre-empt. So 4♥ is a very good spot. Unfortunately, this contract may also be difficult to reach and 3NT was bid at the table. So, you get a ♠ lead. Obviously you duck two rounds and win ♠A on the 3rd round. West has the

remaining 3 ♠'s. How do you make the contract? You have 4 ♣'s, 2 ♦'s, 1 ♥ and 1 ♠ = 8 tricks. You need one more and this must come from ♥'s. At the table, South tried ♥A and small to the ♥Q.

Unfortunately West had ♥K and so that was two down. Is there a better line? Yes! East has no more ♠'s, he can be allowed to get the lead. You must not allow West to win another trick. The answer is to lead ♥Q towards the North hand and let it ride if not covered. This line only fails if West has both ♥K and ♥J, in which case there is no play for the contract. If East has ♥KJ9 then this line gets one less trick. Unimportant. It was teams and making the contract safe is all important.

Normally, when playing ♥A84 opposite ♥Q10763 it is correct to lay down the ace and then play towards the Q1076, but not if you cannot afford to let West to win a trick.

The motto? If one opponent has the setting tricks, the don't let him in. Try to find a line of play such that he never gets the lead, even if it may concede an extra trick.

Making a Small Slam?

North

South

West

North

East

South

♠ Q54

♠ AK6

2♥ (1)

dbl

pass

6NT

♥ K32

♥ Q107

pass

pass

pass

♦ AQ94

♦ KJ108

♣ K63

♣ AQ9

West leads the ♣J, how can South make twelve tricks? 3 ♠'s, 4 ♦'s and 3 ♣'s leaves two tricks needed from the ♥ suit. Perhaps 6♦ would have been a better contract? No. Surely there is a way to collect two ♥ tricks in 6NT? can you spot it?

Answer at the end of this news-sheet.

Impossible? - A Magic Trick?

Board 26 from Monday

Dealer:	♠ 874	West	North	East	South
South	♥ K1083	(me)			
Both vul	♦ 1084	-	-	pass	2♠ (weak)
	♣ 1054	3NT	all pass		

♠ K10	N	♠ 62
♥ A96	W E	♥ J7542
♦ AQJ9653	S	♦ K
♣ K		♣ AJ832

This was the bidding at my table.

♠ AQJ953
♥ Q
♦ 72
♣ Q976

First, how about the bidding? The 3NT bid over a pre-empt has a wide range of strength. It denies a decent 4 card major but promises a stop in the pre-empt suit. The hand often contains a good minor suit (as in this case). Do not worry about having an unbid suit unstopped (partner is sure to have something).

One E-W pair reached 5♦ for a bottom score. I guess that I am repeating myself when I say that 3NT is often easier than 5 of a minor – and scores more if there are more than 9 tricks. With a long minor suit, think 3NT! I not only thought it – I bid it!

I held the West hand and was declarer in 3NT on a ♠ lead. It seemed pretty straightforward to me. The opening lead was ducked (♠J) to my ♠K. I unblocked the ♣K, over to dummy with ♦K, ♣A, back to ♥A and claimed +2, conceding the last two tricks (making 1 ♠, 1 ♥, 7 ♦'s and 2 ♣'s). An excellent contract and par result, so should be a good board? Upon opening the traveller I was amazed to see that one pair had made 12 tricks in the same contract. Impossible? A mistake? A revoke? Then came a loud roar from across the room. 'What, only 11 tricks Terry? I made 12!' It was, of course, Chuck. How did he do it? He could not resist telling me all about it later: -

		♠ 8
		♥ K10
		♦ -
		♣ 10
♠ 10	N	♠
♥ 96	W E	♥ J7
♦ 5	S	♦ -
♣ -		♣ AJ
		♠ AQ
		♥ -
		♦ -
		♣ Q9

This time, a low ♥ was led. Chuck played small from dummy and won the ♥Q with the ♥A. He unblocked the ♣K and led a low ♦ to dummy's ♦K. At this point, Chuck led a low ♠ from dummy, thus cutting himself off from ♣A! South played ♠J and Chuck won the ♠K. A stream of ♦'s followed and on the last one this was the position. What should South discard on ♦5? 'Obviously' not a ♣ as that would leave two ♣ winners on table (who would suspect that Chuck had no ♣ left). So ♠Q was discarded. ♠10 to South's ♠A then end-played South who had to lead into dummy's ♣AJ.

Chuck said 'put that in your new-sheet and smoke it'. What can I say? A lesser person might say 'lucky lead'. Another might say South can easily avoid the end-play by taking ♠A at trick 4. A third might ask what if North has ♣Q so South keeps his ♠AQ?

I simply say: 'Good show - I take my hat off to you, sir'

How the Odds Change - Or do they?

Last week I gave you a few basic %'s. Hans, Chuck and myself were discussing the expected split when there are 4 cards out. The relevant statistics are :-

Case A:	2 out	2-0 = 48 %	1-1 = 52 %	
Case B:	4 out	4-0 = 10 %	3-1 = 50 %	2-2 = 40 %

Hans and Chuck both agree with these basic statistics. But consider the case of, say, a trump suit with 4 small cards missing (as our 'interesting big hand'). Initially, the odds on 4-0, 3-1 or 2-2 splits are Case B. Suppose you pull one round of trumps and both follow. Obviously the 4-0 option is now ruled out and the remaining two trumps split either 2-0 or 1-1, but what are the odds now?

Hans and Chuck say that there are now just two cards out and it reverts to Case A. Not so. We started off with Case B and have eliminated the 4-0 option; the relative %'s of Case B still apply. So we now have after 1 successful round of trumps:

Terry says	2-0 = 55.555 %	1-1 = 44.444 %
Chuck and Hans say	2-0 = 48 %	1-1 = 52 %

What argument can I find to persuade these two of the error of their ways? Try this. You have 100 such hands with 4 trumps out all lined up in a row on 100 tables. The expected splits are as Case B, so you expect 50 tables to split 3-1 and 40 tables to split 2-2. You get your servants to start playing for you and you dismiss the 10 that encountered a 4-0 split. The lions have to be fed on something. The odds have changed in your favour and it is now OK for you to play these remaining 90 boards. But what are now the odds of a favourable 1-1 split? Hans/ Chuck say 52%. I say that these 90 remaining tables have not changed; 50 of them were initially 3-1 and are now 2-0. Just 40 will be 1-1, so it is 44.444%. Nothing has changed. Nothing changed with Hans' or Chuck's opinion either.

Another way of looking at it: If these final 90 boards are indeed split 48%-52% then the original distribution was 10, 43, 47 and premise B is violated. Premise A is only valid when you have 11 cards and there are two out; it is not applicable if the suit has been played before.

I failed to convince these unbelievers. Given my limited powers of persuasion, we agreed to await the return of Chris to adjudicate. Who do *you* think is right? If you go with the 'odds' then there are two excellent card players against just little me (I'm not so tall – Odessa?), so they are much more likely to know what they are talking about and be correct? I have been wrong before. I recall once in 1957, ...or was it 1958? Remember that hat that I took off, I'll eat it if I am wrong here. How much are you willing to wager?

Casinos make an excellent living out of people who think that they understand the odds but do not. The difference between 52% and 44% is enormous (the difference between winning or losing). So who's going to lose their shirt when Pattaya gets its casino? I sure won't be backing these two.

Chuck said something about restricted choice. Indeed, odds change when there are honour cards about that either appear or fail to on the first round. That is an exceedingly complex subject, well beyond the scope of these news-sheets. I have specifically stated 4 small cards missing and you should assume that defenders will not signal but follow randomly; so restricted choice does not apply.

Making a Small Slam – Solution

South is declarer in 6NT and West leads the ♣J.

The ♦ suit is presumably 6-1, South makes 6NT if East has the singleton ♥J, but that's against the odds. But there is a solution if West has ♥AJxxxx (or ♥AJxxx).

Dealer:	♠ Q54	West	North	East	South
West	♥ K32				
N-S vul	♦ AQ94	2♥	dbl	pass	6NT
	♣ K63	pass	pass	pass	

♠ 103	N	♠ J9872
♥ AJ9764	W E	♥ 5
♦ 65	S	♦ 732
♣ J108		♣ 7542

♠ AK6
♥ Q107
♦ KJ108
♣ AQ9

South must first strip the hand, so three rounds of ♠'s, three rounds of ♣'s and four rounds of ♥'s. That leaves this position with the lead in the North hand: -

♠ -
♥ K32
♦ -
♣ -

♠ -	N	♠ J9
♥ AJ9	W E	♥ 5
♦ -	S	♦ -
♣ -		♣ -

♠ -
♥ Q107
♦ -
♣ -

A low ♥ is now led from dummy. If East happened to have the ♥J then South covers and all is well. In this (the more likely lay-out) East plays low and South inserts the ♥Q. Whether West takes his ♥A now or not he is lost. Endplayed. If he takes the ♥A then he must lead into South's ♥Q10. If he allows South to win the ♥Q then South's 12th trick is made by leading up to the ♥K

Well, that's it for this week folks. Perhaps a bit complicated this time; but I have to respond when our two leading players gang up and disagree with me, don't I? Haven't I done well in not mentioning America(ns) once. Remember that Fawly Towers episode (don't mention the war). And do I *really* know anything about statistics and probability? Perhaps not too much these days (does Mekong really eat up the grey cells?). I'm a bit rusty now, but in my youth...

Last week's winners: Monday 19/5/03

Friday 23/5/03

1st Clive/Gerry 56 %
 2nd = Hans/Bill & Tomas/Per 54 %

No Friday results
 as only 7 players

The Jump Rebid, Jump Shift and Reverse

OK, let's start off with this sequence 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦. It shows a strong hand and a good ♦ suit but is non-forcing. Typically, the hand would be 7½ - 8½ playing tricks if you do not play strong twos. If a minor suit (as in this example) then it should be 8-9 and hand C does not quite qualify (it is 7½).

The jump shift (1♦ - 1♥ - 3♣) is also very strong. As Chuck points out, this is normally played as *game* forcing these days. In the old days of Acol it was not, but it was very rarely passed below game.

The reverse (1♣ - 1♥ - 2♦). I have covered this in previous sheets. A strong hand with, in this example, more ♣'s than ♦'s. The strength required is up to your partnership. Chuck and myself require about 17 HCP or excellent shape if less. John (UK) and Hans will reverse with considerably less values. Whether you play a reverse as forcing or not is up to you. Chuck plays it forcing; presumably non-forcing if you reverse with just 15?

The 'high' reverse. After partner has responded at the two level (1♥ - 2♣ - 2♠). Traditionally this also shows a big hand and is *game* forcing. Some players these days (e.g. Chuck with me) will play this as not showing extras (but still game forcing). Typical if you play 2/1.

No Rebid?

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	
♠ AQ952	♠ Q5	♠ AK952	You are playing Standard American. Do you open? And if so, what is your rebid on hands A & C if partner responds 2♣?
♥ A82	♥ 743	♥ A82	Hand A is North hand 6 from Friday 16 th .
♦ 743	♦ A82	♦ 743	Playing a strong (15-17) NT it opened 1♠,
♣ Q3	♣ AQ952	♣ Q3	Partner responded 2♣ and the holder could find no satisfactory rebid, eventually choosing 2♥.

I was asked the correct bidding. Now I have my opinions, but first I asked our 'resident experts' (Hans and Chuck). Hans would pass Hand A, Chuck would open 1♠ and rebid 2♠ over 2♣. Who is correct? It depends upon your style/system but my opinion is: -

The 1♠ opening is correct; the hand is minimal, but a sound opener. After partner's 2♣ the correct rebid is 2NT. You do not like to bid 2NT on a minimal hand, but partner has bid a suit at the two level and must anticipate the 2NT rebid. This underlines what I keep saying about a two level response being up to strength – no crappy 10 counts. If partner has a poor 10 count opposite this hand then you are probably too high – but it's not your fault! So, playing a strong NT the 2NT rebid after a two level response by partner is 12-14 points. If you go down (because partner has a poor hand) then loan him a few back issues of our news-sheets. Failing that, play a weak NT system (I would open this hand 1NT playing a weak NT) but the real point is that responder can bid at the two level with just 8 or 9 points when you play a weak NT. Playing Acol (4 card majors, weak NT) then open 1♠ and rebid 2♠ if you prefer that to a 1NT opener. Playing a strong NT there is no option other than a 1♠ opening and 2NT rebid. Some (Hans) would not open, I would not consider pass as an option.

Hand B is the same hand but inverted. Both Chuck and Hans would open 1♣ and rebid 1NT over 1♦/♥/♠. Interesting, the hands are 'identical' except that Hand A is superior because the 5 card suit is a major. It seems odd to me that anyone would open the inferior hand B but not Hand A.

Hand D Now I had a 'feeling' that Hans would pass with Hand A (I am beginning to understand his style – you only open if you have a *good* rebid). With Hand C it would be absurd to pass but what is your rebid over 2♣? For Hans it's simple; a balanced hand with 13 points so 2NT, what's the problem? Chuck would, again, bid 2♠. Now Hans is quite adamant that you cannot rebid a 5 card major. I recall this Hand D (from news sheet 18) when I opened 1♠ and rebid 2♠ over partner's 2♥. Hans said that I cannot rebid a 5 card major and that he would rebid 2NT. Chuck will rebid a 5 card major if he is minimum (12-13) or does not have both unbid suits stopped. So, two extreme differences of opinion, who's side am I on? Neither! I take the more sensible (?) middle-of-the-road approach. A rebid of 2NT after partner has responded in a lower ranking suit at the two level is a *balanced* 12-14 points. 5332 shape is typical. I will only rebid a 5 card major with an *unbalanced* hand.

Hans, Chuck and myself were all in agreement on one point, however. With Hand C (or A) you do not invent a suit and rebid 2♦/♥. This is just silly. If you don't like 2NT then choose Chuck's 2♠. 2♠ is the rebid if you play 4 card majors.

Four Cards Missing

Board 14 from Monday

North

South

♠ A5

♠ Q103

♥ K872

♥ AQ643

♦ 1097643

♦ KQ2

♣ J

♣ Q5

Chuck bought this hand to my attention. First, the bidding. East opened 1♣, North passed of course (even I would not overcall this ♦ suit) as did East. Chuck (South) overcalled 1♥ and asked what I would do with the North cards. I said I would bid 2♥. Seems simple to me. Chuck said that he would then pass. It was played 4 times on Monday, all in 4♥ with three of them going down. Anyway, Chuck was happy with this bidding, but Hans was present and he was not. He said that the North hand should raise to 3♥ - either directly or via a cue bid, depending upon your methods.

I disagree (surprise – surprise). A 1♥ overcall can be anywhere in the range of 7-17 points. If partner is in the lower range then you will go down if you go to 3♥. Hans then introduced the red herring of weak jump overcalls. Totally irrelevant, jump overcalls are 6 card suits and you may play them as weak, intermediate or strong, as you wish. They are *totally* independent of the strength of your normal overcall. Anyway, whether you adopt the generally accepted view that an overcall at the 1 level may be as weak as 8 points and a 5 card suit, or whether you adopt the Hans approach that a 1 level overcall must be opening strength is irrelevant here; this particular overcall was in the balancing seat and may easily (should!) be weak. Under these circumstances, North should simply raise to 2♥, even with a much stronger hand. South, in the balancing seat, is bidding some of North's points. If anybody should make a try for game then it is south. One final point (for Hans), weak jump overcalls do not exist in the balancing seat. The South hand, in fact, is possibly good enough for a jump overcall in 4th seat.

Anyway, this is all rather irrelevant. Chuck brought this hand up not because of the bidding, but because it hinges on the play of the ♦ suit. There are 4 cards out. You lose two tricks in the black suits, how do you play the ♦'s for just one loser? I said play towards the queen. If this loses then play towards the king and hope for a 1-1 split of the remaining two cards. A broad smile appeared on Chuck's face. That is how he played it in 4♥ and he went 1 down (♦'s were 3-1 initially). My (and Chuck's) play is correct. Chuck said that in the previous news-sheet I stated that after one round that the two outstanding cards are more likely (56%) to be divided 2-0 and so why did I play for the split. Chuck and Hans maintain that the 1-1 split in this situation is 52%. It is not. Hans stated that when he played with experts in Holland, they told him that the odds slightly favour the drop, but that it is so close that you should play the finesse if you have certain other shapes in your other suits. This is incorrect, more red herrings. I lived in Holland for 5 years and know all about their love of herrings. The odds of the 1-1 split over the finesse are much *better* than 52%, in fact they are 61% (after both have followed to the first round). How can this be when the odds of a 1-1 split are 44%? Chuck says that I have got it all mixed up. The best way to demonstrate that I have not is to move on to the analogous, well known situation of 4 cards out missing the queen: -

Eight Ever, Nine Never.

North	South	This well known phrase refers to a suit of 8 or 9 cards missing the queen. When you hold 8 cards (so 5 out) then cash one top honour and then try the finesse. With just 4 cards out, play for the drop. How does this well-established maxim fit in with my stated odds?
♠ AJ975	♠ K1086	

In order to satisfy Chuck and Hans I have to go into greater detail in my analysis. We have to consider the West and East hands individually. Initially there are 5 possible cases:

West	East	%	Let's hope that we're all agreed so far. So, with this given ♠ holding you bang down a top honor hoping for a singleton queen. It does not materialise, but we have eliminated the 4-0 and 0-4 options. The relative %'s of the remaining three options <i>do not change</i> .
4	0	5	
3	1	25	
2	2	40	
1	3	25	
0	4	5	

West	East	orig %	new %	So, the odds of a 1-1 split are just 44%. How can this possibly be the favorite option? The answer is that I was very careful of my wording above, I did not say which top honour was banged down. Suppose that you laid down the ace. You now lead towards the king and LHO shows out. Tough. But this will happen 28% of the time. So Let's consider the luckier situation when you decided to play the king initially. You now lead towards the ace and LHO plays small. There is just one card out (the queen), finesse or not? What are the odds? They are not 52% as Chuck and Hans believe, but much better!
2	0	25	28	
1	1	40	44	
0	2	25	28	

West	East	orig %	new %	We have been lucky, we decided to cash the king and play towards North and West follows. We have eliminated the option of East holding a doubleton. There are just two remaining possibilities and their relative odds <i>have not changed</i> . You were lucky earlier and you now have a 61% chance of success if you know 'eight ever, nine never' and do not finesse.
2	0	25	39	
1	1	40	61	

Most players know to play for the drop when there are 4 with the queen out, but they don't know why! It is not a close call (52%) but much better (61%). All of this, of course, assumes that both follow to the first round and that the queen did not appear singleton or doubleton with LHO. Incidentally, I said to cash one top honour and then lead towards the other, this was simply in order to explain the odds. Now that you know to play for the drop, it makes no difference if you play up to the 2nd high honour or simply lead it. Simply bang down the top two honours if both follow to the first round.

What are the overall odds of playing for the drop? A somewhat lengthy calculation. You have the 40% for the 2-2 split but on top of that you have the possibilities of a singleton queen or being able to pick up a 4-0 split with the queen onside. I won't bore you with the maths here, but they all add up to a total of 58% when it is queen and three small missing. And the total odds when playing for a finesse? About 56% (whichever way you decide to take it!). These appear not to add up but do because both lines work with singleton queen, or Qx or Qxxx onside. Of course, all of the above assumes that you have no inference from the bidding or other play.

Just one final point. The overall %'s can be deceptive. It appears that there is virtually no difference (58% as opposed to 56%) between playing for the finesse or the drop. This is because both lines have situations where either wins (singleton queen, or Qx or Qxxx onside). Once you get to the position where you have to decide to finesse or not (just one card - the queen, out) then these other winning options have been eliminated. The odds are *well* in favour (61%) of the split, despite what the Dutch experts may or may not say. The saying eight ever nine never would not exist if it was only a 2% difference.

I have presented my case. Chuck and Hans' case is far simpler: - just two cards out, RHO has one more card than LHO, so 52% in favour of the split - simple. The jury is out and we eagerly await the return of the foreman (Chris).

I hope that this analysis satisfies Chuck and Hans. In future I will try to keep my promise and have simpler topics. However, I suspect that most of you will have found this interesting; especially as we have to await the return of Chris in order to determine who really is talking garbage. Perhaps Chuck and Hans will realise that I perhaps do know what I am talking about when it comes to probabilities and statistics. Best to wait for the real expert (Chris) if you want to argue further.

A (Strong) 1NT Opener?

This seems to be a never-ending topic. There were a number of hands recently which either opened 1NT or rebid 1NT which I did not like: -

East hand 2 from Friday 16th.

♠ AQJ10 It opened 1NT. I did not like this opening bid. 18 HCP's, two strong suits
♥ 87 and three aces all make this much too strong for a 1NT opener. I gave the
♦ A72 hand to Chuck and Hans, they both opened 1♣. But what is the rebid over
♣ AQJ2 1♦/♥? They would both rebid 1♠ over 1♦ but over 1♥ Chuck would bid
1♠ and Hans would bid 2NT. Who is correct? They both are. 2NT shows
a balanced 18-19 points and is rarely passed. If you have agreed that this bid can hide a 4 card major (so partner will bid a 4 card ♠ suit if he has one, or maybe use Checkback) then I guess that 2NT is OK; but you certainly have to have agreed this (the possible 4 card ♠ suit) with partner.

Open 1NT with Two Doubletons?

Hand A	Hand B	This is possibly more a question of style and partnership understanding. Strong enough for 1NT but many will not open 1NT with two doubletons. The problem is, if you open the 'obvious' 1♣, then what is your rebid over 1♥/♠? Chuck would open both with 1NT, Hans would open Hand A with 1NT but Hand B 1♣ and then reverse into 2♦. I prefer Chuck's 1NT but if your partnership agrees that a reverse may be as light as this, then obviously Hans' bidding is fine. I (and Chuck) need a much better hand for a reverse (say 17 points or more points in the long suits). I assume that Hans thinks that Kx is OK but Qx not for an off-beat 1NT opener?
♠ K3	♠ K3	
♥ K5	♥ Q5	
♦ K1087	♦ K1087	
♣ AK1063	♣ AK1063	

South hand 10 from Friday16th.

♠ K3	This is the hand from a week ago that prompted me to ask Hans/Chuck about hands A & B above. It opened 1♣ and rebid 1NT(12-14) after partner's 1♥ response. Now here I definitely do have a strong opinion. I do not like a 1NT (12-14) rebid because the hand is too strong. This great ♣ suit and decent ♦ suit mean that the hand is worth upgrading.
♥ Q5	
♦ Q1087	
♣ AK1063	

It certainly is not strong enough to reverse and I firmly believe that the correct opening is a strong 1NT. Chuck agrees. Hans would open 1♣ and then reverse into 2♦. I cannot see that this is correct, I would require a better hand for a reverse. The overall balanced nature and the two reasonable major suit tenaces all cry out for NT, and it is easily worth 15+ points in NT, so open 1NT.

And how about 6 card suits?

Hand C	We have seen this hand before (news-sheet 18). If you choose 1♦, what is your rebid over partner's 1♥? I believe that the hand is just worth 3♦ but Hans and Chuck disagree. OK, I accept that it is a bit pushy, but what else Chuck says that the hand is worth a 2½♦ rebid! As that is not allowed the only sensible alternative is to open the hand 1NT. I agree, Hans does not. Hans actually did rebid 1NT, saying that partner will bid again if game is a prospect. Not so. The 1NT rebid is a limit bid. It promises 12-14 points (after evaluation); this hand is <i>far</i> too strong. The hand is not 12-14, it is a <i>very good</i> 15, so open 1NT if not prepared to jump to 3♦. You will miss game when partner is 9-10 points and you rebid 1NT (12-14) or simply rebid 2♦.
♠ AK8	
♥ 109	
♦ KJ10943	
♣ A5	



Last week's winners: Monday 26/5/03

Friday 30/5/03

1 st	Clive/Gerry	59 %
2 nd	Hans/Chuck	57 %

No results for Friday as
(again) only 7 players.

I messed up the first two pages of last week's news sheet (before I re-issued it as a revised version). Basically, I got the bidding of Hans and Chuck interchanged. You should have heard the stick that Chuck gave me, suggesting that he would make these 'totally odious' (in his opinion) bids. They were, of course, Hans' bids. Sorry Guys, but quite amusing, eh? I re-issued the first two pages.

Hans and Chuck were partners on Monday and they gave me a rough time (for messing up last week's news-sheet?), taking every possible opportunity to argue with me about various bidding scenarios. It was, however, difficult for them as they usually have totally opposite opinions. Presumably they were correct as it was two against one? I shall answer the points they raised in the next three sections (The Law, 1NT opener and ace ask). Tell me (or them!) who *you* think is correct: -

The Law of Total Tricks

This rule states that the total number of tricks that may be made by the declarers in a competitive situation is equal to the total number of trumps held. This may sound a bit complicated. The 'simple' version is that in a competitive situation where the high card points are roughly equal between the two sides (say 23-17 or more equal) then it is safe to compete to the level of the combined number of trumps between you and your partner.

Hand A You hold this hand (Hand 6, North from Monday). East and South both pass and RHO (West) opens 1♣; obviously you overcall 1♥. LHO bids

♠ K85 1♠, partner bids 2♥ and RHO bids 2♠, what now? A summary: -

♥ AQ532

♦ J2

♣ K74

East	South	West	North
pass	pass	1♣	1♥
1♠	2♥	2♠	?

So, do you push onto 3♥ or not? If you know the law of total tricks it is very easy.

If you and your partner have 9♥'s between you then you should bid 3♥, with only 8♥'s you should pass. Simple. But how do you know how many combined trumps your partnership has? The answer is that you don't, but partner does! You have just the 5♥'s already advertised by your overcall, partner may have 3 or 4. You should pass and partner (provided he too knows all about the 'law') will bid 3♥ if he had 4♥'s and maybe pass otherwise. Of course, if you had 6♥'s then you would bid 3♥ yourself as you then have at least 9 between you (provided partner has the expected 3). So, all very simple. Trivial even? Seems not.

Chuck said that this hand should bid 3♥ (and Hans agreed with him). Chuck maintains that he knows all about the law of total tricks. Really? I don't think so. 'The Law' was made popular by the writings of two Americans (Larry Cohen and Marty Bergen), it is accepted world wide. Clearly the word has not yet spread to Chicago and Holland.

Now let's get down to the real nitty-gritty; obviously a bid of 3♥ non-vul may be a good bet as it may push the opponents one too high. Indeed, this is actually mentioned in some articles on 'The Law'. But this bid of 'one too many' *must* be made in the pass-out (balancing) seat.

Balancer is the captain, he knows how many 'trumps' his side has but is allowed to over-bid by one trick, especially if non-vulnerable and pushing opponents to the three level. In this situation, a bid of 3♥ by North *promises* 6♥'s but 3♥ by South may be just 3 card. The fact that North has a reasonable hand (14 points) is totally irrelevant, the only consideration according to the law is the total number of trumps. Chuck and Hans are firm believers in sound overcalls; this North hand is a sound overcall, *nothing more*. Only compete further with extra trump length in this position. One more very significant point – E-W may only have a 7 card ♠ fit (East 4, West 3).

So under what circumstances can North advance to 3♥? Consider these two auctions: -

East	South	West	North	(1) Support Double (3 ♠'s)
pass	pass	1 ♣	1 ♥	(2) E-W may have a 5-3 ♠ fit, you have a 5-3
1 ♠	2 ♥	dbl (1)	pass	♥ fit. At (2) you are in the balancing seat
2 ♠	pass	pass	? (2)	and may venture 3♥.

East	South	West	North	(1) Negative Double (4 ♠'s)
pass	pass	1 ♣	1 ♥	(2) As South knows all about the 'Law', this
dbl (1)	pass	1 ♠	pass	bid is presumably just two card support
pass	2♥ (2)	pass	pass	(South would have bid 2♥ at the
2 ♠	pass	pass	? (3)	previous turn with 3♥'s).
				(3) Only a 5-2 fit, so pass. Who knows,
				maybe E-W only have a 4-3 ♠ fit?

And how did the 'law' work out on this board 6? E-W can make 9 tricks in ♠'s and N-S just 7 in ♥'s. Both had a combined 8 trumps (and so a total of 16 trumps). Low and behold – the 'law' works – a total of 16 tricks can be made. If North bids 3♥ he goes 2 down, perhaps a good save non-vul against 2♠ making +1, but a disaster if doubled or if partner pushes onto 4♥ because he has 4♥'s.

And how did the score on this board work out? I went two down N-S in 3♦ for a score of +100 to Chuck/Hans. They scoffed at my result as the other three tables had chalked up + scores in my direction. 3♥ making (impossible with sensible play), 4♠ - 2 by E-W. So, this is a small club with a very mixed standard. At the level that Chuck and Hans are used to playing they would score very few matchpoints for +100 when they can make 9 tricks in ♠'s standing on their heads. Probably best to actually look at all the cards before you gloat on how well you have done and belittle opponent(s) (Odetta?)? The complete deal is reproduced overleaf.

A (Strong) NT opener? West hand 6 from Monday (yes, the same board)

Hand B An all too familiar topic, but I disagree with Chuck on this one. Two passes to you, what do you open, vul in 3rd seat? 14 high card points and excellent intermediates make this a strong NT opener according to Chuck.

♠ J102
♥ K96
♦ A109
♣ AQ82

I said it is not quite good enough. Chuck threw the two tens and the two nines on the table and said 'Isn't that worth an extra point?' I replied 'yes – but you must deduct a point for the totally flat 4333 shape'. Now Chuck claims to know all about hand evaluation, saying that you add on for intermediates but he has never heard of deducting for totally flat shape. When he returns, I'll lend him a couple of books. One final point, 1NT openings need to be up to strength when vulnerable in 3rd seat (I would not open a weak NT in this position), it is quite likely that you will get a penalty double. Hans was present, but was conspicuous by his silence. I imagine that he would open 1♣ but he said nothing as this was a 'get Terry' session. Actually, 1NT is reasonable on this hand, but everybody was in an argumentative mood.

Board 6

Since it caused such controversy, let's see the complete deal.

Dealer: ♠ K85
East ♥ AQ532
E-W vul ♦ J2
♣ K74

♠ J102	N	♠ A9764
♥ K96	W E	♥ 108
♦ A109	S	♦ K3
♣ AQ82		♣ 10963
	♠ Q3	
	♥ J74	
	♦ Q87654	
	♣ J5	

Would you be satisfied with a result of +100 with the E-W cards? Chuck was over the moon. He really enjoyed rubbing in his glorious top (it was the last hand). Looks like a pretty solid 9 tricks in ♠'s for E-W to me (4 ♠'s, 2 ♦'s, 3 ♣'s), scoring 140. Even if you mess up and lose an extra trick somewhere, +110 still beats +100. I shall have to organise a Par competition sometime, +100 would not score a lot!

Ace-ask (Blackwood or Gerber), Natural, Splinter?

Hans/Chuck had this sequence on Monday 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 4NT - ?

What does 4NT here mean? Hans meant it as RKCB, Chuck said it was a simple ace ask. Most experienced players (including me) would say they are both wrong. The only sensible interpretation is that it is quantitative. Anybody worth their salt plays 4♣ (Gerber) as the ace ask in this sequence (it is bog standard) and there is no question of key card (no suit even remotely agreed). Hans and Chuck simply dismissed my (universally accepted) opinion; obviously neither was going to agree with me on this day.

Contrast this with an equally silly bid that Chuck made when partnering me on Friday 16th:

1♥ - 4♣ - ? So what is 4♣? I took it as a splinter (agreeing ♥'s with ♣ shortage). Chuck said it was RKC Gerber. Piffle. It is a splinter or Swiss (if you play that). Obviously we need a page or so to inform these more experienced players what is generally accepted as Gerber, RKCB, splinter or natural. Some people simply have no clue.

These two 4-level jumps were very poor bids; it is usually not a good idea to leap directly to an ace-asking bid. A better style is to take it slowly (with forcing bids of course) and find out more about partner's hand before asking. 2/1 is really good here as every bid is game forcing after a 2 level response. Another powerful tool is 4th suit forcing – support for partner after invoking the 4th suit is game forcing.

Now Chuck has ticked me off for stating things in this news-sheet that are my opinion and perhaps not generally accepted. Point taken. So, on this particular topic (4♣ or 4NT for ace ask) I am stating what is generally accepted. The most significant generally accepted 'rule' is that 4♣ is Gerber after partner's last natural bid was NT (either 1,2 or 3) and that 4NT is always quantitative in this situation.

It is usually simpler to use Gerber only when partner's last natural bid was NT, but note the definitions in the Stayman/Transfer sequences. You may play standard Gerber or RKC Gerber as you wish in these sequences. Before I launch into some generally accepted definitions, there are a few players who always use 4♣ (and only 4♣) as the ace ask. All of you who use this scheme may skip the next page.

Quantitative, Normal Blackwood, RKCB, Gerber, Splinter or what?

West East

- 1♠ 2♥ 4♣ is a splinter, agreeing ♥'s. It could be either a singleton or void.
 4♣ 4NT 4NT is RKCB. Some play exclusion RKCB here.
- 1♠ 1NT What is 4♣ over the strong 3♥? If East had a weak hand, he would pass
 3♥ 4♣ or correct. If he had a limit raise for ♠'s or ♥'s, he would simply bid
 game. Thus 4♣ can only be a cue bid agreeing ♥'s. Responder has a ♥ suit with
 insufficient values for an initial two level response. A bid of 4NT here or a subsequent
 4NT bid by either is thus RKCB for ♥'s
- 1♥ 4♣ A splinter or Swiss, according to partnership agreement.
- 1♥ 4NT Normal Blackwood. This cannot be RKCB for ♥'s as then East would
 first bid a forcing raise (maybe Jacoby 2NT). It is not quantitative, as East would first bid
 2/1. It must be a strange hand.
- 3NT 4NT 3NT is gambling. This 4NT is not Blackwood, opener has exactly 1 ace.
 Responder has a good hand and simply requests opener to bid 5 of his suit.
- 3NT 4♣ 3NT is gambling and 4♣ is pass or correct
- 2♣ 2♦ RKCB for ♦'s. With a big hand in support of ♥'s, East would have
 2♥ 2NT splintered, cue bid, bid 3♥ or bid RKCB on the previous round.
 3♦ 4NT
- 1NT 4♣ Gerber 1NT 4NT Quantitative.
- 1♠ 2♦ 1♠ 2♦
 2NT 4♣ Gerber 2NT 4NT Quantitative.
- 1NT 3♠ East's 3♠ is a slam try. West's 4♣ is a cue bid agreeing ♠'s.
 4♣ 4NT East's 4NT is RKCB for ♠'s.

Transfer Sequences

Stayman Sequences

- 1NT 2♥ Gerber (RKC?). Partner's last natural bid was 1NT.
 2♠ 4♣
- 1NT 2♥ Quantitative (5 ♠'s)
 2♠ 4NT
- 1NT 2♥ This time, 4NT is RKCB for ♠'s. West's super accept of the transfer has
 2NT 3♥ set ♠'s as trumps. East re-transfers to get West as declarer and then uses
 3♠ 4NT RKCB.
- 1NT 2♦ 4NT is not RKCB for ♥'s here, it must be quantitative. If East had a hand
 2♥ 4NT where he can investigate slam in ♥'s with minimal support from partner,
 he would have started with a slam interest bid of 3♥ over 1NT.

You have a minor suit and Partner opens 1NT

Hand C

♠ K86
♥ J42
♦ Q9532
♣ 95

Hand D

♠ K103
♥ Q42
♦ QJ932
♣ 95

A few of our members have just started playing Stayman and transfers and one asked me what you are meant to do when partner opens 1NT and your only suit is a minor? Here we are playing a strong NT (15-17). With Hand C you would reply 1♦ to a 1♣ opening, but opposite a 1NT opening simply pass. With Hand D you have invitational strength but 2♦ is a transfer. Simple, don't even bother to

mention this minor suit. The response to 1NT with Hand D is 2NT, 8 points and denying a 4 card major. The point is that game (3NT) may be possible with Hand D but 5♦ (11 tricks) is not. Think NT when you do not have a major suit.

That Interesting Big Hand Again

from News-sheet 29.

North

♠ AKQJ54
♥ AKQ
♦ -
♣ AQ32

South

♠ 1093
♥ J10985
♦ Q63
♣ 95

This is the hand that sparked off the debate about the odds. Remember when I invited you to find a line of play that actually worked with the given layout? Kenneth did just that. He said that you can cash ♣A at the second trick and then lead a low ♣. The defender returns a ♠ if he has one and you ruff a third ♣. This line succeeds if ♣K drops in three rounds (as in this case). Kenneth knew that although

the line works, it is mathematically inferior, he asked me the %'s. Always willing to oblige:

Ken's line does not depend upon a 2-2 ♠ break (it is slightly more likely to succeed if ♠'s are 3-1). The only important factor is the ♣K dropping in 3 rounds. The % of the king being accompanied by at least 3 others with a total of 7 out is about 69%. So, given the vague extra chances of a defender not leading a trump at trick 3 (perhaps having none), the line is about 35%. Way short of the 80% for the other lines and less than just a simple finesse (Ken suspected this), but full marks for finding another line that works with the given lay-out.

Any sensible comments and contributions (such as this) are welcome and will be reproduced if you wish. Even not-so-welcome comments (usually Chuck's) will also be printed. I will gladly type up any sensible contribution from anybody.

How Greedy are You?

West Hand 9 from Monday

Hand D

♠ J109864
♥ KQ5
♦ A
♣ J64

LHO and partner both pass; much to your surprise, RHO opens 1♠. What do you do? Double would be take out of course, so you pass. LHO bids 2♦ and RHO bids 4♠! What now? I held this hand and managed not to fall off of my chair. Obviously you have 4♠ set 2, probably 3 tricks in your own hand, so double? 500 is not to be sneezed at, more if partner can contribute a trick or two. Get real. LHO still has a bid. If you double, he (or RHO) will doubtless run to 5♦, are you then going to double that?

You have 3 more defensive tricks against ♠'s than against another contract. Don't be greedy. I passed and collected the 250 for 5 down (LHO was void in ♠'s). At the three other tables? Two got to 5♦ making +1 (maybe somebody doubled 4♠?). At the fourth table the contract was 4♠ doubled going minus two. Guess that was the beginner's table? Obviously you should lead ♠J (or ♠8) against 4♠.

What to do when partner passes your take-out double?

West	West	North	East	South
♠ QJ108	-	-	-	1 ♣
♥ AKQ5	dbl	pass	pass	pass
♦ KQ62				
♣ 3				

You're not happy, but what do you do? Perhaps get a new partner, but for now the question is – what do you lead? Answer below.

A Tricky Rebid? South Hand 9 from Monday

Hand C	Partner and RHO both pass; you obviously open 1 ♠ and partner responds 2 ♦. What now? Partner's 2 ♦ bid is music to your ears, but how do you continue?
♠ AKQ72	Difficult. Gerry held this hand playing Acoll with Clive. The hand must be
♥ A94	worth game now, but what is the bid? 2 ♠ and 3 ♠ are non- forcing,
♦ K1054	as are 3 ♦ or 4 ♦. Seem to have run out of bids? Gerry chose 4 ♠,
♣ 5	certainly a very reasonable bid, but is there anything better? Remember, partner is a passed hand and is quite likely to pass any non- forcing bid.

My suggestion was 3 ♣. Now I hate digging up non-existent suits, especially with a singleton!! But there really is no sensible alternative. It really is no problem here, because if partner raises ♣'s the you simply revert to ♦'s – it is a higher ranking suit. A new suit at the 3 level is most certainly forcing in this situation. The only other forcing bid available is 3 ♥; I don't like this for two reasons – first, it is usually not a good idea to lie in a major (especially if partner has not denied a holding in that suit) and secondly because it is a more expensive bid than 3 ♣. 5 ♦ is a possible bid at IMPs. Anyway, Gerry chose a quite reasonable 4 ♠, how did it work out?

When Partner passes your take-out double – Answer

Partner has good ♣'s, he is sitting under opener, so he must have 'body'. Typically QJ1098, KQJ109 or similar. On this auction a trump lead is mandatory (to stop a possible ruff in dummy).

Dealer:	♠ K5	West	North	East	South
South	♥ 97632				
N-S vul	♦ 1053	-	-	-	1 ♣
	♣ 652	dbl	pass	pass	pass

♠ QJ108	N	♠ 632	With any star other than a trump South makes his contract. Four top tricks, two ♥ ruffs in hand and a ♠ ruff on table. Even with a trump lead the contract is difficult to defend.
♥ AKQ5	W E	♥ J104	
♦ KQ62	S	♦ 74	
♣ 3		♣ KQJ107	
	♠ A974		
	♥ 6		
	♦ AJ98		
	♣ A984		

The bottom lines? E-W have a cold 3NT. It is rarely correct to pass partner's take-out double.

Board 9 OK, since we've mentioned the board twice, let's see the whole deal: -

Dealer:	♠ -	Should North have bid 5♦ (or 5♣) over partner's 4♠?	
North	♥ J107	Obviously he would if West (me) had doubled (sorry	
E-W vul	♦ QJ8632	guys). But without the double? Now normally this	
	♣ A1073	would be difficult, South may have a good long semi-	
		solid ♠ suit and it is not obvious to pull the 4♠ bid.	
♠ J109864	N	♠ 53	However, these guys were playing multi 2♦ with
♥ KQ5	W E	♥ 8632	strong opening 2♥/♠. South cannot have just a good
♦ A	S	♦ 97	♠ suit and so must have leapt to game because he
♣ J64		♣ KQ982	liked the 2♦ bid! I think that North should have bid 5♦.
		♠ AKQ72	Hans sees it just slightly different from me. He
		♥ A94	would rebid 4♦, showing a good hand with 5+ good
		♦ K1054	♠'s and 4♦'s. Non forcing, but he says that if North
		♣ 5	passes, then there is no game. I'm not so sure. Hans
			also says that with the North hand he would not pull

the 4♠ bid – stating that South must have a self-sufficient ♠ suit capable of making 10 tricks opposite a possible void. Again, I'm not so sure. Now of course it is possible to construct such a hand, but there are very few hands that can make 4♠ opposite a void but could not open a strong 2♠. Doubtless Hans is technically correct, but I would not trust many partners to have a sufficiently robust ♠ suit to play opposite a void. Hans' approach or mine? A matter of odds and %'s and trust? Anyway, only a small difference of opinion here. We both agree that 4♠ is not the best rebid by South, but I find it much more palatable than Hans does, but then I would expect partner to bid 5♦ with a ♠ void.

Just a word about North's 2♦ response. Normally a two-level new suit response should be 11+ points. By a passed hand 8+ is OK but it should be a 5 card suit as it is non-forcing. Anyway, these guys were playing a weak NT and so 2♦ is OK even if not a passed hand.

Incidentally, North could not open a weak 2♦ because they were playing the multi. Playing Standard American a likely bidding is 2♦ - 5♦ - pass. I know that certain members (you know which two I mean) would not like a 2♦ opening here (♥ tolerance, ropey ♦ suit – it's not a good bid). I agree, I would only open a weak 2♦ with this hand if in 3rd seat.

A bit complex again this week? But Chuck's gone back for a couple of months and so it should be a quieter and less controversial for the next few issues.

Which Card?

♠ A	Dealer:	West	North	East	South
♥ 954	South				
♦ J9754	E-W vul	-	-	-	4♠
♣ AKJ3		pass	pass	pass	

N	♠ 43	
W E	♥ A10732	West leads the ♥K, which card must East play?
S	♦ A	Answer at the end of this news-sheet.
	♣ 98652	

Last week's winners: Monday 1/6/03

Friday 5/6/03

1 st	Ian/Bill	57 %
2 nd	Hans/Clive	55%

1 st	Hans/Jan	32 VP
2 nd	Ian/Bill	29 VP

A one-level 'penalty' double?A hand from Friday 30th

Hand A Two passes to you. You open 1♣, partner responds 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠, what do you do? I was playing with Bill and I doubled – passed out. ♠ AQJ9 LHO was amazed that this was a penalty double (the contract went ♥ AK74 two off). If you do not play support doubles here (I only play support ♦ 7 doubles of partner's major) then this is a penalty double. As Chuck is the ♣ Q732 only player who plays support doubles and he's gone, then this is most certainly penalties (saying I could have bid 1♠ myself if there was no overcall). After the dust had settled, RHO (Ian) expressed surprise that a one level contract can be doubled (and go two off). I simply replied that you got what you deserve for overcalling with Kxxx ! Bill (my partner) had just a 6 count and a small doubleton ♠; he saw no reason to let the opponents off the hook. Absolutely correct, I wish there were more penalty double sequences? Or perhaps more people who simply use their common sense (like Bill here) – what else can double possibly mean?

Incidentally, Hans would not double. I gave this hand to Hans and he said that he would rebid 1NT, but then Hans believes that it is inconceivable that anybody would overcall with Kxxx. Of course they should not, and the best way to teach them is to keep on doubling them. Hans does not see it this way, and believes that opponents always have their bids. I am not so trusting, people will do whatever they think they can get away with. Obviously more when you play against Hans than when you play against me. Incidentally, a 1NT rebid promises a balanced 12-14 points, perhaps I need to get my calculator out?

One more very significant point. Partner's 1♦ bid means that he has some (6-11) points but the hand is quite possibly a mis-fit. Do not bid too high with mis-fits and doubling opponents is usually a good idea.

Clive and Jan (Swe) were present when I gave this hand to Hans. Jan said he would rebid 1NT. Is he picking up bad habits (rebid 1NT with the incorrect point range) from Hans? Clive would rebid 2♥. Now normally a reverse would promise a good hand *with greater length in the first bid suit* (♣'s here) but I do have some sympathy with this bid because partner has not actually denied ♥'s – it is far better than the lying 1NT rebid.

Now Hans was quite adamant that a double here was not penalty orientated – he suggested that it was negative (showing 4♥'s). I disagree. One simple quote from a Crowhurst book (he is a *great* believer in negative doubles) should suffice :-

'A double of an intervening overcall in this situation is for penalties. Furthermore, you will be relieved to hear that there are no exceptions to this general rule.'

To be fair, this book did not include Support doubles; but if you do not play them (or play them only when partner bids a major suit – as I do) then Crowhurst's statement is still 100% valid.

The bottom line? If this hand does not qualify for a double (whatever you think double means), then what sort of hand does?

Raising Partner's opening Major to Game

Hand B	Hand C	Your partner opens 1♠. Hand B is an excellent raise to 4♠, so bid 4♠? Perhaps, but then what about Hand C? Again you want to raise partner to 4♠, but this time more of a pre-emptive raise. You have 10 ♠'s between you and 'the Law' says to compete to the four level. You may or may not make 4♠, but if it fails then the opponents are sure to make game their way (probably 4♥). So, two totally different
♠ QJ863	♠ QJ852	
♥ A3	♥ 63	
♦ KJ42	♦ KJ42	
♣ K7	♣ 74	

hands wish to raise partner to 4♠. How does partner know if you have a solid raise (Hand B) or the pre-emptive raise (Hand C)? The answer is that you should only bid a direct 4♠ on the pre-emptive type hand. And how do you then bid Hand B? There are various different schemes to choose from (Jacoby 2NT, Swiss etc) and I will cover a few in later news sheets; for now an effective method is the delayed game raise. Simply (in this case) bid 2♦ with Hand B and bid 4♠ at the next turn. This shows a full-blooded raise to game.

Hand D	Hand E	So, now we've got the hang of it, let's see if you can do better than the holders of these two hands recently. Hand D is South board 4 from Friday. It responded 4♠ to partner's 1♠ opening at both tables. Opener had a good 15 count and could not bid on. An easy slam was missed. Why? Hand D is a very sound 4♠ raise, it should not bid 4♠ directly. Hand E was held by one of the same players on Monday (Board 19
♠ AJ1073	♠ Q9543	
♥ J104	♥ AQ10	
♦ A64	♦ 95	
♣ 107	♣ Q105	

North). What should you bid with Hand E after partner has opened 1♠? First, let's evaluate the hand. 10 points and flat except for the 5 card support for partner. Queens are not great cards but the hand does contain two tens and two nines. Now 10 points is normally a limit raise to 3♠ - that's what was bid at one table, but with 5 trumps it is too good. So a direct 4♠? The law of total tricks says to always bid 4♠ when you have 5 trumps, regardless of points (10 combined trumps, so bid to make 10 tricks). Perfectly sound and 4♠ is a far better bid than 3♠. The only problem with bidding 4♠ directly is that it is often (usually) a much weaker hand. The alternative? Hans would bid 2♣ and then jump to 4♠ next bid. This is the delayed game raise and one method of showing a sound raise to 4♠. This is definitely to be preferred if partner has a big hand (say 16+ points), with this big hand he would pass over a direct 4♠ but investigate slam with the slower sequence. In my opinion this Hand E is just on the borderline between these two approaches. I personally would bid the direct 4♠, but would adopt Hans' style if two of the queens were replaced by a king and a jack. If slam is a possibility, kings are way better than queens. I suspect that most expert players would not bid a direct 4♠, but then they have sophisticated methods to stay out of poor slams. What actually happened? Opener passed the 3♠ bid (he was minimum) and 4♠ made easily.

'Silly' Stayman?

Partner opens 1NT, you bid 2♣ Stayman and partner responds 2NT. What the hell is going on? You may recall back in new-sheet 4 there was a hand where Ian rebid this 2NT (to show a max) when playing with Chris. Now Chris is perhaps not quite so verbose as me, but his comments to Ian were sufficient to the extent that Ian has never made this silly bid again.

The reason that I am bringing this all up is that one of my former 'pupils' (Jan) used to play this 'silly' Stayman (in this case 2NT to show both majors). I taught him 'proper' Stayman but now one of our club's most experienced player (Hans) has agreed to play this silly scheme with him. I am appalled! Why undermine all my good (?) work?_

Hand F	Hand G	Hand H	How do you bid these hands if partner opens a strong (15-17) 1NT? Easy. These are all classic Stayman hands. With Hand F you bid 2♣ and pass any response from partner. With Hand G you bid 2♣, if partner replies in a major then you pass; if partner replies 2♦ then you bid 2♠ (weak). So, Stayman
♠ J963	♠ J9852	♠ 975	
♥ J763	♥ J763	♥ K973	
♦ J9852	♦ J2	♦ J2	
♣ -	♣ 74	♣ A974	

works admirably with these weak hands containing two major suits (you need 4 or 5 ♦'s when only 4-4 in the majors). How about invitational hands? Playing a strong NT then an invitational hand would be 8 points. So you have Hand H and partner opens 1NT. You bid 2♣; if partner replies 2♦/♠ then you invite game by bidding 2NT, if partner replies 2♥ then you invite game by bidding 3♥. Nothing could be simpler; and this is how most people play Stayman. Chuck calls it 'garbage' Stayman – because the 2♣ bidder may have garbage.

Now Stayman has been around for eons and there are a few variations. One of which a few of our club members play is that if opener has two 4 card majors then he bids 2NT (instead of the usual 2♥). This way responder knows of any fit straight away. So what are the advantages/disadvantages of this approach? –

Let's start with the disadvantages: -

- 1) You have a problem with Hand F if partner replies 2NT (both majors) as you cannot then play in anything at the two level.
- 2) You have a problem with Hand G if partner replies 2NT (both majors) as you then have to play in 3♠ instead of 2♠.
- 3) You have a problem with invitational hands if partner replies 2NT (both majors) as you no longer have an invitational bid. 3♥/♠ would be weak, to play.
- 4) If opener responds 2NT (both majors) then the wrong hand will be playing an eventual major suit contract.
- 5) You cannot play 4-way transfers. With 4-way transfers *all* invitational bids (either containing a 4 card major or not) go via 2♣. If partner may respond 2NT then 4-way transfers is not a viable system for you. I will be covering 4-way transfers soon.

Just to be fair (ain't I always?), let's list the advantages of this scheme: -

.....

.....

Now this may appear to be an empty space, but that is an illusion. I'm sure that somebody out there (Hans?) can actually think of an advantage of this scheme? While we are waiting, I strongly advise everybody to play the normal ('Garbage') version of Stayman because:

- it works
- it's what most people play

p.s. I found a reference to 'silly Stayman' in a recent book. The author states that the 2NT response 'does not exist'; obviously he has not met some of the players at our club.

Which Card – Solution.

Dealer:	♠ A	West	North	East	South
South	♥ 954				
E-W vul	♦ J9754	-	-	-	4♠
	♣ AKJ3	pass	pass	pass	

♠ 75	N	♠ 43
♥ KQJ	W E	♥ A10732
♦ 108632	S	♦ A
♣ 1074		♣ 98652
	♠ KQJ109862	
	♥ 86	
	♦ KQ	
	♣ Q	

West leads the ♥K against South's 4♠ contract. What must East do?

East can see how the defence can succeed, West is not in a position to do so. Thus East must take charge; overtake the ♥K with the ♥A, play the ♦A and return a ♥ (the ♥10 if you feel that your partner needs a McKenny signal to know that you need a ♦ ruff). West cannot really go wrong now and gives East his ruff.



Last week's winners: (Monday's results were mislaid)

Friday 13/6/03 1st Hans/Jan 52 VPs 2nd Garry/John 48 VP's

Count Your Tricks

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 8753	♠ AKQ102	-	-	1♦	dbl
♥ Q52	♥ A874	3♦ (1)	pass	4♦	4♠
♦ 4	♦ 63	pass	pass	5♦	dbl
♣ QJ1062	♣ AK	pass	5♠	all pass	(1) weak

West leads the ♦10 to East's ♦K, East continues with ♦A. How do you play?
Answer at the end of this news-sheet.

Bidding Stayman When 5-4 (or 4-5) in the Majors

Hand A Hand A is Hand (d) from the page I photocopied from a book and added to last week's news sheet. I was asked why this hand did not transfer after partner opened 1NT. Obviously my writings are clearer and easier to understand than the professionals? With this 'garbage' hand you just want to play in a better spot than 1NT. So transfer and get partner playing in 2♠? That would often be fine, but it may just be that partner has 4♥'s and you miss a 4-4♥ fit. So best to bid 2♣ then pass a 2♥ or 2♠ bid but convert 2♦ to 2♠. Thus the Stayman sequences: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ shows a weak hand with 5♠'s & 4♥'s and is drop dead.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ shows a weak hand with 5♥'s & 4♠'s and is drop dead.

Hand B OK, but what about stronger 5-4 (or 4-5)'s? You can transfer into the 5 card major and then bid the 4 carder (so 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ here). This sequence is game forcing. However, the recommended modern practice is to reserve the transfer sequences for 5-5 hands and to bid Stayman on *all* major suit 5-4's (no matter what strength). With this example bid Stayman and raise any major suit response to game. If opener responds 2♦ then jump to 3♠, game forcing, offering partner the choice of 4♠ or 3NT. If you play the SMOLEN convention, then jump in the 4 card major so that opener is always declarer. Thus (if not playing Smolen): -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥ shows 5♥'s, 4♠'s game forcing. Opener should bid 3NT or 4♥.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♠ shows 5♠'s, 4♥'s game forcing. Opener should bid 3NT or 4♠.

Hand C

Holding a 5 card major and a 4 (or 5) card minor, then transfer to the major and then bid the minor. Game forcing.

♠ QJ852

♥ K4

♦ AQ87

♣ 74

So, 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♦ shows 5♠'s, 4+♦'s and is game forcing.

Just for completeness, I mentioned that 5-5 hands in the majors after a 1NT opening from partner are shown by transferring by the more experienced players these days. But which suit do you transfer into? The answer is: -

1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 2♠ shows 5-5 in the majors and is invitational

1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥ shows 5-5 in the majors and is game forcing

Makes sense to me. Keep the bidding lower on the invitational hand. Both sequences are 5-5 as all 5-4 major hands use Stayman as mentioned above.

Editor's note: Smolen has been superseded by Quest transfers

The forced reply after a Transfer

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	2♦	3♣
3♥	pass	?	

This sequence occurred on Monday, when an eventual 4♥ contract was reached. At the end of play I asked West why he bid 3♥ when he had only a doubleton. He replied that he had been told that he should always complete the transfer. Yes, but not if there is intervention! Partner has another bid. In this particular sequence 3♥ is a super accept, normally promising a max and 4♥'s. If the intervention is a double, then only complete the transfer with 4 trumps.

Top or Bottom from sequences?

You hold ♦ 10987, what do you lead? Obviously the ♦10, top of a sequence. Dummy plays low and partner produces the ♦K which declarer wins with the ♦A. Where is the ♦Q? You have no idea if your partner will choose randomly when holding ♦KQx. That is why one should always play lowest from a sequence when you are not leading it. Consider this example:

	♦ 864	
	N	
♦ K1052	W E	♦ QJ9
	S	
	♦ A63	

E-W are defending. West leads ♦2, dummy played low and East thoughtlessly plays the ♦Q. Often this may make no difference; but not if West is one of those annoying players like Hans, Chuck, Clive (or even myself on a good day) who will note which card was played. When declarer (south) wins this with ♦A then West will place South with ♦J and will not continue the suit when he regains the lead. If East had played the ♦J and declarer the ♦A then West *knows* that East has ♦Q (South would have played ♦Q if he held both ♦A and ♦Q).

So, when leading always lead top of a sequence. When following suit (whoever leads it), always play the bottom of a sequence. If you are declarer, of course, you play whichever card is more likely to deceive opponents.

2♠ Redoubled, making!

Now Ian came under a bit of stick (for unsound overcalls) in the last news-sheet. He agreed it was warranted but wanted me to print something about his 2♠ redoubled contract that made (didn't he do well). Ian overcalled a 1NT opener with 2♠ holding ♠10xxxx last week. He was doubled and his partner redoubled (having full faith in Ian's overcalls). The contract should have gone down but made because one defender played ♦Q from ♦QJx when the suit was led. The previous paragraph was not written for nothing.

Too Tough?

More than one member has told me that they enjoy the news sheets, especially when they can relate to the people mentioned. Sometimes I may seem a bit tough, but I only really go up against the 'big guys'. Hans, Chuck etc are far better players than myself and they can take a bit of stick. With less experienced players I tend not to mention names. Anyway, with Chuck gone for a while I have to find material elsewhere. I did mention Ian and Bill by name last week, but only because they are steadily improving (Ian's overcalls have progressed from Kxxx to now 10xxxx). Who knows, a few more weeks and he may actually be relied upon to have a decent (by my standards) 5 card suit. It will take a long time before he has the requirements for a Hans overcall.

And hasn't the Ian/Bill partnership taken off! Neither of them has had consistent results like this before. Bill seems to have taken on a new lease of life and will soon be the expert on Stayman/transfers etc? What a difference a new motivated partner (for Bill) makes. When these two had a sit-out on Monday they discussed the news sheet and Stayman /transfers for 20 minutes. This would have seemed inconceivable a few months back. Good stuff. I'm glad that the effort I put into the new sheets is appreciated, even to the extent of Ian ringing me up to ensure that his 2♠ redoubled contract was included!

The take-out double and response

Board 15 from Friday

East	Your LHO opens 2♥ (weak) and partner doubles for take-out. What do you do? I covered this situation fairly comprehensively in news-sheet 17.
♠ J3	The one thing that you do not do is pass. This hand has no defence and
♥ 8653	partner is short in ♥'s. 2♥ doubled and making cost 670 points,
♦ J76	team-mates were not impressed. So what should you bid? 3♣ is clear-
♣ Q1082	cut, your cheapest suit. The bid promises 0-9 points.
West	While we are discussing the board, let's just look at partner's hand. Your
♠ KQ872	RHO opens 2♥. What is your bid? Now this is so easy that I would not be
♥ A10	reproducing the hand if it was not for a poor (in my opinion) bid by an
♦ Q32	experienced player on Friday. Obviously a 2♠ overcall, nothing else can
♣ A65	even be remotely considered. Hans chose a double! I can see no reasoning
	behind this at all. An appalling double. The hand is not strong enough to
	bid 3♠ after partner's 3♣/♦ response. The only sensible contract with these E-W hands is
	2♠. It will not be reached if you double. A Double Dutch double? enough said.

Not Using Stayman

East hand 4 from Friday

♠ J963 Partner opens a strong 1NT, what is your response? A combined 29-31
♥ AQ3 points, so Stayman and look for a slam? That's what happened at one table
♦ KJ7 and 6NT went two down (even though partner had a 17 count). This hand
♣ K102 is totally flat with the only 4 card suit headed by the Jack. Slam is out of
the question. Even 31 combined points is nowhere near good enough
without a fit or a long suit. Hans held this hand at our table and bid 3NT, ignoring the 4 card ♠ suit.
Correct? Now you will undoubtedly have read throughout the news-sheets that you should never deny a 4
card major. However, I did state in news-sheet 28: 'Playing in 3NT rather than 4 of a major *only applies*
when the other three suits are well covered (with at least 27 combined pts) and usually only when
the 'trump' suit is very poor.' This hand fits that description perfectly and is one of the *very few*
examples when Stayman should not be used.

Count Your Tricks - Solution

Dealer:	♠ 8753		West	North	East	South
East	♥ Q52					
N-S vul	♦ 4		-	-	1♦	dbl
	♣ QJ1062		3♦ (1)	pass	4♦ (2)	4♠ (3)
			pass	pass	5♦ (4)	dbl
♠ 6	N	♠ J94	pass	5♠	all pass	
♥ 1063	W E	♥ KJ9				
♦ Q1092	S	♦ AKJ875				
♣ 98543		♣ 7				
	♠ AKQ102					
	♥ A874					
	♦ 63					
	♣ AK					

First of all, what can we say about the bidding? 3♦ at (1) is a good bid. A jump in partner's suit after a double is best played as pre-emptive, it certainly prevented North from entering the auction. And what about East's further pre-empt with 4♦ at (2)? At favourable vulnerability I prefer 5♦. I do not like the 5♦ bid at (4), if East is prepared to go to the five level, then he should do so at (2) – that would really make it difficult for South. South's 4♠ at (3) was good judgement, as was North's 5♠ at (5) – it would have been tricky if East had bid 5♦ at (2).

Anyway, onto the play. The ♦A takes the first trick, what do you do when ♦K is led?

Many players would go wrong here because of failing to count. Assuming that ♠'s do not split 4-0 there are 5 ♠ tricks, 5 ♣ tricks and the ♥A; eleven in total. The ♦ ruff in dummy can be a twelfth, but if declarer thoughtlessly ruffs in dummy then the ♣ tricks in dummy are unreachable.

If the trumps are split 3-1 (the most likely split) then there is no entry to North's ♣'s after trumps have been drawn. Thus declarer must not ruff the 2nd ♦, but throw a ♥ from dummy. South then wins the next trick, draws trumps, ♣AK and has the ♠8 as an entry to the three top ♣'s.

If South was in the poor 6♠, then he would have to ruff the 2nd ♦ and hope that the trumps are 2-2.

Last week's winners: Monday 15/6/03

Friday 19/6/03

1st Garry/John 62 %
2nd Hans/Clive 57%

1st Garry/John 57 VPs
2nd Hans/Jan (Nor) 55 VPs

Well done Garry/John. There has been a little bit of agro recently and I would like to clear up my interpretation of the rules, and what is applicable to our club.

Strong or Weak NT?

ACBL rules are quite clear here – if you do not play 15-17 then partner must announce the range. However, Pattaya is not USA and despite what a certain gentleman may say, ACBL rules will not always apply. In our club about 50% play a strong NT and 50% a weak NT. As far as I am concerned it is up to everybody to establish the NT range of their opponents. If you don't know, then you can always ask during or after the auction. The best solution, of course, is to fill out a convention sheet.

Transfers

I have no idea what the current ruling is. Alert procedures change all the time. I really don't mind if transfers are alerted, announced or if nothing is said. Only a few players at our club do not play transfers and most know who they are. You can always ask if not sure.

Questions During the Auction.

Suppose your partnership has been silent and the opponents are bidding on merrily towards slam. One opponent bids 4NT (Blackwood) and you enquire if they play key card or not. Asker thought they played normal and responder thought RKCB. So responder says that the bid is RKCB. Asker wakes up and realises that there are two aces missing and does not bid the slam that he would have done otherwise. Unethical? Sure. But nobody can prove it.

So what's the solution? Simple. Do not ask questions during the auction unless the answers are going to affect your bid. We have bidding boxes and the bidding sequence is laid out on the table. Ask questions about the bidding after it has finished. If you are on lead then you ask before leading. If your partner is on lead, then request that the lead be made face down (as it always should be) and then ask questions. This latter rule is so that a player's question does not affect his partner's lead.

Incidentally, you should only ask a question during the auction if it is your turn to bid.

Using the Bidding Boxes

Do not wrap up your bidding cards directly after you have made what you think is your last bid. Others get a turn and are entitled to see all of your previous bids. When the bidding is over – after 3 passes, then the bidding cards should actually remain on the table until after the opening lead has been made (face down, of course) and leader's partner has either asked questions or said 'no questions or OK'. Bidding boxes really do make life easier, especially if used correctly.

Alerts and Explanations

Most players know which bids need alerting. As an example, you play Cappelletti defence to opponents 1NT opener. Partner bids over their 1NT and you alert; but *do not start explaining unless an opponent asks*.

The Prepared ♣

This is one that really gets Chuck going. It is quite common in Europe that a 4432 hand that cannot open 1NT opens 1♣, although it is a doubleton. In USA you must alert a 1♣ opening that may be less than 3 cards. In England you must alert a 1♣ or 1♦ opening if it may be less than 4 cards. In Europe there is no need to alert anything, 1♣ is frequently short. In Pattaya anything goes as far as I am concerned.

I really don't care what America says and I don't think that Chuck should call people cheats simply because they do not alert bids that the American authorities say should be alerted. For us, it's up to you to ask if your opponent's 1♣ opening may be short.

'Conventions' that are not well known

1) Now at least one player (Hans) took exception to my article on 'silly Stayman'.

He said that it was often taught to beginners as they were unable to cope with the concept of a 2♥ bid that may also have 4♠'s. Now I am not a teacher, but if I was teaching maths I would not start by telling students that 1+1=3 and then teach them the correct answer later. Anyway, you can bid whatever you like (within reason) and 'Silly Stayman' is allowed. However, you most definitely need to alert both a 2NT response *and* a 2♥ response. The 2♥ response needs to be alerted as it denies a 4 card ♠ suit which is not standard. Seems a bit silly to me, a player plays 'silly Stayman' because he does not understand the 2♥ response but then he has to alert and explain if asked.

2) If your 2♣ Stayman bid does not guarantee a 4 card major (perhaps because you play 4 way transfers) than I feel that it should be alerted. The rules keep changing here but it makes common sense to me.

3) The 1NT overcall. I really do not like having to repeat myself too many times. As mentioned in news-sheets 4, 18, 21, 27, - a 1NT overcall is always 15-18 points in the direct seat. *This applies even if you play a weak opening 1NT*. If you play a 1NT overcall of 12-14 points (as Don/Sid appear to do) then you may, but it *must* be alerted. Probably best to wave a flag saying 'please double me'. 12-14 is most certainly not a recognised range for a 1NT *overcall* in the direct seat. Don got away with this twice last week. It is not allowed (if not alerted). Any future infractions will most definitely receive an adjusted (unfavourable) score.

Hesitation

Directors are called more for conflicts over hesitation during the bidding than for any other reason. You are, of course, allowed to think. But the fact that you are thinking passes unauthorised information to your partner (that you have something to think about!). Often the implication is that you have some points or are perhaps considering raising partner. If there is a pass after a long pause then the partner of the hesitator should not bid unless he has a clear-cut bid. A few examples: -

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	
♠ 63	♠ 7	♠ 7	Your RHO opens 1NT. You are playing Cappelletti (or multi Landy) where a 2♥ overcall promises ♥'s and a minor. You elect to overcall 2♥. LHO bids 2♠, passed round to you. What do you do? With hand A you have told your story. Pass is clear. Hand B is
♥ AQ986	♥ AJ1086	♥ KQJ10876	not so obvious and many people (including
♦ KJ63	♦ KQJ98	♦ A2	me) would try 3♦. Hand C is a clearcut 3♥ bid (it should probably not have bid 2♥ first
♣ J5	♣ 85	♣ J74	time, but that is beside the point). So, a clear pass, a questionable bid and an obvious bid.

But what if partner had hesitated after the 2♠ bid? Obviously he was thinking about bidding something and so 3♦ on hand A may well be a good bet. You cannot. Partner's pause must not be considered and you *must* pass. And hand B? A debatable decision without partner's hesitation. After the hesitation you *cannot* bid on hands like this even though you would have without the hesitation. And Hand C? Partner's hesitation does not affect you here. You certainly will not be encouraged to know if he was thinking of asking for your minor. It's very unlikely that he was going to raise ♥'s. He may even have been thinking about doubling 2♠ (for penalties). A 3♥ bid is quite in order here after hesitation.

Hans, Paul and Chuck cry out in unison: - 'But partner's hesitation has indicated that he has some points!' Yes, but you know that anyway. RHO has 15-17. LHO's bid is weak, probably 3-7. You have 11. On average that leaves 8 points for partner. His hesitation does not affect your knowledge that he has some points. Hans and Chuck argue that this is true, but that many players at the club could not work that out. I like to believe that they can. The bottom line: -

Partner's hesitation does *not* bar you from bidding. But it does bar you from making bids that are not *absolutely* clear-cut.

The best solution? Try not to hesitate and then pass. It saves a lot of problems if you elect to bid after a long pause. Even if it's not a very good bid, it may well be better than the debates ensuing from long pauses followed by a pass. And it's less hassle for the director!

Claiming

Claiming the contract is to be encouraged as it usually saves time. Claims are usually made by declarer, but please face your cards and allow opponents time to examine both your hand and their partner's and the validity of your stated line of play. Simply claiming the remainder, flashing the hand and returning it to the wallet (as I have witnessed recently) is unacceptable.

Cue Bidding Opponent's Suit

Again I have no idea what the current rules are. When one cue bids the opponent's suit it is rarely natural. As far as I am concerned it need not be alerted, it's up to opponents to ask if they wish.

OK, that's it on etiquette and rules for now. Please try to be polite and well-behaved. I have had to eject a few people from the club before and I will do so again if necessary. We all know Hans as an easygoing guy, and if somebody ruffles his feathers then I know that something is very wrong. In the years that I have known him, I have never heard Hans raise his voice (except just this one time recently). I trust Hans explicitly (except in some matters of the bidding! – we seem to have a totally different style). It would be stupid to really upset me at the club (you will get kicked out) and if you manage to upset Hans then I can only assume that your behaviour has been very bad – so be careful. If there is any doubt then I will always take Hans' side. So, unless you know that your behaviour is beyond reproach (so OK for the vast majority of club members), be especially careful at Hans' and my table.

Enough of the rules for now, let's have a few hands: -

The Jump Shift (Jump Response in English).

You open 1♣ (or 1♦) and partner replies 2♠, what type of hand does partner have?

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D
♠ KQ9842	♠ Q9764	♠ AKQ873	♠ Q98642
♥ 85	♥ KJ8	♥ A8	♥ 85
♦ J5	♦ KQ6	♦ J63	♦ 653
♣ J92	♣ Q5	♣ Q5	♣ 105

Four totally different hand types, so something to discuss with your partner. But you will get a few tips from me: -

Hand A would have opened a weak 2♠, but after partner has opened the bidding there is no need to pre-empt. A 1♠ response is fine on this hand.

Hand B has game forcing values, so jump to 2♠? Why? Your ♠ suit is not so great that you can virtually insist on it being trumps. Since some exploratory work (to find the best strain) is necessary, then reply just 1♠ (but make sure that you find a forcing bid next turn).

Hand C Now this is more like it! In traditional Acol/Standard American, the jump shift shows a game forcing hand and a good suit (strongly suggesting the trump suit with little support from partner – especially if the suit is a major, NT may be preferable with a minor suit). This scheme certainly has its merits and is probably the most popular use of the jump shift.

Hand D A load of garbage with a 6 card major suit. A hand that is too weak to respond 1♠! This is a popular bid nowadays, 2-5 points and a 6 card *major*. Pre-emptive. This is my preferred style, but then I often get dealt garbage hands and get fed up with passing all the time.

So, up to you. Hand type C or D? If you opt for the popular strong Hand C type approach, then the hand should be 14++ points with a *very* good suit. A suit such as KQ975 is not good enough.

Respond to Partner's opening with 6+ points

Hand E East hand 12 from Friday

♠ Q96 Partner opens 1♥, what is your reply? Too weak for 2♣ and no support for
♥ A partner, so this hand passed. Wrong. You cannot pass with 7 points. The
♦ 1083 only sensible bid is 1NT. Not an ideal shape, but often over major suit
♣ J108753 openings you have no room for a descriptive bid. This is especially true if
you play a strong NT system where a 2-level bid promises 11+ points
(playing a weak NT then a change of suit at the two level is just 8+). So playing a weak NT, this hand is
nearly worth 2♣, whereas it is nowhere near when playing a strong NT. If you had initially passed then you
bid 2♣ on this hand whatever system you play as the bid is then non-forcing.

Last week's winners: Monday 22/6/03

Friday 26/6/03

1 st	Jon/Ian	62 %	Hans/John(UK) beat Garry/John(UK/Aus)
2 nd	Hans/Clive	57%	no printable results as only 7 players..

Please support the Friday club. Numbers are low now, and if we do not turn up at the Amari then we will lose it as a venue. It really is a pleasant place to play, especially for non-smokers. You may recall that we had 7 tables there in Jan/Feb, so no problem in the peak season but we really need the residents to keep it up (you know what I mean) in this low season.

DOPI (Double 0 Pass 1)

It does not matter if you play 4♣ or 4NT to ask for aces (or key cards), if the opponents bid over your asking bid then obviously things change. This happened on Friday 19th and a lay-down 7NT (13 tricks off the top) was missed.

Let's assume you are playing simple Blackwood, you have 2 aces and partner bids 4NT to ask. Your response is 5♥, but what if your RHO sticks in a bid of 5♦? The answer is the DOPI convention: -

Double	=	1 st step	(0 aces)
Pass	=	2 nd step	(1 ace)
Next bid (so 5♥ here)	=	3 rd step	(2 aces)
Next but 1 bid (5♠)	=	4 th step	etc.

The same principle applies if you play RKCB, Gerber or whatever. Note that the lower responses (double or pass) allow for a possibility of defending against a doubled contract by opponents. Often a good idea if you are short of aces/key cards!

If RHO doubles the asking bid, then there is a similar convention (ROPI)

Redouble	=	1 st step	(0 aces)
Pass	=	2 nd step	(1 ace)
Next bid (so 5♣ here)	=	3 rd step	(2 aces) etc.

Now I have been careful to mention steps here. For example, If you play standard RKCB then 1st step = 0 or 3 key cards, 2nd step = 1 or 4 key cards etc.

Responding to Partner's Negative Double

Hand A You have this hand and open the obvious 1♦. There is absolutely no problem and you can cope with any bid from partner. If partner bids 1♥, you simply rebid 2♣. But what if LHO overcalls 1♠ and partner doubles negative, promising 4 (maybe 5) ♥'s? What now? Simple, you just respond the same as if partner had bid 1♥. So in this case, rebid 2♣.

♠ 52	
♥ Q2	
♦ KQ876	
♣ AQ65	Do not pass.

A new Suit at the Two Level

I can be quoted as saying that one of the many advantages of playing a weak NT is that a two-level new suit response requires only 8 points instead of the 11 needed when playing a strong 1NT. I was asked to explain why.

For example, 1♥ - 2♦. Why does this require 11 points but only 8 playing a weak NT?

Nobody has bid No Trumps, so why does it matter? The answer lies not in the strength of you opening 1NT, but in the strength of your NT rebid (and so obviously directly connected). If opener's rebid is NT (so 12-14 playing a strong NT but 15-16 playing a weak NT) then this 2♦ bid has to be strong enough to cope with a rebid of 2NT by opener. This 2NT rebid still shows 12-14 (strong NT) or 15-16 (weak NT). You (the 2♦ bidder) have pushed the bidding up to the two level and must anticipate this 2NT rebid. Playing a strong NT opener may have 12-14 and so you need 11+ to be safe at the 2NT level. Playing a weak NT a 2NT rebid here shows 15-16 points and so a decent 8 is adequate for a two level response.

Denying a 4 card major

I guess everybody (including me) is fed up with this theme recurring week after week after week after week? Perhaps when people start getting this right then I can move on to pastures new?

Hand 17W This is West hand 17 from Friday. Partner opens 1♣, what is your reply?
1♥ is so obvious that it hardly warrants a mention in the news-sheet. The
♠ J1052 holder chose 1NT. This really is the epitome of poor bidding. Not just
♥ KJ62 denying one major suit, but two! And with a singleton in the unbid suit!!
♦ Q Please, Please, Please do not deny a 4 card major in situations like this,
♣ Q652 let alone two! 4 card majors should be bid up the line, so respond 1♥ here.
OK, time for a sensible bid: -

Hand 1E Hand 1 East from Friday. I was playing with Clive. Clive held this hand
and heard me open 1♣. He responded 1♠ and my 1NT (15-16) ended the
♠ 10974 auction. A good contract. After the hand, Clive asked my opinion of his
♥ K108 1♠ bid (rather than 1NT) on this flat hand. Now Clive has read all of my
♦ KJ10 news-sheets and knows my opinion; he just wanted confirmation that his
♣ 854 bid of 1♠ is correct even with a totally flat hand with no honours in the
suit. My opinion? Absolutely! Although not everybody agrees with me.

When the partner ship has less than about 28 points, it is virtually never better to play in NT rather than a 4-4 major suit fit. This is particularly true in part-score contracts: -

This page is extracted from a book regarding the similar situation where opener has opened 1♣ or 1♦, his partner has bid 1♥ and opener has to consider whether to bid 1♠ with his flat 13 count (strong NT) with 4 ♠'s, or to bid 1NT: -

Do we bid our major or always charge into 1NT as quickly as possible with 4333 shape? Now just about every book you read says that you should bid 1NT; and there are similar variations on this theme. For example, if you hold 4333 or 3433 shape with invitational values after partner opens 1NT, numerous experts recommend forgetting Stayman and bidding a direct (invitational) 2NT. Can all these guys really be wrong? Let us consider some quite plausible hands. Consider an auction 1♣/♦ - 1♥ - ? playing a strong NT, so a 12-14 1NT rebid (the argument is exactly the same for a weak NT). The auction has gone 1♣ - 1♥ - ?

West	East (1)	East (2)	East (3)	East (4)	East (5)
♠ J532	♠ A1074	♠ AKQ9	♠ 9874	♠ AK109	♠ A984
♥ 652	♥ AJ84	♥ 9864	♥ AJ93	♥ J843	♥ Q843
♦ AK5	♦ 763	♦ 73	♦ J63	♦ 73	♦ 3
♣ AJ6	♣ 83	♣ 843	♣ 83	♣ 843	♣ 9743

Clearly, 2♠ is a far superior contract in all the examples, the quality of the ♠ suit being totally irrelevant. If opener replies 1NT the ♠ fit will never be found as East is too weak to bid again. In fact, I don't think that I can construct a balanced hand where 1NT is better. Why is that? If opener is 4333 and responder is 44 in the majors, then defenders have an 8 card and a 7 card suit in which to attack. If the 8 carder is split 5-3 or worse, you have real problems. Anyway, isn't finding the 4-4 major fit the major task of any bidding system? I'm sorry, but I simply cannot see any logic in denying a 4 card major and then changing your mind during some convoluted checkback Stayman (or new minor forcing) sequence. (The main reason that checkback Stayman is so convoluted is this requirement to find out if opener has suppressed a 4 card major). So, we never deny 4 card majors.

Before we continue with the next section, I must make an important point. I believe that I have convincingly demonstrated that with a 4-4 fit, 2 of a major is better than 1NT. However, that does mean that 4 of a major is always better than 3NT. The main difference is that for NT to be the best contract, you need all outside suits to be well stopped. At the 1NT or 2♥/♠ level, our side simply cannot have enough points to cover all suits adequately. The case for playing in 3NT is fully explained in chapter 10; it is a sign of excellent bidding if you can locate a 4-4 fit and then subsequently play in a superior contract of 3NT.

I guess that some experts may be able to deny a 4 card major, go through checkback Stayman, admit to having one and subsequently still be able to play in 3NT. We will leave that to the experts. Our system is much simpler and we play in the superior suit contract if there is no game.

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.

Last week's winners: Monday 7/6/03

Friday 11/7/03

1st Clive/Chuck 62 %
2nd Bill/John(UK/Aus) 57 %

1st Hans/John Gavens 68 VPs
2nd Chuck/Clive 45 VPs

How Green is Your Garden?

I planted a number of Avacado seeds in pots a few months ago and I now have far more seedlings than I need. They are about ½ a metre tall now. If anybody wants some, then let me know (no charge). Now (the rainy season) is the time to plant.

Welcome back Bob, Chuck

Bob and Chuck re-appeared on Monday, a welcome addition to our low-season numbers. Chuck was kind enough to scribble comments all over last weeks news sheet. I really welcome this, it is the kind of reaction that I like and I will print comments, whether I agree with them or not, from anybody. So, what does Chuck say?

No Game when Responder has 14 Points? _Part 2

Hand 10W Partner opens 1♠, the bidding goes: - 1♠ - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 4♥ - pass

♠ K Remember this hand and bidding sequence from last week? Chuck simply
♥ A10654 could not understand why I wrote it down. He agrees that 3♦ is 100%
♦ AK764 forcing and that this hand must bid game, although he prefers a 3NT final
♣ 83 bid. I'm not so sure. Chuck acknowledges that it is probably a 5-2 ♥ fit and
so East must have ♣'s. Thus 3NT as East may have just xx in ♥'s. I feel
that if 3NT is correct, partner needs something like ♣KJx (x) and he would have bid 3NT himself. With
such a holding, 3NT is probably better played from the East hand. Anyway, I'm not particularly arguing (do
I ever?). 3NT or 4♥, who cares? The point is that 3♦ is forcing and West must go to game.

I believe that Hans still maintains that West should pass 3♥. I would be more than pleased to print his reasoning in the news-sheet.

Quotes

I quoted three books last week about the meaning of 4NT after partner has just bid 3NT (it is natural). Chuck says '*please don't find (by jumping from author to author) someone to agree with your position and quote him. Always use the same guru*'. I don't understand, so I simply repeated what Chuck wrote word for word. Maybe someone can explain it to me?

Over the Top – One too many? Part 2

Remember this one? I went to 4♦, vulnerable and it was doubled.

Hand 2North

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

I think that Chuck slightly missed the point, or perhaps I did not make the point very clear. He said that 4♦ is a bad bid vulnerable as partner may have only 3♦'s, not 4. I know that. I bid 4♦ on the assumption that partner had just 3♦'s. Indeed, partner *did* have only 3♦'s. The whole point is that it is *teams* scoring. I expect 4♦ to go one down, I also expect 3♠ to make (so they score 140). If I go one down in 4♦ then that is 100 away. Now the Law of Total Tricks is not exact; I may go two down, I may make. And on the + side, partner may just have 4♦'s. I would not make this 4♦ bid at pairs, opponents will double and the expected -200 is a bottom. Teams scoring is totally different, it is very dangerous to double opponents into game if the expectation is just a one trick set. This is the reason that I believe that the bid is sound, one down (even doubled) is no problem at teams and I estimated that the likelihood of making was just as good as the likelihood of going minus two, but the gain at teams is much greater if you are doubled and happen to make.

For some reason (I don't understand it), Chuck does not think that I should quote from books. Nether the less, here is a quote from The Official Encyclopaedia of Bridge. '*In almost all doubling situations at IMPs, the odds favour the coward, not the hero* (i.e. do not double)'. The book then goes on to say much the same as I have said.

Bidding Opponent's Suit – Part 2

The last two pages of last week's news sheet were devoted to a bidding sequence involving a bid of opponent's suit. I made 13 comments on the bidding and said that a bid of opponents suit need not be alerted. Chuck's comment on the whole two pages –

'I agree, I must be weakening. Partner should bid 4♠ over 3♥. No cue is alertable unless it has a very special meaning.' I'm not sure why 4♠ when you can bid 3♠, no need to go to game yet? But this is a minor point.

Many thanks for the written input, Chuck. I believe that the last news-sheet that Chuck had was No. 30 (but I re-wrote the first two pages). Nos 30 and 31 contain some 'Chuck material', I look forward to printing his comments and also any contributions from anybody else.

A short report this week. I am trying a new approach – to let a few members 'approve' the news sheet before I print it. Hopefully this will avoid any animosity, future misunderstandings and cock-ups.

Last week's winners: Monday 14/7/03

1st Chuck/Jon 68%
2nd Clive/Bob 61%

Friday 18/7/03

1st Clive/Bob 26 IMPs
2nd Joe/Guy 9 IMPs

A Consensus of opinion?

Last week's news sheet was somewhat short as I had produced a number of pages for comment. The reason being that I wanted the contents to be agreed by a couple of players before I released it. Chuck was very obliging. The other player (Hans) was not. He insisted that since I mentioned Acol then I should describe it in detail. He also would not comment upon any sequences involving a double of an overcall as he said I had to explain what an overcall meant. Normally I do not respond to stupid frivolous unproductive remarks. But just to humour him, I have included something on Acol and overcalls. I will simply continue to print my views from now on. If anyone does not wish to be featured in the news sheets, then best not to offer unsolicited erroneous advice and criticise others. Any sensible written comments from anybody will continue to be included.

What is Acol?

Seems a silly question, I know. But one club member had a problem with me stating that a sequence like 1♣ - 1♠ - 2NT shows 17-18 points in Acol, he says it shows 18-19. So, let's start at the beginning. Acol is a **British** system. It was invented in 1934 by a number of British players at a bridge club in Acol Street, North London. The original system featured 4 card majors and a variable opening NT. Over the years, the system has been refined and a weak NT is played throughout these days. It retains its 4 card major suit openings but most serious players adopt the Jeremy Flint philosophy of bidding 4 card suits up the line. Also, many players these days play a prepared 1♣ when exactly 4333 (4 ♠'s). So, the main feature of Acol, the English standard, is a weak NT; and 4 card major suit openings play a secondary role (they are usually 5+).

Now Acol has spread outside the UK, notably to Holland. The system grew in a different way there and a strong NT became the norm. Most Dutch players also adopt the Jeremy Flint philosophy and so 'Dutch Acol' is virtually the same as Standard American.

The strength of NT openings (and thus rebids) has much more influence on a system than if an opening 1♥/♠ is 4 or five cards. For example, the sequences :-

1♠ - 2♦ - 2♠ guarantees 5 ♠'s only whether you play 4 or 5 card majors and

1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥ guarantees 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s in both systems (Flint style).

As far as I am concerned, the Dutch do not play Acol. When I refer to Acol in these news-sheets, I specifically mean the English *standard*, a weak NT. The fact that the Dutch play a system that *they* call Acol is irrelevant. It is not Acol. It's probably best to refer to it as 'Dutch Acol' or 'Acol with a strong NT'.

Now then, about the NT bids and rebids playing Acol: -

1NT = 12-14
 1x – 1y – 1NT = 15-16
 1x – 1y – 2NT = 17-18
 1x – 1y – 3NT = 19

This is the traditional set-up. If you don't believe me then ask John G, Clive or any of the ½ dozen or so English club members who play Acol. These days, however, many players prefer the 2NT bid to be 17-19 as this frees the 3NT bid to show a good hand with a long suit (a source of tricks).

Overcalls and Jump Overcalls

Hand A	Hand B	Many (most?) players play weak jump overcalls these days. You are non-vulnerable and RHO opens 1♦. With hand B the best bid is a weak jump overcall of 2♠. With Hand A the best bid is a simple 1♠ overcall. Trivial, I agree. I have only included it as one player in the club (Hans) insists that you need a much better hand (an opening bid) to make a simple overcall if you play weak jump overcalls. I say that
♠ KQJxx	♠ KQJxxx	
♥ xxx	♥ xx	
♦ xx	♦ xx	
♣ Qxx	♣ Qxx	

the two are totally unrelated, jump overcalls are 6 card suits and in no way affect your simple overcall which may be 5 card. If I include a simple overcall in a bidding sequence, I normally mean that it is an overcall as played by 99% of bridge players.

A simple overcall at the two level, of course, needs to be close to an opening bid.

A New Suit at the three level – this is normally forcing – part 2

On the first page of new-sheet 36 I said that the sequence 1♠ - 2♦ - 3♣ is game forcing. Hans is not convinced and supplied Hands C, D and E, asking how Chuck or I would bid them: -

Hand C	Hand D	Hand E
♠ AQxxx	♠ AQxxx	♠ AQxxx
♥ xx	♥ Qx	♥ A
♦ x	♦ xx	♦ xx
♣ KJxxx	♣ KJxx	♣ Qxxxx

First of all, how you bid these hands depends upon what system you play. I shall consider just three systems; Acol, 2/1 and Standard American.

Secondly, as I mentioned on the last page of the news-sheet (No 36) some people would open 1♣ on these 5-5 black suit hands, and not everybody would open Hand C.

Anyway, I am reasonably happy opening 1♠ on all of them. Hand C is perhaps just about worth an opener, it conforms to the rule of 20 with the points in the long suits. How does one continue after a 2♦ response?

Chuck gave this reply without seeing my answers. Chuck: - 'I would not open Hand C; If I do, I open 1♠; my rebid is 2♠ playing Standard American and 3♣ playing 2/1. I open both Hands D and E with 1♠ and my rebid is 2♠ playing Standard American and 3♣ playing 2/1.'

My response to Hans' three hands: - Playing Acol it's easy. Rebid 2♠ with all hands. There is no other option as 2NT is 15-16 and 3♣ is forcing. Partner's rebid only promises 8 points and any bid other than 2♠ is way over the top. Playing a weak NT with 5 card majors, or 5 card ♠'s, I still rebid 2♠. There still is no other option and this bid does *not* guarantee 6 ♠'s.

Playing 2/1 it's equally easy. Partner's 2♦ response is game forcing. Bid out your shape, so 3♣ with all of these hands – it does not show extra values in 2/1. Yet another example of the superiority of the 2/1 system.

So, now onto the interesting bit. Standard American. You elect to open 1♠ (I don't disagree) and what do you rebid over 2♦? This 2♦ bid could be just 11 (some play 10) points and is not game forcing. 2NT here shows a *balanced* 12-14 points and 2♠ is *generally* a six card suit. I would *never* rebid NT in this situation with a singleton. Some people would bid 2NT with Hand D – I think it's a reasonable alternative but I prefer 2♠. The 3♣ bid here is not a typical reverse as the first suit is not necessarily longer than the second suit; some people refer to it as a high reverse and opener promises another bid. Whether you call 3♣ a reverse or not is not important. It is game forcing and 3♣ is *absolutely* out of the question with these weak hands. A 3♣ bid shows the *values for game*; playing Standard American you would need about 15 points, playing a weak NT (Acol) you would need a little more. Playing Standard American I believe that there is *no* other option but to rebid 2♠ on all of these hands (except possibly 2NT with Hand D). 3♣ is forcing and these hands are not balanced enough for 2NT. If you don't like it, then you should have looked ahead before you opened the bidding and chose 1♣ instead of 1♠.

The bottom lines. Obviously it would be nice to be able to bid both your suits (especially with hands C and E). You cannot. If you think that you should, then open 1♣ with the 5-5 hands or, even better, take up 2/1. The 3♣ bid is forcing in all systems and I believe that it makes life easier if it is game forcing.

Incidentally, Clive held hand type C in new-sheet 36, opened 1♠ and rebid 2♠. I totally agree with his bids; but I also agree with anyone who opens 1♣ (I believe that John G did a week or so back). Both are fine by me. Opening 1♣ with these 5-5 black suit hands was quite common before 2/1 was developed.

Presumably Hans would rebid 3♣ with all the hands? Why else would he give them to me? Hans says that he plays a different system to me. I agree! But I play what most of the real world play.

Hand F	Hand G	We can take this theme one step further. You have the same problem with a ♠-♦ and ♥-♣ two-suiters.
♠ AQxxx	♠ xx	You open 1♠ with Hand F and have no option but to rebid 2♠ over partner's 2♥ response if you are playing
♥ xx	♥ AQxxx	Acol or Standard American. With Hand G you open 1♥
♦ AQxx	♦ xx	and have to rebid 2♥ over partner's 2♦ response.
♣ xx	♣ AQxx	

These hands are classic examples of why a rebid of a major does not guarantee 6 cards. If you have no other bid (unsuitable for NT and insufficient values to force to game by a 3 level bid), then you sometimes have no alternative but to rebid a 5 card major. Hans disagrees, what's new?

Responding 1NT to partner's 1♣ opening

Board 19 from Friday 4th July

- Hand 19W You open 1♣ and partner responds 1NT, do you pass or bid 2♣?
First of all, what agreement do you have about a 1NT bid over 1♣?
- ♠ 109 This takes up a lot of bidding space and needs to be fairly specific.
♥ A1083 Obviously it denies a 4 card major, but does it deny a 4 card ♦ suit?
♦ 62 Does it show a 4 card ♣ suit? There are four main schools of thought,
♣ AKJ95 they all assume no 4 card major.
- School A With 6-10 points and no 4 card major, always respond 1NT.
- School B Bid 1♦ with a 4 card ♦ suit, else bid 1NT. So 1NT is 6-10 and usually 3334 (in that order) shape.
- School C 6-10 is a large point spread, so bid 1♦ with 6-8 and then a subsequent 1NT bid over partner's 1♥/♠ shows 6-8. The direct 1NT shows 8-10. Thus the 1♦ response may mean just 3 card and the direct 1NT response (8-10) may conceal a 4 card ♦ suit.
- School D Bid 2♣ (or 3♣ if you play inverted minors) with 6-8 points. A direct 1NT shows 8-10 and denies any 4 card suit other than ♣'s.

Chuck pointed out that some players have a slightly different range for the 1NT bid with schools C or D – (9-11, or 8-11). OK, having another bid for the lower range is what's important. Which is the preferred method? I definitely prefer school C but it is not commonly played. This advantage with the school C approach is just one reason why I always open 1♣ (when I cannot open 1NT) when equal length (33 or 44) in the minors, and why I like to open 1♣ when exactly 4432.

School D is reasonable. The only problem is that in a sequence like 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 1NT then the range of the 1NT bid is still an unmanageable 6-10.

If you have no agreement with partner, I would assume school B. Bidding 1NT is a poor bid if there is a sensible alternative. 6-10 is a large point spread, so bid your ♦ suit if you have one and wait for partner's rebid. So, back to the problem hand. If responder is indeed 3334 then 2♣ is a far better contract than 1NT. John G held this hand and rebid 2♣, a bid with which I totally agree. Hans says that this promises 6 ♣'s. I say not so, especially if partner promises 4 ♣'s with his 1NT bid.

What if you belong to school A (The NT hog school? - which I believe has little merit other than ensuring that the weaker hand is declarer in a NT contract), then responder has 6-10 points and does not promise 4 ♣'s. He is probably 3343 or 3334 shape. With the points concentrated in two suits, opener rebidding 2♣ with Hand 19W is still best, but Hans says it must be a 6 card suit. I disagree. As I said, I don't like school A, but then getting to play the hand has never been high on my list of priorities. What actually happened?

Hand 19E This was partner's hand which responded 1NT. Unless this bid specifically promises 9-10 points (school C) then I don't like it. Bid 1♦. In this particular case partner would rebid 1♥. You could then try 1NT, but I would prefer 2♣ as partner is very likely to have a 5 card ♣ suit and the pointed suits are weak. Anyway, this hand responded 1NT initially (School A?) and opener rebid 2♣. What now after opener rebids 2♣? Obviously pass. This hand (Hans) chose 3NT 'because it is vulnerable at teams and partner has a 6 card ♣ suit'. When the dust had settled, that was 300 away. Defender's cashed their 5 ♠ tricks, but a defensive mistake meant that they only got 2 of their 3 top ♦ tricks. East berated West for not having 6 ♣'s. What West said about East's 3NT bid is unprintable. I *totally* agree with West, although I can print something: -

Even if West did have 6 ♣'s, you still lose the first 8 tricks. Once you have limited your hand (1NT here) partner is the captain. If you feel that you must do something because you are top of the range, then enrol in school C. West (correctly) thought that 2♣ was a better contract than 1NT. As West's 2♣ rebid says that he does not like 1NT, he is sure not to like 3NT. West has a two suited hand (♥'s and ♣'s in this case) or a single suited hand. East has most of his points in West's suits. Two suits are probably wide open. Agreed, East does not know which other suit West has (a very good case for bidding 1♦ initially to find out). Finally, West's rebid of 2♣ most certainly *does not* promise 6 ♣'s as East has promised 3 or 4 cards in the suit and there is a fit. I can go on and on, but this hand really is a beginner's problem and I have said enough already.

Board 9 from Monday: -

East 9	West 9
♠ KJ108	♠ 753
♥ K83	♥ AQ4
♦ K6	♦ J932
♣ AJ92	♣ K74

An easy 3NT was reached at three tables. East opened 1NT (15-17) and West raised to 3NT. At the fourth table they were playing a weak NT. East opened 1♣ and West replied 1NT which East passed. The problem is that if East makes an effort (with 2NT) over West's 1NT, then 2NT may be in jeopardy if West has just 6 points. Thus it really is important

to enrol in school C if you play a weak NT. Incidentally, this East hand is a perfect example of why I don't particularly care for opening 1♠ when I have an alternative, a 1♣ opener allows West to show his point range. So, with these hands, the bidding when playing Acol should go:

East	West	(1) I am a member of the Jeremy Flint fan club, bid 4 card suits up the line. So 1♣ here and not 1♠.
1♣ (1)	1NT (2)	(2) School C. 8-10 points, may have 4 ♦'s.
2NT (3)	3NT (4)	(3) invitational
		(4) OK

Note that School D fails here, as the sequence 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♠ - 1NT (6-10) leaves East no better off than the actual sequence played at table 4.

The bottom line. Enrolling in School C is a good idea as it informs opener of your point range more accurately. It is really important if you play a weak NT as partner will not know what to do if he has 15-16 points. This particular problem does not exist when playing a strong NT as partner would have opened 1NT.

Board 13 from Monday: -

East

West

♠ AKJ	♠ Q107
♥ A1096	♥ J42
♦ 6	♦ A105
♣ KJ875	♣ Q932

This board was played 4 times but the good 5♣ contract was reached only once. East opens 1♣. If a 1NT response from West promise 8-10 points and at least 3♣'s (School C) or 8-10 points and 4♣'s (School D), then 5♣ should be easily reached (perhaps a 3♦ splinter from East?). A reverse bid of 2♥ by East should also get to 5♣.

Another alternative with this Board 13 is that West can bid an inverted 2♣ (if you play inverted minors). I think it's dodgy, I prefer a better/more shapely hand for an inverted minor raise and I prefer 1NT (8-10) with this hand.

So, belonging to School C or D is also important if you play a strong NT (this last sequence is independent of your opening NT range).

Just one final point. There is a mechanism that solves all of these problems concerning schools C, D etc. It is called Walsh, whereby after the bidding starts 1♣ - 1♦, then opener may bid 1NT concealing 4 card major(s). It is, however, probably a bit too complex for the news sheets, so best to stick a school other than school A.

Lead the A from AK?

I held J83 when defending a week or so ago. Partner led the King and dummy came down with three small. I encouraged with the 8. Partner then produced the Ace and declared made his queen. I thought that partner had led K from KQ. You have to discuss this with your partner, but I recommend for all casual partnerships that you always lead top from everything, it is a good simple system. So A from AK and K from KQ.

Last week's winners: Monday 21/7/03

Friday 25/7/03

1st Bob/Joe 62%
 2nd Chuck/Terry 60%

1st Chuck/Terry 58 VP's
 2nd John G/John 48 VP's

Well Excuse Me for Bidding My Hand!Board 17 from Friday 18th

West	East	West (Bill)	North	East (Ian)	South
♠ AK52	♠ 103	1♦	1♥	♦2	pass
♥ K42	♥ 103	2♠	pass	pass !	pass
♦ KQ843	♦ A752				
♣ K	♣ QJ873				

I was not at the table, but apparently a conversation along the following lines ensued: -

West: How can you pass my 2♠ bid?
 East: I have already said I have a weak hand. So why bid on?
 West: I was looking for game.
 East: Stick to the system, I have a weak hand.
 West: Well excuse me for bidding my hand.

So, who was correct? I was asked to comment. The following is my view, whatever I say I know that a certain somebody will disagree with me, but here goes: -

East's bid showed about 6-9 points and ♦ support. West's subsequent 2♠ bid shows a good ♠ suit and is a try for game opposite what East has already said. It invites East to investigate/bid game if he is maximum for his bidding so far. I fully agree with West's bids. East's hand is perhaps borderline as to go to game or not. Many would, others would not; that is not the issue here. If East believes that game is impossible, simply bid 3♦. Do not pass with the mistaken impression that West has made a silly bid. The only silly bid was East's pass.

What actually happened? ♣A and ♥A were with North (as expected). South had no entry and 5♦ would have made. 3♦ was bid (making +3) at the other table. 2♠ went down.

Transfers over 2NT?

Board 15 from Friday 25th

Transfers over 1NT are pretty universal these days, with 2♠ either being used as a transfer to ♣'s or a transfer to ♣/♦'s. But what if partner opens 2NT (either directly or via 2♣)? Opener has shown a big hand, 20+, there is no need for a weak transfer to a minor. With a weak hand and a long minor, either pass 2NT or chance 3NT. There are few other options as 3♣ is Stayman, 3♦ is a transfer to ♥'s and 3♠ is needed for a special case as mentioned below. Anyway, even if you could transfer into 4♣/♦, would that be a good contract? Not too often.

East15	Hand A	East15 is from Friday. Partner opened 2NT (20-22), what is your bid? You really <i>must</i> play transfers in this situation.
♠ 76532	♠ K7652	You simply want to play in 3♠. If you do not play transfers and simply bid 3♠, then how does partner know if you have
♥ 5	♥ A4	five ♠'s and garbage or a game going hand like Hand A?
♦ J842	♦ J842	Simple. Transfer. With East15, bid 3♥ and pass partner's reply.
♣ 843	♣ 43	With Hand A, transfer and then bid 3NT, showing 5 ♠'s and offering partner the choice between 4♠ and 3NT. Transfers are good over 1NT, with less bidding space they (or some similar system like Baron/Flint) are <i>imperative</i> over 2NT.

So, what happened? East15 bid 3♠ (meaning it as natural) and the partnership got too high. Now then, what should 3♠ mean after a 2NT opener? Perhaps for the more advanced player, but when playing transfers the best use for the bid is that it shows game going values with 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s. The reason is that there is insufficient room to transfer and bid ♥'s below 3NT. There is no problem with the other major two-suiter, with 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s you can transfer (3♦) and then bid 3♠, forcing.

Negative Doubles at the Two Level?

Board 19 from Friday 25th

Negative doubles are played slightly differently by just about every partnership. This hand came up on Friday and my and Chuck's treatment of negative doubles are exactly the same.

North19	I held this hand on Friday and my partner (Chuck) opened 1♦. RHO bid 2♣, what do you do? First of all, one very important point to clear up.
♠ AK64	How strong does a negative double at the two level need to be? With
♥ 10542	no interference, this hand is not strong enough for a two level bid, but
♦ 8763	after RHO's bid has pushed us there, a negative double is perfectly OK
♣ 9	with this hand. Why? Because the negative double <i>does not</i> promise the same values as a two level bid, it only promises values to compete at this

level in opener's suit or a suit shown by the negative double. This hand is a perfect example, you are quite happy if partner's rebid is 2♦, 2♥, or 2♠. Your negative double does *not* promise sufficient values for partner to rebid 2NT on a flat 12-14.

Push 'em Up and Double?!

Board 14 from Friday 25th , Love all.

West14	West	North	East	South
♠ K7	-	-	pass	1 ♠
♥ AKJ754	2 ♥	2 ♠	pass	pass
♦ Q7	3 ♥	3 ♠	pass	pass
♣ K93	?			

N-S were trying to play in just 2 ♠ , you were happy with 3 ♥ but it pushed them up to the three level. What now? 4 ♥ is obviously absurd, but double? They are one level above their comfort zone. Basically, this is one of those situations where the type of scoring is very important. Your expectation is that 3 ♠ will be one down, but doubling at IMPs (teams) is a very bad move. If they go one down, then you gain 100 instead of 50, not important at IMPs. But if they make then they score 530, very significant. At pairs double is perfectly sound, but not at teams.

What happened? 3 ♠ made for the biggest swing of the match.

Play The Big One

Board 10 from Friday 18th

North 10	West	North (me)	East	South (Chuck)
♠ KJ2	-	-	pass	pass
♥ K83	1 ♠	1NT (1)	2 ♠	3 ♥ (2)
♦ A	pass	4 ♥	all pass	
♣ AJ7532				

I held this hand playing with Chuck. First of all, the bidding. I chose 1NT at (1) because I considered it to be the best bid. Unlike 1NT openers, a 1NT overcall is allowed (and often best) on hands like this (but only if the singleton is a minor suit). Chuck's 3 ♥ (2) was forcing (we play Lebensohl here) and so I had no problem bidding game. Fine, now onto the play: -

Chuck won the opening lead in hand and played a small ♥ towards this dummy (me). West paused for a while and Chuck said 'play the big one'. West played the ♥ A and I obediently played the ♥ K from dummy. A few moments later Chuck woke up and asked 'what happened to my trump king'? I replied that he played it under West's ♥ A. Now apparently Chuck was talking to West when he said to 'play the big one' (suggesting that he play the ace). Opponents, of course, subsequently made the ♥ Q. Chuck was not amused. Everybody else at the table (Bill, Ian and myself) thought it hilarious. What was the final outcome? Chuck made 11 tricks and only 10 were made at the other table! The smile came back onto Chuck's face.

And the moral? I guess don't tell the opponents what to play when your partner is a dummy like me?

Redouble ! of 1NT

Board 14 from Fri 18th

- North 14 I held this hand on Friday. Partner opened 1♦, RHO overcalled 1NT (15-17). What do you bid? Nine points, partner has opened in 2nd seat,
- ♠ A732 this particular partner (Chuck) opens soundly, so we have the balance
 - ♥ 532 of the points. Thus my favourite bid, double! This is penalties.
 - ♦ J52 LHO redoubled and all passed. What did the redouble mean?
 - ♣ A92
- 1♦ 1NT dbl redbl? all pass

Actually, the 1NT overcaller should be able to work this out without prior agreement. Assume 1♦ is 12+ points and doubler is 9+ points, overcaller himself had 16 points, that leaves max 3 points for partner. The redouble can only be SOS, looking for a 4-4 fit. My double states that our side have the majority of the points. Just as an aside, what do you lead against 1NT redoubled? Answer below.

That sequence is easy, the following is not quite so simple: -

1NT dbl redbl?

In the 1st sequence, the 1NT bidder knows that his side is outgunned and that redouble can only be for SOS. In the 2nd sequence it is not clear. Does the 1NT bidder's partner have a big hand and looking for a huge score, or is it also SOS? This one you cannot work out and you have to agree it with your partner. Many play redouble as SOS also in this 2nd sequence. I am not so convinced when playing a strong NT (I prefer to stick it to 'em when they interfere with our strong NT) Another system that is popular is the a pass by responder forces opener to double; responder then passes with a good hand or else runs. It's up to you. And what did you lead against 1NT redoubled? ♦2 is the answer, low from an honour and partner's suit must be best.

Do You Open ?

Board 8 from Friday 18th

- North 8 2nd in hand, nobody vul, teams scoring, do you open? 12 points, no jacks so yes? I did not. First, it does not comply with the rule of 20. Secondly, it is totally flat (so deduct one point). Thirdly, the only 4 card suit contains no honour. This hand is not an opener in my book. Much to my surprise, Chuck said that he would open it. Hans, of course, sided against me and said that he also would open. Would you? And what happened? Passed out. They opened at the other table, partner had an 8 count and 1NT went one down.
- Hand B When I got home, I did a quick check to find a similar hand. This Hand B is from a recent Max Hardy book. Pretty similar, in fact I prefer Hand B as it has points in the long suit and better intermediates. Anyway, Max says to pass.
- ♠ QJ9 Basically, I think that there are two ways of looking at it. Either use the
 - ♥ K985 rule of 20 or else deduct 1 point for 4333 type shape and open on 12+.
 - ♦ J43 Both hands fail both tests
 - ♣ KQ9

A 1NT Opener?

Board 5 from Monday 14th :-

North 5	South 5	Two North's opened the hand with 1♠ and reached the sensible 2♠ contract. The other two North's elected to open a strong NT. Many experts (including Zia Mahmood!, remember that 1NT doubled minus seven from news sheet 12?) would open 1NT with this North. I personally prefer 1♠ with a good suit like this, but it is a personal preference.
♠ AKJ63	♠ Q75	
♥ A2	♥ 98543	
♦ J84	♦ K52	
♣ A64	♣ QJ	

What happened? At one table, south transferred and passed the 2♥ reply. Correct in my view, this is a poor 8 count and not worth a try for game. 2♠ cannot be reached after a 1NT opening. And at the other table? N-S lucked out. North again opened 1NT but this time East overcalled 2♦. South doubled and 2♦ doubled minus two was a top for N-S.

So what was this double of 2♦? South meant is as saying that he would have bid 2♦ himself (so still a transfer). North took it as penalties. Who was correct? You can play it however you like. Both approaches are common, you simply have to agree with partner! I personally prefer all doubles as penalties (especially when playing a strong NT) and I play Lebensohl. I like to play all systems (Stayman and transfers) off when there is *any* interference over my partner's 1NT, but it's up to you to decide with your partner.

Can a ♠ Game be reached?

Board 5 (modified) from Monday 14th :-

Same board, but with a slightly stronger South hand. Suppose North again opens 1NT, can 4♠ be reached with no interference?

Noprth5	South5	North	South	South (1) is an invitation to game North's normal options are pass, 3NT or 4♥. I suggest another possible bid - 3♠ (2). This accepts the game invitation but also says that North has 5 decent ♠'s. South can then either bid 4♠ or 3NT.
♠ AKJ63	♠ Q75	1NT	2♦	
♥ A2	♥ 98543	2♥	2NT (1)	
♦ J84	♦ A52	3♠ (2)	4♠	
♣ A64	♣ QJ	pass		

An Opening Pre-empt?

Board 17 from Mon 25th

East 17 I held this hand on Monday, non-vul and in 2nd seat. What do you open?
I opened 1♠ and there was considerable debate about the
♠ AKQ10943 opening bid after the hand. Chuck said that he would open 3♠.
♥ 1054 I said that the hand was far too good, Guy agreed with me.
♦ J Hans at first sided with Chuck of course, but upon reflection said that
♣ 109 1♠ was OK because I had ♥ 'support'. So, who's right?

First of all, Hans. He said 1♠ is only OK because of the ♥ suit. He added that if the ♥ holding was switched with a minor suit holding then he would open 3♠. I see no difference, the hand is probably going to be played in ♠'s and whether your 3 card suit is ♥'s or a minor hardly matters.

Next, a 3♠ opening? Partner has not passed. You have a good hand, with your fair share of the points and an excellent spade suit. Who are you pre-empting? LHO or partner? This hand is (in my and Guy's view) far too good for 3♠. If the ♠A or ♠K were replaced by a small ♠, then I would open 3♠. The only bid other than 1♠ worth considering is 4♠ and I think that it is an equally good bid.

Position at the table is very important for pre-empts, and my opinion of this hand in the four positions is:

1st seat 1♠ or 4♠. I slightly prefer 4♠ here as it is 2-1 that it is the opponents who have the points.
2nd seat 1♠ or 4♠. Both are fine by me.
3rd seat 4♠. Only LHO left and partner has passed. Pre-empt to the hilt.
4th seat There is no such thing as a pre-empt in 4th seat. Opening 2 or 3 bids are bid with an expectation of making if partner has his fair share of points. Bid 2♠. 3♠ is also a very reasonable alternative, especially if you play strong two's or strong two's in 4th seat. You expect partner to have 9-11 points and 2♠ or 3♠ should make your way.

I would *never* open this hand 3♠ (except maybe in 4th seat). Either 1♠ or 4♠.

Pre-empt in 4th seat?

Hand C Obviously you do not need to pre-empt in 4th seat as you can pass the hand out. An opening 2♥/♠ can be played how you wish. Some play this as a traditional strong bid (8 playing tricks). Another option for 2♠ would be something like Hand C. 9-12 points, so 3 or so points more than a traditional weak two. Be wary of opening 2♥ in 4th seat. If you don't have a good hand or a good ♠ holding opponents may steal the contract in ♠'s.

♠ KQ9874
♥ KQ4
♦ 8
♣ J74

Last week's winners: Monday 28/7/03

Friday 1/8/03

1st Chuck/Terry 68%
 2nd Tobjorn/Gunn 62%

only 7 players, so no results.

A New Format

In my eternal quest to make the news-sheet more interesting, I am trying something new. On this first page you are given a number of bidding questions, all the hands are from recent weeks at the club. See how you do.

Bidding Quiz

Solutions appear throughout this news-sheet._

Hand A Hand B

♠ AQ8 ♠ A10
 ♥ 985 ♥ AJ8753
 ♦ J3 ♦ A93
 ♣ QJ542 ♣ K7

You are playing a strong NT for these two.
 With Hand A, partner opens 1♦, what do you reply? And what if you had passed initially, does that change your bid?

With Hand B, you open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠.
 So, 16 points and a 6 card suit, what is your rebid?

Hand C Hand D

♠ AQ ♠ A104
 ♥ AQ98 ♥ 10632
 ♦ 75 ♦ K
 ♣ Q10952 ♣ AQJ43

Hand C was held by an Acol player. So, playing 4 card majors and a weak NT, what do you open with Hand C?

With Hand D partner opens 1♦. What do you bid?
 If you choose 2♣, partner rebids 2♦. What is your 2nd bid?

Hand E Hand F

♠ K5 ♠ J
 ♥ A742 ♥ K875
 ♦ KQ74 ♦ AQJ973
 ♣ 876 ♣ K6

You are playing a strong NT. With Hand E, partner passes as dealer. You open 1♦ and partner responds 2♣. What is your bid?

With Hand F you open 1♦ and partner responds 2♣ (promising 8+ pts – you are playing Acol). What is your rebid?
 What would your rebid be if partner had responded 1♥?

Hand G Hand H

♠ KJ32 ♠ J8652
 ♥ A4 ♥ 103
 ♦ J1064 ♦ K103
 ♣ AKQ ♣ A52

You are again playing a strong NT.
 With Hand G, partner opens 1♦, you bid 1♠ and partner rebids 1NT (12-14). You try Blackwood/Gerber and partner has 1 ace. What do you bid. Do you have enough for 6NT?

With Hand H partner opens 1NT (15-17). You transfer and partner obediently bids 2♠. What now?

The Power of a Fit

Board 19 from Monday 21st

North (G)	South	North (Joe)	South (Bob)
♠ KJ32	♠ A6	-	1♦
♥ A4	♥ K1095	1♠	1NT (1)
♦ J1064	♦ KQ972	2♣ (2)	2NT (3)
♣ AKQ	♣ J8	4NT (4)	5♦
		6♦	pass

(1) 12-14

(2) 2♣ is a new suit by responder and is forcing. Some players play this as Checkback/NMF but I believe that Joe/Bob play it as natural. Sometimes it is OK to bid a three card minor and there is no better bid here. 2♦, of course, would be weak and 3♦ is only invitational.

(3) Bob had choices here. If you play the 2♣ bid as natural then there is little point in bidding 2♥ (2♥ would not be a reverse as he has already limited his hand). Anyway, with good cover in the suits that Joe had not bid, 2NT is fine. With 3 card ♠ support, South would have bid 2♠ of course.

(4) I prefer to play 4♣ as asking for aces here (after partner's last natural bid was NT).

I believe that Joe/Bob had agreed to play 4NT Blackwood if ♣'s had been bid naturally. Either is fine as long as you agree it with your partner.

Well done Joe/Bob. This board was played 4 times, and only they found the excellent 6♦ contract. Others were in 6NT (one pair in 3NT) and justice was served when ♠Q was offside so 6NT was -1. The only injustice was that Chuck and I got a bottom (Joe/Bob bid this against us). 6NT depends upon the ♠ finesse, 6♦ is a doddle and depends upon nothing. These hands have 31 combined points, that is not enough for slam unless you have a fit or a long suit to run. Of course, when you have a fit, you have to play in it!

I have said repeatedly not to look for minor suit games, 3NT is usually better. I have also said that with fits (4-4 or 5-4) in a major, bid the major suit game rather than 3NT. However, I have not yet said much about slams. The principle of the 4-4 or better fit is also relevant for slam contracts, it will often give an extra trick (as in this case). Minor suit 4-4 fits are fine for slam, do not bid 6NT just because you have no major suit fit – if there is a minor suit fit, then bid the slam in the minor unless you have oodles (33+) of points. A combined 31 points is not usually enough for 6NT without a long suit, it is enough for slam if there is a fit.

But how does North know that South has 4(+) ♦'s? Playing a short ♣ a 1♦ opening is always 4+. Playing Better Minor an initial 1♦ opening may be 3 card. However, South's bidding has denied 3 card ♠ support, so with just 2 ♠'s he must have 4 or 5 ♦'s.

Note that this is still an excellent slam even if South has only 4 ♦'s. e.g. replace 2♦ with the 2♣ and 6♦ is still cold. Then, of course, 6NT would fail even if ♠Q was onside.

A Two level response? Board 1 from Monday 21st. Love all, South opens in 3rd seat.

North (A)	South (E)	North	South
♠ AQ8	♠ K5	pass	1♦
♥ 985	♥ A742	2♣	2NT
♦ J3	♦ KQ74	pass	
♣ QJ542	♣ 876		

This really is a poor contract, 1NT is far safer. What went wrong? A two level response after passing shows about 10-11 points and a 5 or 6 card suit. It is not an invitation for partner to bid on with a miserable 12 count. South should pass, there is a known 5-3 or better fit. Mind you, I would not bid 2♣ with Hand A (but 1NT) as I would prefer a better suit to suggest a final 2♣ contract.

Chuck's Comment: - *'Why 10-11 points for a two level response? Pard does not have 15 (he would have opened 1NT), so bid 1NT with 10 pts. If pard has a better than min hand then he will give you another chance to bid. 2♣ by a passed hand shows 11-12 points.'*

So there you have it. I don't like the 2♣ bid here, Chuck rules it out completely.

Now consider the case where North is not a passed hand, say South dealt and again opens 1♦, what should North bid now? 2♣ would be forcing and this hand is not good enough to cope with a probable 2NT response from partner.

Hand A	Hand J	Hand K
♠ AQ8	♠ AQ8	♠ AQ8
♥ 985	♥ J95	♥ Q95
♦ J3	♦ J2	♦ J2
♣ QJ542	♣ QJ1042	♣ KJ1042

Let's study this a little deeper. We are playing a strong NT and partner deals and opens 1♦. What is our response with each of these hands?

We have already discussed Hand A. It should bid 1NT. The reason is that if you bid 2♣ and partner replies with the quite likely 2NT then you may well be too high.

And Hand J? Enough for an invitation? If partner had opened a weak NT (12-14), then you would invite with 2NT. You are, however, playing a Strong NT. If you bid 2♣ and partner rebids 2NT (12-14) then what? No room to invite. You have no idea whether to bid 3NT or pass. The wrong hand is making the decision and you will get it wrong 50% of the time. So, the hand with the point spread has to make the decision. Easy. The correct bid with this hand is 2NT showing a balanced 11 points. If opener has the 12-14 type hand then he knows whether to bid game or not. Chuck agrees, bid 2NT.

And Hand K? Here you will not be embarrassed by a 2NT rebid from partner. Respond 2♣ as you can then safely bid 3NT over a 2NT rebid. Chuck recommends 3NT with hand K. I can't really see why, but a minor disagreement.

If you play a weak NT, then obviously a no-brainer. Bid 2♣ with all 3 hands.

Summary: (when playing a strong NT)

After a 1♦ opening from partner: -

Hand A :- 1NT
Hand J :- 2NT
Hand K :- 2♣

If you had passed initially
and partner opens 1♦:-

Hand A :- 1NT (or 2♣?)
Hand J :- 2NT
Hand K :- you would have opened

Inviting after a Transfer

Board 1 from Monday 14th

You do not always have to bid an excellent slam to get a clear top. Sometimes just having a good understanding of hand evaluation (not just counting points) will also score a top.

East1 (H) You hold this Hand H and partner opens a strong NT. Obviously you transfer with 2♥ and partner completes the transfer with 2♠. What now?
♠ J8652 Simple really, all the books say that with 8 points opposite a 1NT opener you should invite. So bid 2NT, invitational (8 points) and showing just a 5 card ♠ suit. That's what happened at three of the four tables on Monday.
♥ 103
♦ K103
♣ A52 3NT was reached twice and 3♠ once. They all failed. So, no problem, you have followed the 'rules' and it failed – it will be the same for everybody?

But what happened at the fourth table? Well, that East simply passed 2♠. What! Does this East not know about points? Does he not read any books? Doesn't he read the news-sheets?

Actually he does – it was me! Just look at that trump suit, jack high with no intermediates. High cards are good in long suits, not 3 card suits. With very poor trumps, no touching honours etc. etc. this hand is not worth an invitational bid. And what happened? 2♠ made on the nose.

By the way, if 4♠ is going to make opposite this hand then partner will usually need a good hand with 4 trumps. We play super accepts and partner's simple acceptance of the transfer denied 4 trumps.

The Jump Rebid

Board 2 from Monday, dealer East

East (B)	West	East	Hand B from the front page. Did you jump to 3♥? If you did then you have plenty of company. The board was played 5 times on Monday and only
♠ A10	-	1♥	Chuck/myself rested in 2♥. Other contracts of 3♥,
♥ AJ8753	1♠	2♥	4♥ and 3NT stood no chance.
♦ A93	pass		
♣ K7			

A jump to 3♥ here is not forcing but is strongly invitational. It shows a good 6+ card suit and about 16-18 points. East has a good hand, but the ♥ suit is too moth-eaten to jump to the three level when partner has promised no support. A quiet 2♥ is quite sufficient with this hand. If game is on, partner will make another move.

Skip a 4 Card Major and bid it later?West Hand 21 from Monday 21st

		<u>Table 1</u>		<u>Table 2</u>		<u>Table 3</u>	
East (F)	West (D)	East	West	East	West	East	West
♠ J	♠ A104	1♦	2♣	1♦	1♥ (1)	1♦	2♣
♥ K875	♥ 10632	2♦	3♣	4♥ (2)	6♥ (3)	2♦	2♥ (4)
♦ AQJ973	♦ K	pass		pass		3♥ (5)	4♥ (6)
♣ K6	♣ AQJ43					pass	

Table 1: 3♣ made an overtrick, but 4♥ made +1 at other tables. What went wrong?

1♦ is the correct opening even if you play Acol. 2♣ by West is also correct.

Should East bid 2♥ at his 2nd turn? No. That would be a reverse and this hand is not good enough, so 2♦ is fine. And West's 3♣ bid? This is where it went wrong, West has values for game. 3♣ is not forcing and, what's more, it denies a 4 card major. A double sin. West should bid 2♥ (a new suit by responder, so forcing) at his 2nd turn.

Table 2: This also went wrong when West bid on over 4♥. What was the problem here?

East's jump to 4♥ at (2) shows a relatively balanced hand (no singleton),

18-20 points and 4♥'s. It invites partner to look for slam. This hand is not good enough and it is not balanced. Neither is it good enough for a game forcing 3♠ splinter, the trumps are too weak and the hand is not strong enough. Be satisfied with a 3♥ bid over partner's 1♥. Now what about that 1♥ bid at (1)? As I said earlier, 2♣ is to be preferred. If you bid 1♥, what is your next bid if partner rebids 1NT or 2♦? A♣ bid would show 5♥'s. If possible, try to bid out your shape; if West starts with 2♣ and then bids ♥'s next go, that shows a game forcing hand with 5♣'s and 4♥'s – perfect. Having started out on the wrong foot, what should West do at (3)? If partner indeed has about 19 points, then slam may well be there. I suggest 5♥, which means 'I have values for slam opposite your monster but I am worried about the quality of the trump suit, bid 6♥ with good trumps'. 5♥ would have made because the ♥A was onside with North. So just two trump losers.

Table 3: They got it right. Perfect bidding. West correctly showed his good ♣ suit first.

2♥ at (4) is a reverse after a two level response and is game forcing. 3♥ at (5)

is stronger than 4♥ (fast arrival) and is encouraging. West wisely did not investigate slam at (6) because of his poor trumps. Indeed, 4♥ could easily be the limit if the ♥'s lie badly.

Chuck's Comment: - *The only sensible auction was at table 3 and I agree with it 100%. At table 2 East's 4♥ bid was an overbid and West's bid of 6♥ is justified although the initial 1♥ response was a poor bid.* A minor and unimportant difference of opinion (about what West should bid over East's 4♥ at table 2). No problem, Chuck and I would both bid as Table 3.

Note. This concept of responder bidding the strong 5 card minor and then reversing into the 4 card major was fully covered in news-sheet 23. It is standard practice.

Open a 4 Card Major?

West Hand 19 from Monday 21st

Hand C You are playing Acol (4 card majors, weak NT). What do you open?
A decent 4 card major, so open it 1♥? Many Acol players would, but what
♠ AQ is your rebid? Partner responded 1♠. If you now bid 2♣ then this promises
♥ AQ98 5♥'s. The holder knew that he now had a problem, and settled for 2♠,
♦ 75 with that resulting in a final contract of 4♠ minus two. So how do you bid
♣ Q10952 this hand (playing Acol)? The answer is that although you play 4 card majors,
that does not mean that you must open a 4 card major just because you have
one. Many people would open this hand 1♣, but you have the same problem after a 1♠ response from partner.
You do not have the values to reverse into 2♥, the hand is not strong enough for 2NT (15-16) and it really
would be sad to have to rebid that ♣ suit. Easiest is to simply open 1NT. If you don't like it, then read up on the
Crowhurst convention.

So when should you open a 4 card major when playing Acol? Personally, I rarely do. I will only open
a *decent* 4 card major and then only if my rebid is No Trump (so I have a balanced hand and 15+ points)
and I really only like to do it with a good 16+ (a hand where I will raise the 'awkward' 1NT response to
2NT).

Bidding Quiz answers

These have all been fully described earlier, but a summary is: -

- Hand A: Respond 1NT to a 1♦ opening. 2♣ is a problem if partner rebids 2NT.
If you are a passed hand, then still respond 1NT. Although a response of 2♣ having passed is
not totally unreasonable, it should be a better suit.
- Hand B: Rebid 2♥. The hand does not warrant a jump to 3♥.
- Hand C: I prefer a weak 1NT opening. If you do not open 1NT with two doubletons, then open 1♣. You
have no rebid if you open 1♥.
- Hand D: You should bid 2♣ at the first turn and then 2♥ if partner rebids 2♦. This
first 2♣ bid is not denying a 4 card major as you intent to bid it next go.
- Hand E: You should pass partner's 2♣ bid. You have a 5-3 or better ♣ fit. You expect partner to have
5 *good* ♣'s or a 6 card ♣ suit.
- Hand F: Rebid 2♦ after a 2♣ response. The hand is not strong enough for a 2♥ reverse.
If partner's initial response was 1♥, then rebid 3♥. The hand is not strong enough for a splinter
(3♠) nor good enough for a jump to 4♥.
- Hand G: Bid 6♦. With a 4-4 (possibly 5-4) fit, the ♦ slam has better chances than NT. You do not have
enough for 6NT.
- Hand H: Pass! This ♠ suit is too miserable to invite game.

Last week's winners: Monday 4/8/03

Friday 8/8/03

1st Martin/Chuck 60%
2nd John/John 57%

only 6 players,
so no results

A New Approach

Apart from the new front page (the quiz), I am trying a few new things to make sure that everybody likes the news-sheets and appreciates how much time/effort I put into them. The last thing that I want to do is upset anybody, so from now on I will refrain from mentioning people by name unless my comments are complimentary (Chuck, of course, is excluded from this concession). Also, I understand that Chuck is going to become a resident (does anybody know where I can purchase Valium tablets?) and so I will always produce a draft copy of the news-sheet for comments on Friday to be included in the Monday issue; Chuck (and anybody else present) will hopefully 'approve' it. If you wish to have an input, simply arrive early on Fridays (I will always try to be there by 9.30 in future). I can also stay later if required.

One thing remains unchanged; if anybody openly criticises anybody's (especially my) bid or play during any game then the gloves are off. I will print my/all opinions and mention names; if you don't know what you are talking about, then keep it to yourself. Criticising people (especially opponents) when they have not asked for your opinion will most certainly be fully reported in the news-sheets if I consider that you are incorrect.

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A you are playing 5 card majors and a strong NT. Partner opens 1♥ and RHO doubles. Nobody is vulnerable. What is your bid?
♠ K10863	♠ K7	
♥ J85	♥ A9874	
♦ K6	♦ A10954	With Hand B you open 1♥, LHO bids 2♣, partner bids 2♥ and RHO bids 3♣. What is your bid?
♣ AQ10	♣ J	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠, what is your bid?
♠ KQ62	♠ KQ62	
♥ J832	♥ Q832	With Hand D partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠, you make a negative double and partner replies 2♥. What is your next bid?
♦ Q5	♦ Q5	
♣ J96	♣ Q96	

Eight out of Ten for Chuck?

Chuck gave me his answers to last week's bidding quiz. He got two 'wrong' and so scored 80%. Of course Chuck sees it differently, he scored 100% and I get just 80%. We will have a look at the two hands where we found different bids and have Chuck's and my comments. We disagree on Hands G and H.

Inviting After a Transfer

Hand H Partner opens 1NT (15-17). You transfer and partner obediently bids 2♠. What now? I say pass, Chuck says 2NT. So, my opinions first: -

- ♠ J8652 We play super-accepts. Many experts play a super-accept as any 4-card support or a max with good 3 card support (the responses tell you what).
- ♥ 103
- ♦ K103 When you transfer with this hand and partner fails to super-accept, then game is remote. This is a miserable 8 count and if you bid on, you will go down (in either a part-score or game) much more often than you will find a makeable game. Even if you do not super-accept with a good hand and 3 card support, 2NT is a poor bid here as it is a miserable 8 count (poor ♠'s).
- ♣ A52

Chuck's comment: - *I will only super-accept with 4 trumps. Super-accepting has nothing to do with rebidding 2NT or 3NT. Describe your hand, 8-9 pts with 5 ♠'s. Pard can have 17 pts for a good shot at 3NT or pass 2NT with 15-16 points and 2 ♠'s.*

So, what do you think is more likely? Making 3NT (possibly 4♠ on a 5-3 fit) or going down in a contract of 2NT, 3♠ or more? What happened at the table (I know it's irrelevant?)? Partner had 15 pts, contracts of 2NT or 3♠ went down; 2♠ was the limit and scored a clear top.

Nice Try, Chuck

Board 12 from Friday 1st, Dealer West, N-S vul.

West (B)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ K7	♠ A9643	1♥	2♣	2♥ (1)	3♣
♥ A9874	♥ K52	3♦ (2)	pass	4♥ (3)	all pass
♦ A10954	♦ Q863				
♣ J	♣ 9	Chuck was West.			

- (1) East has no option but 2♥ after North's overcall. A negative double would show ♠'s but there is no point as you already have a ♥ fit. The 2♥ bid shows 6-9 points and may be either 3 or 4 card support.
- (2) This is a game try. It asks partner to bid game (4♥) if he is non-minimum for his bid.
- (3) I liked my hand. Despite having only 3 trumps, the singleton ♣, ♠A and reasonable ♦ suit are all plus factors, so I bid the game.

An excellent game contract on just a combined 21 points. Nice (game) try Chuck. This West hand is Hand B from the front page. A 3♥ bid would only be competitive (not invitational). 3♦ is the game try inviting partner to bid 4♥, it is coincidental that West has a good ♦ suit. This West hand has only 12 points, but the excellent shape warrants a try for game. Since Chuck gets his fair share of stick in these news-sheets (he asks for it), it's only fair to comment on his successes.

Chuck's comment: - *'About time you recognised greatness'*.

Redouble ! ?

Board 8 from Friday 1st

Partner opens 1 of a suit, RHO doubles. What does a redouble by you show? It should be 9+ points (Chuck prefers 10+), showing that your side has the balance of power. You are out for blood. It shows a desire to punish opponents for having the cheek to interfere with your auction and usually implies a mis-fit with partner. Chuck disagreed with my bid on this hand and *insisted* that I write it up in the news-sheet (we play 5 card majors).

I am always obliging, so here goes: -

East 8 (A) Partner opens 1♥, RHO doubles. Nobody is vulnerable. What is your bid?
Presumably you have game your way (Pard has 5♥'s) and that will score
♠ K10863 420 or 450. RHO's double should show 4♠'s. A double of 1♥ should
♥ J85 promise 4♠'s or a *very* good hand. I held this hand and realised that we
♦ K6 had an easy 420+ in 4♥. However, I was looking for 800 or more! Even
♣ AQ10 just 500 is fine. I believe that there is absolutely no point in letting the
opponents off the hook here. Redouble and see what happens! You can
subsequently double both ♠'s and ♣'s for penalties. If opponents bid 2♦ and partner is unable to double
that (for penalties) then you simply bid the 4♥ game. Nothing is lost.

There is no point in bidding 1♠, RHO surely has 4♠'s and you already know about your 5-3 or better ♥ fit. I say that I am 100% correct here. Chuck says that I should have bid 1♠. I believe that this is one of those rare (or 50%??) occasions where Chuck is talking nonsense. Although this hand does have 'support' for partner, the support is minimal and the hand has a good 12 points in the other suits – certainly enough to make life very unpleasant for opponents in a doubled contract. I am a nice guy (?), but I just love making things unpleasant for opponents. What actually happened? LHO bid 2♦, partner passed and so I bid 4♥ and we made +1. No problem, but it would have been a glorious massacre if partner had had ♦'s.
Chuck's Comment: -

A redouble shows 10+ points. You should not let the opponent's interference change a bid that you would otherwise make. You could miss a ♠ slam. Go back to Disneyland.

This statement is obviously nonsense, if you don't let opponent's double change your bid then why is there a re-double bidding card? Would anyone else bid 1♠ here? Am I wrong for looking for greater things than a ♥ game (a big penalty)? Am I a man or a mouse? Is Disneyland near Chicago? Let me know what you think and I'll write it up. Clive was at the table and was 100% and more behind me.

Chuck also says, '*a double of 1♥ does not always promise 4♠'s*'. True, but if it does not contain 4♠'s then it must be a big hand. Since you have a good 13 points then that is unlikely (and it does not matter anyway – the opponents are outgunned). Unfortunately some players will double with any opening hand, despite my articles on take-out doubles in previous issues. The only way that these people will change their ways is if they keep going for 800 or more. They will not if you meekly bid 1♠ on monsters like this.

Finally, you have to agree what a 1♠ bid here is. I play it as limited to 8 points (any more and I re-double). You also have to agree if it is forcing or not – as it is limited to 8 points you can play it as non-forcing.

That ♦ slam again

Remember the 6♦ that Joe bid last week? I say well done, Chuck says 'lucky'.

Hand G Partner opens 1♦, you bid 1♠ and partner rebids 1NT (12-14). At the table this hand temporised with 2♣ and partner responded 2NT. What slam (if any) should you be angling for? I say bid 6♦ (as Joe did, after checking on aces), Chuck says that you should bid 4NT (quantitative). So, my opinions first: - If you play 4NT as quantitative here (I would) then it invites partner to bid slam if he is maximum. You have 18 points and partner is 12-14. Even if partner is maximum your combined 32 points is not normally enough for 6NT. If you bid 4NT, partner may assume there is no fit and may well bid 6NT when maximum, he will pass with a minimum. You do not want either, 6♦ is the only realistic slam. You do not have a good enough hand to invite 6NT. The 4-4 (or better) fit normally produces an extra trick. The ♦J10 are wonderful cards, especially in a ♦ contract.

Hand E	Hand F	So, we have enough points for a ♦ slam, but the only real worry is the trump suit. Basically, does partner have good enough ♦'s? Two honours will suffice. Hand E was partner's actual hand and 6♦ is lay-down. Chuck says that Hand F is just as likely and stands no chance. Is he right? It certainly stands no chance, but is it just as likely?
♠ A6	♠ A6	
♥ K1095	♥ KQ85	
♦ KQ972	♦ Q9732	
♣ J8	♣ J8	

We have 18 points, partner has 13 +/- 1. What are the odds that we are missing two out of ♦A,K,Q? It's probably easiest to consider it the other way round; opponents have 9 points, what are the odds that they have 5 or more points in a suit that partner has bid? Certainly way less than 50%. There is no way to ask partner if he has good trumps (if the suit was a major, then 5 of the suit asks to bid 6 with good trumps). With a minor you cannot, so go with the odds and bid the minor suit slam. One more point, partner may have 5 ♦'s and ♦Axxxx still gives us a chance of making. So, of course, does ♦A9xx. All in all, I would put the chances of the slam being good at about 75%.

South	North	How would I bid this hand? Playing with my twin brother, we would bid like this. At (1) North knows enough to figure that 6♦ is a good bet but first checks on aces.
1♦	1♠	There is little point in bidding 2♣ (Checkback) as North is not interested in a ♥ suit nor 3 card ♠ support.
1NT	4♣ (1)	
4♥	6♦	

Chuck, in his usual eloquent manner, says that this is all bull. He says that opponents were lucky to bid a slam that just happens to be lay down. Sure, they were lucky, but when you bet on 75% chances, then you win 75% of the time.

Chuck's Comments (*in italics*): -

'The extra trick in a minor is a poor score vs No Trump.'

I say not so if 6 of the minor makes and 6NT fails. 6♦ always scores more than 4NT plus one or 6NT minus one. At IMPs always go for the safer contract. At pairs, only bid 6NT if it stands a decent chance of making.

'Hand F is just as likely as Hand E on the bidding. 75% over-rates your point'.

I disagree. I subsequently did a rough calculation of all the possible distributions of the 7 outstanding high cards (♠A, ♠Q, ♥K, ♥Q, ♦A, ♦K & ♦Q), assuming they are divided 4 with opener and 3 with the opponents. There are 35 possible permutations, $7! / 4! * 3!$. Of these, the 15 that have opponents with 2 or 0 aces can be deleted (opponents have exactly 1 ace). That leaves 20 permutations; of these 20 the slam fails with 4, succeeds with 9 and is on a finesse with the remaining 7. Thus the total % of the slam being good is $(9 + 3 \frac{1}{2}) / 20 = 62 \frac{1}{2} \%$. There are also extra chances (singleton ♦K or ♦Q with opponents, partner having A9xx or similar or a 5 card suit. Now I said that this was a rough calculation; in fact, since partner has a ♦ suit, the odds slightly favour him having honours in that suit. You would need to run a computer simulation to arrive at the exact % of this slam, but it is certainly much greater than 50%. It is greater than 62½% and I think that 75% is possibly close.

And just one more final point about this hand. You should check on aces (I prefer 4♣ but 4NT is OK if that's what you've agreed). Not just because there may be two missing, but also because if partner happens to have 2 aces then the odds are overwhelming that 6♦ is making. The quantitative bid is silly.

Enough. I will simply re-iterate the point I was trying to make (just in case you've forgotten it by now). 4-4 fits usually deliver an extra trick. You generally need 33 points for a 6NT slam. A 4-4 fit will usually produce 12 tricks with 31 points in a suit slam. Well judged Joe. Is there a cultural thing here? Opponents bid to a solid slam; I say good show chaps, Chuck says they were lucky!

The Rule of Eleven

On Friday a query arose about the rule of eleven. A small card was led against a suit contract and Declarer applied the rule of eleven. Unfortunately he came unstuck. Why? The rule of eleven was briefly described in new-sheet 8. Anyway, against a NT contract, a smallish card led from an unbid suit is usually 4th best and the rule of eleven applies.

Against suit contracts it is inapplicable as implied in news-sheet 8). Against suit contracts, a low card lead usually promises an honour but may just as easily be from a three card suit to the honour – no need to lead from length against a suit contract. It could even be a doubleton (if not the two), MUD, or a singleton!
The rule of eleven only applies in NT contracts.

Cover an Honour With an Honour?

N
♣ A8 W E ♣ Q led
S
♣ K75

Quite often this is good advice, but not always. This situation arose on Friday. You are south. East had opened 3♣ and the final contract was 4♣. Dummy had ♣A8 and declarer led ♣Q towards dummy. Do you cover? No. Do not automatically cover. If you duck then you are assured of making the ♣K later.

A Negative Double or 1NT?

Board 27 from Monday 4th _

West	East (C)	West	North	East	South
♠ J10	♠ KQ62	-	-	-	pass
♥ AQ95	♥ J832	1♦	1♠	1NT	pass
♦ AJ1083	♦ Q5	pass	2♣	pass	pass
♣ 43	♣ J96	2♦	all pass		

Clearly 2♥ is a far better contract for E-W, was anybody at fault? I suggested to Joe (East) that a negative double (showing 4♥'s) was preferable to 1NT. Joe prefers 1NT. Who is correct? I asked Chuck and Guy, they would both negative double. I brought the board home to write it up – but then I had second thoughts. It is not so obvious that a negative double is a better bid than 1NT!

Hand D First of all, consider this similar but slightly stronger hand. You get the same 1♠ overcall and make a negative double. If partner bids 2♥ then you bid 2NT – just in case partner has only 3♥'s. Perfect. You have completely described this hand; 4♥'s, invitational values with good ♠ stops. Excellent.

♠ KQ62
♥ Q832
♦ Q5
♣ Q96

But now back to Hand C. The problem is that this hand is not worth two bids opposite a minimum rebid from partner. If opener has 4♥'s then a negative double works out best. If opener does not have 4♥'s then 1NT will work out best. Interesting. So I award top marks for both 1NT or double with Hand C.

Chuck's Comment: - *double with Hand C; double and then rebid 2NT with Hand D.*

Bidding Quiz answers

Hand A: re-double (Chuck says 1♠)
Hand B: 3♦ (3♥ is not invitational)
Hand C: either double (-ve) or 1NT
Hand D: -ve double and then 2NT

Last week's winners: Monday 11/8/03

Friday 15/8/03

1st = Hans/Dave 56%1st = Clive/Ken 56%

only 6 players,

so no results

Chuck has decided that the news sheet is no longer worthy of his comment. Probably just as well this week as 90% of the content (and 100% of the agro/controversy) this week seems to involve Chuck. I understand, there is no sense in even trying to defend his bids this time. But no names!

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A, RHO opens 1♦, what is your bid?
♠ AQ	♠ 7	
♥ AJ2	♥ 8753	With Hand B, partner opens 2NT (20-21).
♦ QJ652	♦ 97643	Do you bid? and if so, what?
♣ A106	♣ KJ10	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C you hear LHO open 3♦. Partner bids 4♦, showing a very big hand and RHO bids 4♠. What is your bid?
♠ -	♠ KJ10875	
♥ 109862	♥ KQJ7	
♦ Q6	♦ 6	With Hand D you open 1♠ and partner replies 1NT.
♣ K97542	♣ K7	What do you rebid?
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you are vul against not. Partner passes and RHO opens 1♦. Do you bid?
♠ 106	♠ KJ2	
♥ 76	♥ KJ2	With Hand F you are playing Standard American.
♦ 742	♦ KJ	What is your opening bid?
♣ KQJ653	♣ K10972	

Worth a Bid?Board 12 from Friday 8th

North (B) Partner opens 2NT (20-21), do you bid? and if so, what?
After partner has opened with 2NT there is little room for manoeuvre.

♠ 7 You cannot bid a weak 3♦ (that is a transfer). So it's either pass or
♥ 8753 go to game. If partner has 4♥'s then 4♥ will be a good bet but if he
♦ 97643 does not, then 3NT is very likely to be defeated. If you want to take the
♣ KJ10 plunge then bid 3♣, Stayman. If partner replies 3♦ then pass is probably
prudent. If partner bids 3♥ then have a shot at 4♥. If partner bids 3♠ then
you have no choice but to bid the dicey 3NT. So should you bid 3♣? I think it's very close. Hans and
Chuck said that they would. Clive and his partner would not. Me? I would if one of the ♣ honours was in
the ♦ or ♥ suits. What happened? Opener had ♦ AKQ and ♣ Q8. The ♦ J falls and there is an entry to
the last 2 ♦'s. Lucky.

Do You Overcall?

Board 21 from Monday 11th

South (E) You are vulnerable, opponents are not. Partner deals and passes. RHO opens 1♦ (playing 5 card majors). What action, if any, do you take?

♠ 106 One player overcalled 2♣ and the opponents bid to 4♥. Partner doubled
♥ 76 and the contract proceeded to make an overtrick. Instead of just keeping
♦ 742 quiet (impossible for this individual) he proceeded to lay into partner for
♣ KQJ653 doubling with his eight count. A vulnerable overcall at the two level
promises opening strength. This hand is way too weak. A weak jump
overcall is possible, but most players would prefer to pass when vulnerable (Hans, Clive and myself would
all pass). If your hand is not worth a weak jump overcall, do not make the mistake of making a simple
overcall. The overcaller in question claims it's OK because partner is a passed hand. What's that got to do
with the price of rice? OK, so it's lead directional; but it's still 6 points short of a sensible two-level
vulnerable overcall.

A Silly Contract

Board 20 from Friday 8th

North	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ J96	♠ AQ	pass	pass	1♦	dbl
♥ Q8653	♥ AJ2	pass	1♥	pass	2♦
♦ 4	♦ QJ652	pass	pass	pass	
♣ J542	♣ A106				

So, a very silly contract. Who's fault? South has a nice hand, should he bid it twice? I said in news-sheet 18 that a double followed by a suit bid shows a very good hand & suit. There really is little point in bidding a suit that RHO has bid naturally and this hand/suit are not good enough. South actually has an easy bid at his first turn – 1NT. This is 15-18 points with at least 1 stopper. Ideal for this hand. North would then transfer and the sensible 2♥ contract reached.

Super Accept?

Board 13 from Monday 11th

North	South	North	South	
♠ AK87	♠ 104	1NT (1)	2♦ (2)	(1) 15-17
♥ 10742	♥ QJ953	2♥ (3)	pass	(2) transfer
♦ AJ5	♦ K106			(3) normal accept
♣ A10	♣ J75			

This was the bidding at one table. Very sensible, but a good game was missed. Obviously South cannot invite; the only way to reach game here is to play super-accepts. I will cover super-accepts in a later news sheet.

And the other two other tables? At one, 4♥ was reached (I don't know the bidding). At the third, West (Chuck) overcalled the 2♦ transfer with 2♥ (holding ♠Q965 ♥K ♦Q9842 ♣964). A psyche, more of this later. What happened? North bid 2NT over the 2♥ psyche and played there (making +2). As if he had not done enough already, West then proceeded to chide North for not realising that it was a psyche. This is **totally** unacceptable behaviour.

Another Psyche!

Board 14 from Monday 11th

West	East (F)	West	North	East	South
♠ 97	♠ KJ2			1♣ (1)	1♦
♥ A83	♥ KJ2	1♠ (2)	pass	1NT (3)	pass
♦ 9852	♦ KJ	2♣ (4)	pass	2♠ (5)	pass
♣ J643	♣ K10972	3♣ (6)	pass	5♣ (7)	all pass

This was the bidding on the next board, another outrageous out-and-out psyche by the same player (Chuck) on the very next board. Having made an illegal (in my opinion) controlled psyche, the offender then proceeded to berate his partner for bidding on! Let's have a look:

- (1) I prefer a strong 1NT here, but OK. With all these tenaces you should strive to be declarer in a NT contract, so open 1NT.
- (2) A psyche (aimed at preventing the opposition from finding a ♠ fit). Since this hand has ♣ support then there is a safe haven in a ♣ contract; then this is a *controlled* psyche and they are *illegal* in most competitions. They are most certainly not allowed at this club. 5♣ went minus 3 for a score of -150, opponents can make 3♠+1, scoring 170. So a good result anyway? No! I adjusted the score to give E-W zero and N-S 75%. Controlled psyches are not allowed and will receive an adjusted (Zero) score. I clearly stated this in the last para of news sheet 3. More about my opinions of psyches later.
- (3) 1NT here is 12-14, so the hand is a little too good.
- (4) Preference, so showing 4 ♠'s and 4+ ♣'s
- (5) With 3 good ♠'s and a better hand than he has shown, East decided to show his ♠ support.
- (6) Unable to accept that his psyche is going wrong, he bids on.
- (7) This is a nice East hand, and with partner bidding on and on, he decided to bid game.

Now East's bidding was by no means perfect. He is trying to improve his game and having a partner who psyches (and then criticises everybody at the table) does nothing to improve one's confidence. Having behaved appallingly, I feel that West's best course of action was to keep quiet. If he really wants to say something, then how about apologising to Ian, Kenneth and David? And read news sheet 3! I have made some more copies.

Psyches

Obviously I have to say something and make my position perfectly clear (again). I made everything pretty clear in news-sheet 3 and everything I said then stands (please re-read it). The last player who thought that he could psyche whenever he liked was thrown out of the club. Occasional psyches are not illegal (except controlled psyches), however this club has a large number of non-experienced players and psyching is not appreciated. '*Psyching against less experienced players is unsportsmanlike*' – An ACBL quote. Any player who psyches repeatedly will be requested to leave.

A Direct Cue Bid at the 4 level – A big Hand!Board 14 from Friday 8th

Dealer:	♠ -		West	North (C)	East	South
East	♥ 109862					
Love all	♦ Q6				3♦ (1)	4♦ (2)
	♣ K97542		4♠ (3)	5♥ (4)	pass	pass (5)
			dbl (6)	pass	pass	re-dble (7)
♠ AJ10862	N	♠ 7	pass	pass	pass	
♥ 53	W E	♥ 4				
♦ AK	S	♦ J10975432				
♣ AJ8		♣ 1063				
	♠ KQ9543					
	♥ AKQJ7					
	♦ 8					
	♣ Q					

- (1) Do you pre-empt with this hand? An 8 card suit, non-vul, with good intermediates; shame about the lack of top honours! Would I open it? If playing with Martin – yes. If playing with Chuck – no. I think it's a matter of style and partnership understanding, but I quite like it. Chuck, of course, demands a **much** better suit and hand in 1st seat.
- (2) A BIG hand. Too strong to double and obviously game forcing.
- (3) A nice hand, so bid it. If you get doubled you can always retreat into 5♦.
- (4) 5 points, a typical hand for me. I liked the ♥ suit opposite partner's advertised rock crusher, and so I bid 5♥. I guess that 5♣ is an equally good bid? Pass is for minnows.
- (5) A sensible pass, partner has not promised much and LHO obviously has a good hand.
- (6) Is there anybody out there who would not double with this hand?
- (7) South thinks 5♥ is making, and what's more, he knows what to do with a retreat to 5♠. South, of course, does not know the situation exactly; perhaps 6♥ is making? The redouble sorts that out; 5♥ making redoubled scores more than 6♥ (980).

So what actually happened? 5♥ redoubled made, of course (+ 1000, thank you). Is there a bid here that you think is dubious? Everything is reasonable (in my opinion), there is just one bid that may have cost several hundred points (and I don't mean the 3♦ opener). See if you can spot the dodgy bid (2-7). Answer at the end of this news sheet.

Rebid a 6 card ♠ suit or a 4 card ♥ suit?Board 11 from Monday 11th

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| North (D) | You open 1♠ and partner replies 1NT, what do you do?
Too much shape to pass and not strong enough to jump. So 2♥ or 2♠? |
| ♠ KJ10875 | Should you re-bid a 6 card major or bid a 4 card suit? If the 4 card suit is a |
| ♥ KQJ4 | minor, then I would re-bid the major. However, with a 4 card ♥ suit, I |
| ♦ 6 | would rebid 2♥. I saw this hand bid twice on Monday and they rebid |
| ♣ K7 | 2♠ on both occasions. 2♠ is not incorrect, but not my style. Just for a change Hans and |
| | Chuck both agree with me and would both rebid 2♥. |

Mini Roman 2♦ Anyone?

Board 19 from Friday 8th

In line with my new policy of not mentioning names when bidding is not really up to scratch, let's just call these two Mickey and Donald. Now Mickey believes that there are better uses for a 2♦ opening than just a weak two, and so Donald suggested to play Mini Roman (4441 or 5440, any order, 11-15 points). Mickey was pleased to play anything different and although he had never played it before, he agreed. The very first time that a 2♦ opening occurred was: -

West	East	West (Donald)	East (Mickey)	(1) 11-15 pts, any 4441 shape (2) which shortage? (3) short ♥'s (4) to play
♠ AQ73	♠ K65	2♦ (1)	2NT (2)	
♥ 3	♥ KJ104	3♦ (3)	3NT (4)	
♦ AQ85	♦ K943	4♣ (5)	4♦ (6)	
♣ AKJ8	♣ 93	6NT (7)	pass	

So, a very silly auction and an equally silly final contract. Let's look at the bidding first: -

- (1) 20 points, so 5 points outside the agreed range. A psyche? What on earth would Chuck do if somebody did this against him?
- (2) Mickey was unfamiliar with this convention, but considered that 4♥ would be an excellent contract if ♥'s was not opener's short suit. If it was, then 3NT may have some play. So he bid 2NT to establish the shortage.
- (5) Obviously something is afoot. East is the captain and this is mutiny. Note that after 3NT, 4♣ is never Gerber. In this case it can only be natural.
- (6) East had no idea what was going on, but assumed that West was 4045 and for some reason did not trust East's declarer play in NT. Anyway, East preferred ♦'s and so he bid them.
- (7) This really is silly. East has shown a ♦ suit at (6) and 6♦ is the correct spot.

So what was going on? West decided to put East to the test with this new convention and so decided to psyche by 5 points. Bids like this at the first time that a convention is used destroys partnership trust. I guess that Donald thought that 4♣ was ace asking? (it is not). Just why he chose 6NT instead of the vastly superior 6♦ is beyond me – especially as he could then have been declarer. I guess that he thought that 4♦ was denying an ace and not natural? Anyway, the whole thing is total nonsense and West's psyche has been noted.

This hand is another perfect example of the good 4-4 fit producing an extra trick. 6NT is about a 10% proposition whereas 6♦ is way over 70%.

What actually happened? South led the ♥A and continued the suit and so the contract made easily. Leading an unsupported ace when RHO has promised that suit in the bidding (at least East's bidding could be believed) really is just about as silly as the actual auction. South actually held ♠ J109 and that is an obvious safe lead.

Partnerships who bid like this should not be gifted tops.

Another Mini Roman 2♦?

Board 25 from Friday 8th

Donald(Chuck) and Mickey(me) are again in action. This time Mickey was dealer and had an ideal 2♦ opener. However, not being impressed with the opening when used on board 19 he elected to give it a rest and open a mundane 1♣. Donald, however, was determined to have just as much fun on this deal.

North	South	North (Mickey)	South(1) (Donald)	best with 4144 shape
♠ A872	♠ K			(2) 4 th suit forcing
♥ 10	♥ Q852	1♣ (1)	1♥	(3) ♦'s stopped, fast arrival
♦ KQJ2	♦ A96	1♠	2♦ (2)	
♣ J984	♣ AQ1076	3NT (3)	4NT (4)	
		pass (5)		

So, a very silly auction and an equally silly final contract. Let's look at the bidding first: -

- (2) 4th suit forcing, asks partner to describe his hand further. Whether you play this as forcing for just one round or game forcing is a matter for partnership agreement.
- (3) A NT bid guarantees a stop. North thought the 4th suit bid was game forcing, thus 3NT is fast arrival and states that he is not really interested in another contract and denies any decent ♥ holding. In this case it shows a semi-balanced minimum with just 4 ♠'s, excellent ♦'s and short ♥'s. I guess that 2NT is safer if you had not agreed this.
- (4) Donald did not see it that way and for some reason thought that Mickey had 18-19 points. I believe that Donald meant his 4NT bid as Blackwood?
- (5) Mickey, however, knew better. 4NT is never Blackwood over 3NT. It is quantitative and in this case asked North to bid slam (6NT) if non-min – i.e. 14+ pts. Luckily Mickey had just 11 and so passed.

What can I say? Is this auction worse than the previous hand? 6♣ would be a sensible contract (5♣ is an equally good contract) but Mickey seems unable to get Donald to bid minor suit slams. Donald believes that minor suit slams are just 'lucky'. Be a man and bid 4NT or 6NT. Minor suits are for mice. What happened? Opponents led a ♦, ♣K was onside and 4NT was +1.

I understand that Mickey and Donald are returning to Disneyland to discuss their system (it's close enough to Chicago). Mickey still does not understand Mini Roman and Donald wants to re-read the news-sheets defining when 4♣ or 4NT asks for aces. He is also going to read up on minor suit slams as opposed to silly 6NT or 4NT contracts. And is 4th suit round forcing or game forcing? Is Concorde to Disneyland fast arrival?

Bidding Quiz answers

Hand A: 1NT

Hand B: 3♣ or pass

Hand C: 5♥

Hand D: 2♥

Hand E: pass

Hand F: 1NT

And the dodgy bid from that 5♥ re-doubled hand? Actually, the only dodgy one is the re-double at (7). True, you can certainly cope with a retreat into 5♠, but 6♦ is only one down! That would convert +650 into just +100. Give East a ♥ void and 6♦ would make.

Last week's winners: Monday 18/8/03

Friday 22/8/03

1st Clive/Ken 63%
 2nd Martin/Rosemary 56%

only 6 players,
 so no results_

Chuck Chuck out?

It's crunch time. Chucks behaviour is becoming more and more erratic. I believe that it has led to at least one player leaving the club and I have had enough. There is no stopping Chuck from telling everybody what he thinks they have done wrong after every single hand. A case in point, a couple of months ago Clive said that he would play with Chuck if Chuck held off with the criticism; Chuck replied that that was impossible. Now I enjoy playing with Chuck, perhaps because he always gets it back in good measure from me. I feel that somebody who criticises absolutely everybody on just about every deal should be able to take it himself and so I write it up in the news sheets. I believe I said a few weeks back that you should not criticise people nor say anything if you don't know what you're talking about. Anyway, I most certainly disapproved of his three psyches in one week (as indicated in last week's news sheet) and I also included a few of his other atrocious bids. 'Donald' was, of course, Chuck. I also suggested that perhaps some sort of apology was in order for his *illegal* controlled psyche and subsequent verbal abuse of Kenneth. His reaction last Monday was to openly tear up the news sheet in the middle of the Club; isn't that the equivalent of somebody burning the American flag?. I would be fascinated to know if anybody other than Chuck disagreed with a single sentence in the news sheet (No 42) that Chuck so demonstratively tore up? As far as I am concerned I have had enough of his bad manners and attitude. I feel that the club will be a far better place without him (although the news-sheets may be a bit duller). If Chuck should return, I would like to send him packing. He is incapable of adjusting to a 'lower' standard of play than his 'A' flight back in USA. Mind you, I understand that he has also been banished from clubs in the USA!

You may recall that way back in news-sheet 2 I put Chuck 'on notice' because of his general behaviour and because he walked out of the club three boards into the session leaving his partner partnerless. That incident alone would get him banished by a less lenient director. Nothing much has changed.

Anyway, rather than me making a universal decision, I would like to know that I have the backing of Club members. So please fill out the voting ballot. Everything will remain confidential; there is no need to put your name if you wish to be anonymous. I will simply print the results next week and any comments that anybody wishes to make (but no names unless you wish).

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	
♠ AK92	♠ Q9842	With Hand A, partner opens 1NT (15-17). You bid 2♣ Stayman and LHO doubles. Partner replies 2♦, what do you bid? What does partner's 2♦ mean? (he could pass or re-double).
♥ AQJ8	♥ J763	
♦ Q753	♦ 7	With Hand B, partner opens 2NT (20-22). You bid 3♣ Stayman and partner replies 3♦, what do you bid?
♣ 2	♣ Q98	

No Stopper? Board 6 from Monday 18th, dealer East.

West (A)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AK92	♠ QJ6			1NT	pass
♥ AQJ8	♥ K73	2♣	dbl	2♦ (1)	pass
♦ Q753	♦ AKJ62	3NT (2)	pass	pass	pass
♣ 2	♣ Q6				

A ♣ was led and the defence took the first six ♣ tricks. What went wrong? First of all, what is the 2♦ reply after the Stayman 2♣ bid has been doubled? Obviously you bid the normal 2♥/♠ if you have a 4 card major; if you have no major suit then you now have three options instead of just one. In addition to the normal 2♦ you have pass and re-double. What is the difference between these three bids? You have to agree this with your partner, but a sensible approach is: -

Pass = no 4 card major, contains a ♣ stop

Re-double = no 4 card major, an excellent ♣ suit, perhaps 2♣ doubled is making?

2♦ = no 4 card major, no ♣ stop

Now then, what should West bid at (2)? West thought that since East had no 4 card major then he surely had a ♣ stop (they had not discussed the above agreement!). Playing this agreement it's easy. East has 15-17 points but no ♣ stop. Thus his points are outside ♣'s, excellent, simply bid 6♦!

No Stopper Again

Board 7 from Monday 18th, dealer South.

West (B)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ Q9843	♠ AJ6				pass
♥ J763	♥ AK	pass	pass	2NT (1)	pass
♦ 7	♦ J85	3♣ (2)	pass	3♦ (3)	pass
♣ Q98	♣ AK754	3NT	pass	pass	pass

Déjà vu? The same pair reach an equally poor 3NT on the very next board, this time with no ♦ stop. What went wrong this time? Again, it is something that you must agree. If the major suits were switched in the West hand then West could transfer into ♥'s and then bid 3♠, showing 45 in the majors and offering East a choice of 3NT, 4♥ or 4♠. Unfortunately there is no room to do it this way round (when 54) as you go above 3NT (2NT - 3♥ - 3♠ - 4♥). The Dutch have a solution (a direct 3NT shows this hand pattern). However, probably the simplest solution is to use Stayman and then bid 3♠ over a 3♦ response; this is forcing and shows this hand shape.

And what happened? South did lead a ♦ but missed his partner's encouraging signal and so he switched to ♥10. Declarer won with ♥A, over to ♣Q and the ♠ finesse. This failed but South hoped partner had ♥K and so continued with ♥'s. The resulting 11 tricks for E-W made up for the bottom on the previous board. Look for partner's signals!!

Last week I mentioned Super-accepts of a transfer, let's have a closer look: -

Super acceptance of a transfer. (breaking the transfer after opening 1NT)

The law of total tricks (The LAW) implies that it is always safe to super accept with 4 trumps. Thus we can super accept with 4 trumps and a min or max hand. Super-accepting with just 3 trumps is a bone of contention, many players will super-accept with 3 good trumps and a non-min hand with good shape.

Now onto an interesting point. The LAW states that it is safe to go to the 3 level (combined number of trumps is 9) if the distribution of points between the two sides is approximately even, or if you have more. This is clearly the case with an opening strong NT, but not so with a weak NT. It is dangerous to super accept with a weak NT opening, but if partner is bust, then why have the opponents not said anything yet? If you play a weak NT, it's up to you. I play super-accepts with a strong NT only.

Before we continue, it is only fair to say that my view of super-accepting is not universally accepted. I will super-accept with 4 trumps or with just 3 very good trumps, good shape and a near max. Some players suggest super-accepting with any max, either 3 or 4 'trumps'. Others insist that the only requirement for a super-accept is 4 trumps (the law says that's OK even if minimum). Chuck will only super-accept with a max and 4 trumps. Any scheme is fine, you just have to agree it with partner.

There are umpteen variations on what you should bid when you break the transfer (super-accept). Some players insist that a response of the suit directly below trumps cannot be made as responder needs that for a re-transfer. Others feel that it is more important to be specific about shape. Some players prefer only to show doubletons if they are 'worthless' – Jx (maybe Qx) or worse. Another alternative is to pinpoint a weak suit (either 2 or 3 card) that contains no top (A or K) honour. I give one workable scheme here: -

Super Accepts, showing 4 (possibly 5) cards in the major, can work as follows, where min is (15-16) and max is (16½ -17). In this scheme, the doubleton is weak: -

After 1NT - 2♦ (xfer to ♥) -

2NT 4 ♥'s, no weak doubleton, max pts
or 3 ♥'s. max pts
2♠ 4 ♥'s, doubleton ♠, max pts
3♣ 4 ♥'s, doubleton ♣, max pts
3♦ 4 ♥'s, doubleton ♦, max pts
3♥ 4 ♥'s, any shape, min pts

After 1NT - 2♥ (xfer to ♠) -

2NT 4 ♠'s, no weak doubleton, max
or 3 ♠'s. max pts
3♣ 4 ♠'s, doubleton ♣, max pts
3♦ 4 ♠'s, doubleton ♦, max pts
3♥ 4 ♠'s, doubleton ♥, max pts
3♠ 4 ♠'s, any shape, min pts

After these bids, responder often continues with a re-transfer, which opener must accept: -

3♦ transfer to 3♥
4♦ transfer to 4♥

3♥ transfer to 3♠
4♥ transfer to 4♠

Responder is then able to pass, bid game or to investigate slam. A subsequent 4NT bid is RKCB for the suit agreed, although you may prefer to use 4♠ as RKCB when ♥'s are trumps.

Example 1

West	East	West	East
♠ KQ84	♠ AJ1073	1NT	2♥
♥ 64	♥ AJ	3♥ (1)	4♥ (2)
♦ AK82	♦ Q63	4♠	4NT (3)
♣ A73	♣ KJ10	5♣ (4)	5♦ (5)
		6♦ (6)	6♠ (7)

- (1) West is middle range, but with good trumps and shape, he makes the max pt super-accept, showing a doubleton ♥.
 - (2) re-transfer
 - (3) Key Card for ♠.
 - (4) 0 or 3
 - (5) Do you have ♠Q ?
 - (6) Yes, plus ♦K
 - (7) East has now located every one of West's high cards, and settles for the small slam.
-

Example 2

West	East	West	East
♠ KQ84	♠ AJ1073	1NT	2♥
♥ KQ6	♥ AJ	3♦ (1)	3♥ (2)
♦ 82	♦ Q63	3♠	4♠
♣ AQ73	♣ KJ10	pass	

- (1) super-accept, weak doubleton
 - (2) re-transfer
-

Example 3

West	East	West	East
♠ KQ84	♠ A10732	1NT	2♥
♥ K64	♥ J9	3♠ (1)	pass (2)
♦ K2	♦ Q63	pass	
♣ A9732	♣ J76		

- (1) super-accept, 4 trumps, min pts
- (2) opposite a minimum, even with 4 trumps, game does not look good.

Last week's winners: Monday 25/8/03

Friday 29/8/03

1 st	Clive/Ken	63%
2 nd	David/Kenneth	56%

8 players, but no results
as a couple were learning

Chuck Chucked out?

It seems like the vast majority of the club just want to play hassle-free bridge. Simply leave any decision to the director! - that's what he (gets paid?) for. Clive actually did give a very useful input - a warning is meaningless, but a ban (for say 1 month) gets the message across. I believe that Chuck no longer wishes to play here. Up to him, but he is banned up to the beginning of October. Time for reflection? *Editor's Postscript: Chuck did in fact return to the fold in December.*

And what caused Chuck to go ballistic? Apparently he objected to being given an adjusted score (zero) for a controlled psyche (having also psyched on the previous board). For someone who is a stickler for the rules (and continually calls the director if someone is within a mm of having possibly breached one) perhaps he should read the club rules? News sheet 3 is *perfectly* clear about controlled psyches. Perhaps I need to bring out a comprehensive set of club rules? (give me your opinion please) - wear a shirt, be polite, no psyches, no assaults, arrive 10 mins before start time, etc etc ... ?

Bidding Quiz

Hand A Hand B With Hand A, partner opens 1NT (15-17). What is your bid?
Pass, 2♣ or 2NT?

♠ A4	♠ 9854
♥ J1097	♥ KJ83
♦ Q8752	♦ 7632
♣ J4	♣ 9

With Hand B, partner opens 1NT (15-17). What is your bid?

Hand C Hand D With Hand C, partner opens 1♣ and RHO bids 1♥. Do you bid?
Suppose that you find a pushy 1♠ response; partner then
rebids 3♣, do you bid on?

♠ 10764	♠ K952
♥ K965	♥ 6532
♦ Q10	♦ AKJ
♣ 983	♣ A9

With Hand D you open a strong NT and partner bids 2♣
Stayman. Do you mention the motley ♥ suit or bid 2♠?

Classic Garbage

Hand B Partner opens a strong NT (15-17), do you bid? The answer is that you
should if you play the standard (Garbage) version of Stayman.
♠ 9854 You should try 2♣ and pass any response (2♦/♥/♠) from partner.
♥ KJ83 This only 'fails' when partner has precisely 3325 shape (when you land in
♦ 7632 a 2-4 ♦ fit). Otherwise you will always play in a major suit 4-4 fit or in a
♣ 9 3-4 or better ♦ fit.

Worth an Invitation after partner's 1NT?Board 24 from Friday 22nd

North (D)	South (A)	North	South(1)	Stayman
♠ K952	♠ A4	1NT	2♣ (1)	(2) 4♥'s, maybe also 4♠'s
♥ 6532	♥ J1097	2♥ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) invitational; 4♥'s, 8 pts.
♦ AKJ	♦ Q8752	pass		
♣ A9	♣ J4			

The bidding shown is what I think is correct (at the table, South passed the 1NT opening). So, is the South hand worth an invitation? 8 points is the norm and with good shape and excellent body in the ♥ suit I think it's worth a go, most definitely if partner has a ♥ suit. And so it turned out, South has a really good hand for ♥'s and 4♥ at (3) would not be unreasonable. Anyway, 3♥ is the value bid and is best. North is minimum and should decline the invitation.

So is this better than passing 1NT? Yes! As I have frequently said, the 4-4 fit normally produces an extra trick. The quality of the trump suit is relatively unimportant. 1NT makes 8 tricks, 3♥ makes 9 tricks (10 if opponents do not find a ♣ switch in time).

And the answer to Bidding Quiz question D – never deny a 4 card major. Bid 2♥ in response to Stayman even though your ♠ suit is better. Size does not matter, locating the 4-4 fit is all important. If partner has 4 ♠'s then you will locate that fit later.

A Bit Pushy?Board 6 from Friday 22nd

North	South (C)	West	North	East	South
♠ A	♠ 10764		1♣	1♥	1♠ (1)
♥ 4	♥ K965	pass	3♣ (2)	pass	3NT (3)
♦ A9764	♦ Q10	pass	pass (4)	pass	
♣ AKQJ54	♣ 983				

Would you bid at (1)? I believe it's worth a bid, The ♥K looks well placed and 983 is decent support for partner's suit. A point short of the 6 point norm, but the well-placed ♥K, two 10's and two 9's make up for it. 1NT is incorrect as it denies a ♠ suit. Some players differentiate between 4 ♠'s and 5 ♠'s here by double (-ve) (showing 4 ♠'s) and bidding 1♠ (promising 5 ♠'s). With no such agreement a 1♠ bid is fine. Now what about 3♣ at (2)? This bid is not forcing and a reverse (2♦) is a better bid if you play a reverse after a one level response as forcing.

If 2♦ is not forcing in your system then 3♣ is a sensible rebid. I guess that some players might open the North hand with 2♣ (artificial and strong) but I prefer 1♣ (with this shape, 1♣ will not be passed out). Anyway, a 1♣ opener followed by 3♣ shows a big hand, but should South pass or is 3NT at (3) justified? I think it is, that ♥K is golden and 3NT stands chances even if the North hand was not quite so good. North paused at (4) before finally passing; he later said that he was worried about the ♥ suit. Don't worry, South's 3NT bid *guarantees* a ♥ stop.

Low Level Penalty Doubles ?

I gave a fairly comprehensive list of which doubles are for penalties and which for take-out in news-sheet 17 (& 18 & 19). There was, however, some slight disagreement over my statement in news-sheet 32 that the double in this sequence is for penalties (Hand A from news-sheet 32 – reproduced here as Hand E): -

Hand E (E)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQJ9	pass	pass	1♣	pass
♥ AK74	1♦	1♠	dbl	
♦ 7				
♣ Q732				

Some people (Hans) may disagree, but this sequence is a penalty double showing 4 (possibly 5) ♠'s if you do not play support doubles here. Of course partner knows that this usually shows just 4 (decent) ♠'s and may elect to pull the double with an unsuitable hand. That is the case with all the penalty doubles mentioned in these next few pages.

Let me make it perfectly clear what I mean by a penalty double in these situations where doubler is unlikely to have a 5 card suit. It means that he has a very good 4 card suit. Since it is at a low level, partner is certainly entitled to pull the double and often NT will be a good spot. Do not be put off from showing a good 4 card suit just because RHO has bid it. Double and leave it up to partner. It really is a good flexible bid.

Consider this similar sequence, it is for penalties unless you have agreed to play support doubles.

West	North	East	South
1♦	pass	1♠	2♥
dbl			

Before I get going on more definitions of low level doubles for penalties, let's first define the negative (or sputnik) double: -

A negative double is a bid by *responder* after partner's opening suit bid has been overcalled with another suit. It promises length (usually 4 cards) in any unbid major(s). This is the *only* definition of the negative double, although some play that it also promises the other unbid suit. Only rarely does a negative double promise minor suits: - If the bidding has gone 1♥ 1♠ (or 1♠ 2♥) then a negative dbl shows both minors.

1x 1y dbl or 1x 2y dbl are negative doubles, simple.

In order to avoid confusion in terminology, it is best to restrict the term 'negative double' to these exact sequences. Other general take-out doubles are best called information or take-out or competitive. So, let's set out some ground rules. In addition to all the guidelines in news-sheets 17, 18 & 19 a double of a low level contract is for penalties if *all* of the following hold: -

- 1) The doubler sits after the bidder, and
- 2) the opponents have no fit, and
- 3) we are not in a game forcing situation, and
- 4) partner has shown some values, and
- 5) it is not a negative, support or any other agreed conventional double.

Quite a mouthful, so we need a few examples. Clearly Hand E satisfies these criteria, the double is for penalties. In all of the following, the hand shown is that of the doubler: -

Hand F (N)	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ1072	1♠	pass	1NT	2♦
♥ A65	2♠	dbl		
♦ 82				
♣ Q93				
		Penalties. Partner has shown values and 2♠ will not make.		

Hand G (W)	West	North	East	South
♠ K4	1♥	pass	2♣	2♦
♥ AQ654	dbl			
♦ QJ92				
♣ 83				
		Penalties.		

With Hand type G there is no point in having the double to show a ♠ suit. Partner has denied ♠'s, and if he actually has them then that is because he is strong enough to bid again.

Hand G (W)	West	North	East	South
♠ K4	1♥	pass	1♠	2♦
♥ AQ654	?			
♦ QJ92				
♣ 83				
		The same hand, but this time it is best to pass. Partner has only promised 6 points so double (penalties) is too risky. Partner is quite likely to double next (for take-out, extra values) and you can then pass for penalties.		

Hand H (W)	West	North	East	South
♠ K4	1♥	pass	1♠	2♦
♥ AQ654	dbl			
♦ QJ92				
♣ AJ				
		Penalties. Same sequence as above, but this time you have sufficient values (with partner's 6+) for the penalty double.		

Hand I (W)	West	North	East	South
♠ A43	1♣	1♠	dbl	2♦
♥ 6	dbl			
♦ AJ102				
♣ AK654				

East's double is negative, promising ♥'s.
West's double is penalties.

Hand J (N)	West	North	East	South
♠ J1098	1♥	pass	1♠	2♣
♥ K1096	2♦	dbl		
♦ AQJ8				
♣ 5				

Penalties. Partner has values and opponents have no fit.
A mis-fit hand, so best to defend (preferably doubled!)

Hand K (N)	West	North	East	South
♠ 42	1♥	pass	pass	dbl
♥ A10965	2♥	dbl		
♦ QJ7				
♣ KQ3				

Penalties. West has stuck his neck out, so chop it.

Hand L (N)	West	North	East	South
♠ J106	1♣	pass	1♠	dbl
♥ A8	2♣	dbl		
♦ Q97				
♣ AQ1065				

Penalties. Opponents have no fit. Partner has promised both red suits and you would bid one of them if you wished to compete.

Hand M (W)	West	North	East	South
♠ Q	1♣	pass	1♠	2♥
♥ AJ108	dbl			
♦ A97				
♣ AQ653				

Penalties. Unless you have agreed to play support doubles.

Hand N (W)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ986	1♠	pass	2♠	3♦
♥ 8	dbl			
♦ QJ973				
♣ AK				

Penalties. Here you have 3♥ as the game try. East may, of course, elect to remove the double. But let's hope not.

Now some examples of non-penalty doubles: -

Hand O (W)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ874	1♠	pass	2♠	3♥
♥ 84	dbl			
♦ KQ9				
♣ AQ6				

A game try. There is no bid available to try for game as 3♠ is just competitive. So an exception to the general rules. East may, of course, elect to pass for penalties.

Hand P (E)	West	North	East	South
♠ A86	1♥	pass	2♣	2♦
♥ K2	pass	pass	dbl	
♦ 865				
♣ A10932				

Competitive, sometimes called values. It is not penalties as you sit under the 2♦ bidder. You will be quite happy if partner (W) passes for penalties.

Hand Q (S)	West	North	East	South
♠ 6	1♠	2♦	pass	pass
♥ Q10762	2♠	pass	pass	dbl
♦ 76				
♣ AJ982				

A take out double. Showing values and giving partner a choice. It is not penalties as you sit under the 2♠ bidder.

Hand R (S)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ74	pass	pass	1♥	pass
♥ 76	2♦	pass	2♥	dbl
♦ 87				
♣ A10986				

A take out double. You did not double first time because you had nothing in ♦'s. It is not penalties as partner has not shown values.

This is all fairly standard, you are welcome to agree different meaning for any of these doubles with your partner. I have just given some generally accepted guidelines.

That's it for this week – I'm running out of letters for the hands. If you have any strong opinions (especially if they differ from mine) then let me know and I will print them. Maybe somebody disagrees with some of these penalty doubles? As always, I am more than happy to print any sensible constructive comments from anybody.



Last week's winners: Monday 1/9/03

Friday 5/9/03

1st Dave/Richard 60%
 2nd Ken/David 59%

1st Hans/Richard 56 VP
 2nd Don/Wendy 47 VP

Not much to report this week, a bit quiet. No Director calls, minimal post-mortems, no incessant chatter, no psyches. I wonder why?

If anybody runs into Bill please urge him to return to the club, it's nice and peaceful now. Kenneth has gone back to Sweden for a month or so and so the Ken playing with David and getting 59% is the ken who usually partners Clive (who has gone off to Malaysia for a break).

Bidding Quiz

Hand A Hand B With Hand A, RHO opens 1♠. What is your bid?

♠ A43 ♠ A98
 ♥ 53 ♥ AQJ
 ♦ AKQ1053 ♦ A10764
 ♣ 83 ♣ A8

What is your opening bid with Hand B? If you choose 1♦, what is your rebid after a 1♠ reply from partner?

Hand C Hand D Playing a strong NT, what do you open with Hand C?

♠ 952 ♠ J1096
 ♥ AQ2 ♥ J8
 ♦ AKJ3 ♦ QJ83
 ♣ Q73 ♣ 1075

With hand D partner opens 1♣, do you respond?

Hand E Hand F What do you open with Hand E?

♠ K32 ♠ K1064
 ♥ A54 ♥ AQ9
 ♦ AK ♦ Q95
 ♣ AK942 ♣ Q102

With hand F partner opens 1♠, what do you reply?

Hand G Hand H With Hand G partner opens 1♣ and RHO over calls 1♠. Obviously you pass. This goes round to partner who doubles, what do you do?

♠ QJ92 ♠ QJ72
 ♥ 84 ♥ 653
 ♦ J985 ♦ Q64
 ♣ 865 ♣ 1092

With Hand H partner opens 2NT (20-22), what do you bid?

Winners and LosersBoard 6 from Friday 5th. Dealer East.

North	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ -	♠ A43	-	-	1♠	3♦ (1)
♥ Q9	♥ 53	3♠	5♦ (2)	pass	pass
♦ J742	♦ AKQ1053	pass			
♣ AQ109762	♣ 83				

Board 6 from Friday, first of all the bidding: 3♦ at (1) is a jump overcall. Traditionally this is a good hand (like the South hand here, perhaps stronger) but these days most people play weak jump overcalls and would simply overcall 2♦ with this hand. North assumed that the bid was weak and made an advance 'sacrifice' of 5♦. As it happens, he could make the same call if partner's bid was intermediate, but then with a view to possibly making!

Now the play. West led ♣J, what do you play from dummy (North)? All you have to do is count your winners. Six ♦'s, six ♣'s (after losing one ♣ trick) and one ♠ = 13 tricks. No problem there, but what about losers. Two ♥'s and one ♣, that's one too many; fortunately the opponents did not start by cashing their two ♥ tricks and so one ♥ loser can be tossed on the ♠A. So win ♣A, draw trumps, cash ♠A chucking a ♥, concede a trick to ♣K and claim 11 tricks. Unfortunately South did not have his thinking cap on and played ♣Q on the ♣J lead. You only have to think a little here, apart from the fact that the contract is cold (on the lines given above), ♣J is probably a singleton and is certainly not led from ♣KJ(x). East must have ♣K (and he also opened the bidding). The ♣K, a ♣ ruff and two ♥ losers then meant two down in a cold game contract.

The bottom line? Think at trick one!

Responding with game valuesBoard 18 from Friday 5th

West	East (F)	West	East
♠ AQ98	♠ K1064	1♠ (1)	2♠ (2)
♥ K873	♥ AQ9	4♠	pass
♦ 6	♦ Q95		
♣ AK93	♣ Q102		

A reasonable slam missed (it was also played in 4♠ at the other table). What went wrong here? First, the opening bid. Playing 5 card majors you have to open 1♣, but playing 4 card majors I think 1♥ is correct (although 1♠ found the fit directly here!). Now what about that 2♠ bid at (2)? East wanted to show support, but unfortunately 2♠ shows 6-9 points and is definitely not forcing. What should East bid? If not playing Swiss (4♦ here to show a solid raise) I would bid 2♣ and then 4♠ next go, this is a delayed game raise, showing a sound raise to 4♠ (a direct 4♠ is usually played as pre-emptive). Anyway, East must make a forcing bid (such as 2♣) or else bid 4♠ directly.

And how should the hand be bid? I would open 1♣ but it's the same if you open 1♥ (except that the splinter then needs to be 4♦). After partner's 1♠ the West hand is perhaps just good enough to splinter. East likes a ♦ shortage and so asks for aces.

West	East
1♣/1♥	1♠
3♦/4♦	4NT etc to 6♠

Passing partner's take-out or 'automatic' double

Board 14 from Monday 14th

South (G) Partner opens 1♣ and RHO over calls 1♠. Obviously you pass. This goes round to partner who doubles, what do you do? It does not matter if you are playing negative doubles or not, you cannot pass. 1NT is pushy, it is 2 points light (1NT is 6-9 here) but the ♠'s are well placed and the ♠9 is a good card. Either 2♣ or 2♦ are reasonable alternatives, I would bid 2♣.

♠ QJ92
♥ 84
♦ J985
♣ 865

What happened? 1♠ doubled was passed out and made with 3 overtricks (partner had a singleton ♠); scoring more than 4♠ bid and made!

This hand is not good enough for a penalty pass. When partner makes a take-out double or similar bid: -

A non-jump suit bid promises zero points and does not even guarantee a four card suit.

Denying a 4 card major

Board 15 from Fri 18th.

East (H) A never-ending topic, I know. But one of our (ex) leading players made a bid that I did not particularly like (so what's new?). Anyway, you hold this hand and partner opens 2NT (20-22) or perhaps opens 2♣ followed by 2NT (22-23), depends upon your system. Anyway, partner's bid showed around 22 points and balanced. What is your bid? I was kibitzing behind Chuck and he bid 3NT, the following conversation ensued: -

♠ QJ72
♥ 653
♦ Q64
♣ 1092

Terry: Could be one for the news sheet.

Chuck: What? You would not try for game at teams?

Terry: Of course I would.

Chuck: Do you mean that you would bid Stayman first?

Terry: Certainly.

Chuck faced a 20-22 point opener. Game is not at all certain but certainly worth a go, especially at teams. So, a thin game. Some pundits prefer to ignore Stayman on completely flat hands, I don't like it – especially when over half your points are in a 4 card major. Chuck's thoughts were presumably that nine tricks are easier than ten? I disagree, I believe that a 4-4 fit will normally produce at least one extra trick, even when responder is totally flat - I've been all through this before. Additionally, the majority of this hand's points are in the 4 card major. If partner does not have 4 ♠'s, you end up in 3NT anyway and have lost nothing.

And at the other table? Ian held this hand and bid Stayman. Good show. Mind you, Ian had had the wisdom of recent news sheets which Chuck had missed. It's not often that I suggest that Ian made a better bid than Chuck. Just goes to show, if I keep on persevering, I will succeed.

No Stopper for 1NT?

Hand 14 South from Friday 5th

South (C)

♠ 952
♥ AQ2
♦ AKJ3
♣ Q73

At table 1 this hand opened 1♦ and rebid 2♦ after partner's 1♠ response, an easy 3NT was missed. Always open 1NT with a balanced hand within your allotted 1NT range. You do not promise an honour in every suit. Playing a weak NT, open this hand 1♦ and rebid 1NT (15-16).

The 2NT and 3NT rebids**Table 1****Table 2**

North (B)	South	North	South	North	South
♠ A98	♠ J1063	1♦	1♠	1♦	1♠
♥ AQJ	♥ 875	2NT (1)	pass (2)	3NT (1)	pass
♦ A10764	♦ K53				
♣ A8	♣ Q73				

Board 19 from Friday 5th. Both North's made the correct 1♦ opening bid but chose different rebids. The modern theory is that a 2NT rebid at (1) shows 18-19 points (17-19 if you play a weak NT) and is not absolutely forcing (a 3NT rebid shows a good hand with a long suit). Some players prefer to bid 2NT with 18 points and 3NT with 19 points. I would definitely rebid 2NT. I go along with modern theory, 2NT is more flexible and allows for a possible 4♠ contract if partner has 5♠'s. And what about South's pass at (2)? Dubious, I think that most players would bid 3NT (the ♦K is a great card). 3NT is a good contract but as it happened 8 tricks was the limit on the hand.

No Justice?**Table 1****Table 2**

West (E)	East (D)	West	East	West	East
♠ K32	♠ J1096	1♣	pass	2NT	3♣
♥ A54	♥ J8			3♦	3NT
♦ AK	♦ QJ83				
♣ AK842	♣ 1075				

Board 20 from Friday 5th. West opened 1♣ at table 1 and played there. At the other table the bidding was what I would recommend; unfortunately there is no entry to dummy and 3NT fails whereas 1♣ made +1. No justice?

And should East respond to 1♣ or pass at table 1? This really is a matter of style and partnership understanding. Many stick by the rule of 6 points to respond, just as many are loath to pass a 1♣ opener. With good ♠'s and good intermediates, I would bid.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

- Hand A If you play intermediate jump overcalls, then bid 3♦. If you play weak jump overcalls, then bid 2♦. Double and then bid ♦'s is another possibility but I would prefer a stronger hand.
- Hand B Open 1♦ and then jump to 2NT. This shows 18-19 pts. I.e. a hand too strong to open a strong NT. In Acol (weak NT) this bid is 17-19.
- Hand C Open a strong 1NT. If you play a weak NT open 1♦ and rebid 1NT over 1♥/♠.
- Hand D Either pass or 1♦ or 1♠ could work out best! I would bid 1♠. Debatable.
- Hand E Open 2NT. 2NT is a balanced 20-22 (some play 20-21) pts.
- Hand F Best is 2♣ if you don't play Jacoby 2NT or Swiss; but 4♠ is simplest.
- Hand G 2♣ or 2♦, possibly 1NT. Do NOT pass.
- Hand H 3♣, Stayman.

Last week's winners: Monday 8/9/03

Friday 12/9/03

1st David/Tomas 64%
 2nd Gerry/Dave 55%

1st Clive/Terry 67%
 2nd Gunnar/Tomas 61%

A bit chaotic last Monday with three mis-boardings. Anything similar again and we will have to re-introduce the dreaded curtain cards. Twice a board was played to about trick 11 before one player realised that he had 14 cards and another that he had just 12. This really is inexcusable. The laws of bridge (and common sense) are very clear - count your cards before you even look at them. It really is a waste of everybody's time if two players can bid and play a hand with an incorrect number of cards. What is the name of that convention for showing 4433 shape?

Clive has returned from Penang, he was not impressed. Apparently there was a taxi strike and general anti-farang feeling there. Perhaps they thought he was American? Anyway, nice to have him back and we just managed three tables on Friday.

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A LHO opens 1♦, partner overcalls a weak 2♥ and RHO bids 3♦. You are vulnerable against not and make a sensible pass. LHO bids 3NT round to you. Do you bid?
♠ 94	♠ Q9752	
♥ 10	♥ A10	
♦ 8762	♦ A9	With Hand B you open 1♠ and partner bids 3♠, do you bid 4♠ or pass?
♣ AKQ1062	♣ A654	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C what do you open playing a strong NT (15-17)? What would you open playing Acol?
♠ A106	♠ J72	
♥ AQ94	♥ K1082	With Hand D, partner opens a strong NT. Do you bid?
♦ QJ	♦ 876	
♣ AJ102	♣ Q93	With Hand E you open 1♦, LHO doubles and partner bids 1♥. What is your rebid?
Hand E	Hand F	With hand F you choose to open 1♠, what then: -
♠ A76	♠ AK1065	(a) What is your rebid if partner responds 2♦?
♥ 105	♥ K93	(b) What is your rebid if partner responds 2♥?
♦ AKQ1063	♦ -	(c) Is a 3♣ rebid from you weak, invitational or forcing?
♣ Q8	♣ KJ954	(d) What would 2NT over partner's 2♦ show?
		(e) What would 3NT over partner's 2♦ show?

Leading Quiz

Two more problems from Monday 8th

Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G, RHO opens 1♦ and you choose to bid a weak 2♥. LHO bids 3♦, RHO bids 3NT. What do you lead? What do you lead if partner had doubled the final contract?
♠ 6532	♠ Q54	
♥ AQ6543	♥ A87	
♦ -	♦ A72	With Hand H you open 1NT. This is passed round to RHO who bids 2♠. What do you lead?
♣ 987	♣ AJ106	

Stayman with a weak hand?

Board 27 from Monday 8th

North (C)	South (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ A106	♠ J72	-	-	-	pass
♥ AQ94	♥ K1082	pass	1NT (1)	pass	2♣ (2)
♦ QJ	♦ 876	pass	2♥	pass	pass
♣ AJ102	♣ Q93	pass			

An excellent contract, but is it good bidding or just lucky? Let's look: -

At (1) we have opened a strong NT (15-17) with 18 points. With good intermediates some would say it's too strong, but QJ doubleton is a poor holding and I agree with 1NT. Now what about that Stayman 2♣ at (2). It worked out well as partner happened to have 4♥'s.

But what if partner responds 2♦ or 2♠? With just 6 points and no fit you have no recourse, a 2NT bid would be invitational showing 8 points. South should pass 1NT. Only bid Stayman with invitational or better values unless you can cope with any (2♦/♥/♠) response.

Hand J	Hand K	Partner has opened a strong NT opposite both of these hands. Neither has invitational values but you can bid 'garbage' Stayman with both of these hands because you are happy with any response. With Hand J you simply pass any reply. With Hand K you pass a major suit response and convert 2♦ to 2♠. This shows a weak hand with 4♥'s and 5♠'s and partner will pass.
♠ J1064	♠ J10864	
♥ Q942	♥ Q942	
♦ Q8765	♦ Q76	
♣ -	♣ 3	

And just a look at why that North hand (C) is not worth 18 points – if you do not open 1NT and consider it worth 18 points then the bidding will go something like 1♣ - 1♥ - 4♥ - pass (or 1♥ - 2♥ - 4♥ - pass or 1♥ - 2♥ - 3NT - 4♥ - pass if you play 4 card majors). Either way you end up in 4♥; with a combined 24 points and a fit this is sometimes enough, but 4♥ is a poor contract (because the ♦QJ are worthless). A bad hand for the weak NT? No. Playing a weak NT I would also downgrade the Hand, I would bid 1♣ - 1♥ - 3♥ - pass. Playing Acol it goes 1♥ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3♥ - pass.

I cannot see how to sensibly bid this hand to just 2♥ playing any system but 3♥ is a very sensible contract.

An 'Impossible Lead'?

Board 7 from Monday 8th

West (H)	West	North	East	South
♠ Q54	1NT	pass	pass	2♠
♥ A87	pass	pass	pass	
♦ A72				
♣ AJ106				

First of all, the bidding. I did not say if you were playing a weak or strong NT. A totally flat 15 count, so deduct a point. Playing a weak NT I would open 1NT. And playing a strong NT? The good ♣ suit and three aces is some compensation for the flat shape, I would also open 1NT if playing a strong NT but 1♣ is OK. Strive to open 1NT

if your hand is suitable. Hans opened this with a strong NT and Gerry opened a weak NT. I agree with both.

Now then, what do you lead? We all know not to underlead an ace against a suit contract. Also, it is rarely correct to lead an ace when you don't hold the king (it may give declarer a trick if he holds the king and partner the queen). Now a trump from Q54 could very easily give away a trick. So it's unsolvable! Unfortunately the laws state that you have to lead, so which is the least of the evils?

I would reason as follows: - A trump lead really is too dangerous. I will not underlead an ace against a suit contract. So that just leaves the lead of an ace. The problem with leading an ace is that it gives declarer a trick with his king, if your side holds the Q and J then he would not get it otherwise. So in which suit(s) are our side likely to hold the Q and J? ♣'s are most likely as you hold the J. Thus I would lead a red ace. Which one? A bit of a toss up but I would lead ♥A. ♦A is probably just as good. What happened? West led a small ♣, declarer had the ♣K and partner the ♣Q. The contract made on the nail.

The Killing Lead

Board 3 from Monday 8th . E-W vulnerable

West (G)	East (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ 6532	♠ 94	-	-	-	1♦
♥ AQ6543	♥ 10	2♥ (1)	3♦	pass (2)	3NT
♦ -	♦ 8762	pass	pass	dbl (3)	pass
♣ 987	♣ AKQ1062	pass	pass		

First of all, the bidding. 2♥ at (1) is a weak jump overcall. Some players would not make the bid with a 4 card ♠ suit and a void, I have no problem with the bid. I was East and passed at (2); partner has shown a weak hand and bidding 4♣ is too dangerous, especially when vulnerable. Now what is that double at (3)? It is explained below.

So, what should West lead? First consider the situation without the double. Some players would lead ♥5 (4th best) and others would prefer not to lead a ♥ in which case a ♠ (unbid major) is preferable. Either could work out. But what does partner's double mean? A double of a freely bid 3NT says that East expects to defeat the contract because he has a good long suit. West has to lead this suit and so should choose his shortest suit. In this case it is ♣'s. What happened? West obediently led a ♣ and E-W made the first 8 tricks. 3NT was made (+1) at two other tables (undoubled) when a ♥ was led. With a ♠ lead 3NT makes exactly.

Don't get too high (or bid NT) on a mis-fit

Board 21 from Friday 12th

North (F)	South	West	North (me)	East	South (Clive)
♠ AK1065	♠ 73	-	1♠ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♥ K93	♥ 842	pass	2♠ (3)	pass	3♣ (4)
♦ -	♦ AKQ952	pass	4♣ (5)	pass	4♠ (6)
♣ KJ954	♣ AQ	pass	pass (7)	pass	

Two really powerful hands – but don't get carried away, it is a mis-fit. The bidding is that at our table and needs some explaining: -

- (1) I prefer to open 1♠ when 5-5 in the black suits. 1♣ is acceptable if that is your partnership style but I know that Clive opens 1♠ on this hand type. I have a good memory as far as people's bidding is concerned and I recall Clive opening 1♠ with a similar hand (news-sheet 36).
- (2) Some people will jump shift to 3♦ here, I prefer 2♦ as it consumes less room.
- (3) So then, what's your rebid? 3♣ would be game forcing and this hand is not good enough. 2NT is silly with a void (and shows a balanced 15-16 points in our system, 12-14 if you play a strong NT). 3NT would show a very strong hand (17+ in our system, 18+ if you play a strong NT). 2♥ would be lying in a major suit, silly. That only leaves 2♠. Rebidding a suit does **not guarantee** six cards. If partner had responded 2♥ at (2) then that would have improved this hand immensely and 3♣ would then be correct, although 4♦ (splinter) or even 5♦ (Exclusion Blackwood) are possible alternatives.
- (4) South has a tricky bid now. 3♦ is not forcing (we do not play 2/1), 3NT is out with no ♥ stop but your bid must be forcing. Clive chose a sensible bid, 3♣. Partner would normally bid 3NT with a ♥ stop and then everything is fine.
- (5) I had a ♥ stop but I will not bid 3NT with a void in partner's suit. I envisaged a ♣ slam and so I bid 4♣ (forcing).
- (6) No choice now but to play in 4♠.
- (7) Even though I assumed a ♣ fit, I did not continue because of my void in partner's suit.

So, the best contract was (easily?) reached. And what happened at the other tables?

A poor 3NT was reached at one and a miserable 6NT (minus 5) at the other. The bottom lines? Do not bid NT with a void in partner's suit nor with a mis-fit. Do not bid too high with mis-fits. If West bids NT in this example, East will think that his ♦ suit will produce 6 tricks – it will not opposite a void.

And how did 4♠ fare? With ♠'s 3-3 it was easy; as it happened a ♠ was led initially by East and West did not know about 3rd hand playing high. Thus no trump loser and 13 tricks were then easy. A gratifying result for being in the correct contract.

♠ 73	Let me just illustrate the importance of a fit. Change the red suits and
♥ AQJ82	make the South hand weaker. Opposite North F this now makes 7♥ easily.
♦ 8452	As I said, the North Hand is enormous if South bids ♥'s, but not if he bids
♣ AQ	♦'s.

Accept the Invitation?

Board 24 from Monday 8th

South (B) You open 1♠ and partner bids 3♠, do you go to game or not? This hand has rather poor trumps, but the good shape and three aces more than compensate. Partner's raise shows about 11 points and this hand is certainly worth 4♠. What happened? This hand passed at one table and 11 tricks were made. 4♠ was bid at the other two tables.

♠ Q9752
♥ A10
♦ A9
♣ A654

A Jump Rebid?

Board 17 from Friday 12th

West (E)	West	North	East	South
♠ A76	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ 105	1♦	dbl	1♥	pass
♦ AKQ1063	?			
♣ Q8				

So, what's your rebid? You are playing a strong NT and so 1NT (12-14) is out. 2NT would show a balanced 18-19. 3NT (showing a very strong hand with a long solid suit) is an overbid – a bit down on high cards and the ♦ suit is not solid. That really just leaves 2♦ or 3♦. I think this hand is good enough for 3♦, partner made a free bid (over the double) so probably does not have a miserable 6 or 7 count. What happened? At our table West bid just 2♦ and played there making +1 when partner produced just two aces. 3NT was reached and made at the other tables.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

- Hand A You should double the 3NT bid if partner understands it. It requests partner to lead his shortest suit (but not their suit, obviously).
- Hand B Happily accept the invitation, bid 4♠.
- Hand C This hand is not worth 18 points (doubleton QJ is a poor holding). Playing a strong NT open 1NT. Playing Acol open 1♥ and jump rebid NT (showing 17-19) over partner's response.
- Hand D You must pass partner's 1NT opening. Bidding Stayman is too dangerous as you are fixed over both a 2♦ or a 2♠ reply.
- Hand E Bid 3♦. Too good for just 2♦.
- Hand F
- After a 2♦ reply from partner this hand is not so good. A void in partner's suit is not usually an asset. Your only sensible bid is 2♠.
 - After a 2♥ reply your hand is enormous. Bid 3♣. A ♥ slam could be there.
 - 3♣ shows a big hand. It is **game** forcing.
 - A 2NT rebid would show a balanced 12-14 (15-16 if you play a weak NT).
 - A jump to 3NT shows a hand too good to open a strong NT. In this case a balanced 18-19 points playing a strong NT, (17-19) if playing a weak NT.

Last week's winners: Monday 15/9/03

Friday 19/9/03

1st Hans/Phil 60%
 2nd Gerry/Dave 57%

1st Hans/Jan 53VP
 2nd Clive/Jim 51VP

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A you open 1♦ and partner replies 1♠. What is your rebid? And what if RHO had overcalled 3♣ (weak), what do you bid?
♠ A1076	♠ K9842	
♥ 43	♥ AJ75	
♦ AQJ65	♦ K7	With Hand B you open 1♠, partner replies 1NT, do you bid?
♣ QJ	♣ A6	
Hand C	Hand D	What do you open with Hand C? If you choose 1♠ then what do you do after a 1NT response from partner?
♠ AK952	♠ A1096	With Hand D RHO opens 1NT, what do you bid? Obviously 2♣ if you play multi-Landy or a similar defence to 1NT.
♥ J94	♥ A9863	But you do not play this and so settle for a natural 2♥. This is passed round to opener who produces an unexpected 3♣ bid. What do you do now?
♦ A7	♦ AJ6	
♣ AJ8	♣ 7	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you are playing a strong NT and partner opens 1♠, what is your reply? Is it the same if you play a weak NT?
♠ A6	♠ AJ53	
♥ Q1083	♥ Q82	With Hand F you are playing Acoll and open 1♠, opponents vulnerable and you not. LHO overcalls 2♥ and partner doubles (negative). What do you bid at pairs? And at teams?
♦ 532	♦ QJ73	
♣ KJ92	♣ AK	
Hand G	Hand H	Hand J
♠ A862	♠ 1065	♠ AQ654
♥ KQ9	♥ AQ872	♥ Q10
♦ J43	♦ Q7	♦ 87
♣ K95	♣ A95	♣ KJ93
		Do any of these hands qualify as an opener?
Hand K	Hand L	With Hand K LHO opens 1♦, partner bids 1♥ and RHO bids 1♠. Do you bid?
♠ K86	♠ J842	
♥ 864	♥ 85	With hand L the opponent's bid to 3NT against silent opposition. A ♣ lead is 'obvious', but which one?
♦ K9	♦ J6	
♣ 97652	♣ AK1032	

At King Arthur's Court

King Arthur had been having a bad run at his gambling and so he decided to ask his magicians the odds at a game where he had lost a considerable amount. He summoned Merlin and co. and asked them: -

- Arthur: I have three golden sovereigns, one has two heads, one has two tails and the third is normal. I place all three in a hat and pick out one at random. It is placed on the table and suppose that it shows a head, then what are the odds that the reverse is also a head?
- Griffendahl: Well Sire, that really is simple. You had a one in three chance of picking the double headed coin and so the odds are 1 in 3.
- Dumbledwarf: Great gobbling griffins, what nonsense. You have to think about sides. There are a total of three heads and three tails. You can see one head so that leaves two heads and three tails. The odds are thus 2 in 5.
- Hogwarts: Double Dutch Dumbledwarf!. When will you grow up? Think about the coins. Suppose that you pick the double headed coin, then it's 100% that you place it on the table heads up. But if you picked the genuine coin then it's only 50%. Thus when a head appears it's twice as likely to be from the double headed coin. The odds are 2 in 3.
- Merlin: Hogwash Hogwarts! You're all wrong. There are just two coins with a head and this is one of them. Either coin is just as likely to have been picked and so the odds are evens that this is the double headed coin.
So 1 in 2.

Seems just like a political debate; everybody is very persuasive and appears to have a good argument, but most of them are talking nonsense. 1 in 3; 2 in 5; 2 in 3 or 1 in 2. Who is correct? Answer next week.

An Easy Game Missed (at both tables)

Board 11 from Friday 19th

West (C)	East	At the table where I was kibitzing they were playing a strong NT and West chose to open 1♠. A 1NT opening is a very acceptable alternative. Anyway, partner replied 1NT and West passed; 11 tricks were made in NT, who's fault?
♠ AK952	♠ 4	Playing a weak NT it is easy as East can respond 2♦ to a 1♠ opening. Playing a strong NT you need 11 (or a very good 10 points) to bid at the two level. Some would upgrade because of the excellent ♦ suit and bid 2♦, others would consider the shortage in opener's suit a liability and would be satisfied with 1NT. I think that either is acceptable. But after a 1NT response to the 1♠ opening, West has to bid on. 2NT is the bid, it is too good to pass. I don't know the bidding at the other table but since they scored +210 I guess they were also in 1NT making +4?
♥ J94	♥ Q10	
♦ A7	♦ KQ9543	
♣ AJ8	♣ Q973	

When the bidding starts 1♠ - 1NT, then opener needs about 17-18 points to bid 2NT. It does not come up that often when you play a strong NT as most of the hands in the 16-17 point range would have opened 1NT.

A Good Opener

Boards 1 and 21 from Monday 15th – passed out!

East 1 (H) East 21 (J)

♠ 1065 ♠ AQ654
♥ AQ872 ♥ Q10
♦ Q7 ♦ 87
♣ A95 ♣ KJ93

Hand H was passed by one player on Monday.
A cold bottom as 9 tricks were available in ♥'s.
Seems to be catching, Hand J was passed by
another player and 9 tricks were there in ♠'s.
Do not pass 12 counts with a good 5 card major.

Raising Responder's Major to Game?

Board 25 from Monday 15th

West	East (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ KJ53	♠ A1076	-	pass	1♦	pass
♥ K8	♥ 43	1♠	3♣ (1)	4♠	pass
♦ K10943	♦ AQJ65	4NT	pass	5♥	pass
♣ A10	♣ QJ	6♠	pass	pass	pass

A hopeless slam, who's fault? First of all consider East's rebid if there was no interference. Raising partner's 1♠ to 2♠ is quite sufficient. A rebid of 3♠ would show a slightly stronger hand (about 15-17 pts) and 4♠ would show about 18-19 pts. After the weak 3♣ at (1) there is less room, after interference you sometimes have to stretch. This East hand is worth 3♠, but only 3♠. A bid of 4♠ here shows about 17-19 points. The ♣QJ are worthless and this East hand is about 6 points shy of the 4♠ bid.

Leading Against No Trumps

Board 3 from Monday 15th

East (K) You are on lead against 3NT. I don't know what the bidding was (it's not important). You choose to lead a ♣, but which one?

♠ J842 Obviously you lead 4th best. The player in question led ♣A. He most certainly deserved to find partner with ♣Qx. And for all you unbelievers, there is someone out there? Partner did indeed have Qx and 3NT made +2 when a small ♣ lead nets the first 5 ♣ tricks. Read this before? Of course you have, it is virtually the same script as in news-sheet 24, and what's more it was the same player who led the ace then!! Seems that some players do not learn even after they have let 2NT redoubled make.

♥ 85
♦ J6
♣ AK1032

An Opening Bid in 4th Seat?

Board 14 from Friday 12th

North (G) 13 high card points, totally flat with poor intermediates. Do you open?
It is close. I would deduct a point and perhaps not open in 1st – 2nd seat.
4th seat is different and the rule of 15 applies (news sheet 24). With 12 points (deduct one for this shape) and 4 ♠'s this adds up to 16 and so is a clear opener in 4th seat. What happened? I opened a weak NT at our table and made +2. It was passed out at another. At the 3rd table N-S managed to reach 3♠ (minus 2) on 4-3 fit. I have no idea how, partner had a flat 10 count.

♠ A862
♥ KQ9
♦ J43
♣ K95

Bidding Over 1NTBoard 13 from Friday 19th . Both vulnerable.

West (D)	West(Ian)	North	East	South (Clive)
♠ A1096	-	pass	pass	1NT
♥ A9863	2♥	pass	pass	3♣
♦ AJ6	dbl (1)	pass	pass (2)	pass
♣ 7				

It really is worthwhile having some sort of defence to opponent's 1NT opening. There are dozens around and Multi-Landy (similar to Cappelletti) is certainly one of the best, see news-sheet 15.

Anyway, West played a natural defence and bid 2♥. This was passed round to opener who bid 3♣. It is not usually wise to bid again having opened 1NT, however South had a warped 1NT opener (six ♣'s) and perhaps he knew his opponent? I don't understand the double at (1). The player concerned said that he did not think that 3♣ would make, quite why I don't know. Anyway, a double here is for penalties. Pass is

the only sensible bid now; partner would then have bid 3♥ which makes easily, fine.

He passed the penalty double and 3♣ made, not so fine.

The bottom line? Having something in trumps is normally sound advice for a penalty double! (especially when partner has said nothing).

Responding to Partner's OvercallBoard 19 from Friday 19th , E-W vulnerable

West	East (K)	West	North	East	South
♠ J73	♠ K86	-	-	-	1♦
♥ AQ953	♥ 864	1♥ (1)	1♠	2♥ (2)	pass
♦ AJ	♦ K9	3♥ (3)	pass	pass	pass
♣ A103	♣ 97652				

The contract drifted four off for -400, a disaster at teams on a partscore hand. Things sat badly (♠ A with South and ♥ KJ102 with North) but was anybody at fault in getting this high? Let's have a look: -

- (1) Obviously a sound overcall. An overcall at the one level can be anywhere between 7 and 17 points and this is at the top of the range.
- (2) Responding to an overcall is different from responding to an opening bid in that partner is limited to 17 points. If West had opened the bidding then East would be obliged to bid with this hand as there could be a game opposite an 18 or 19 point hand. Opposite an overcall there is no game and East is under no obligation to bid. This really is a very poor 6 count, LHO has opened the bidding and so you expect at least one king to sit under the ace. Also three small is not a good trump holding and, as I have said many times, points belong in long suits (or partner's long suit). This is a miserable hand and should pass. If the ♠ and ♥ holdings were interchanged then 2♥ would be a reasonable bid. In this auction opener is bound to bid and you can bid 2♥ next go if you get a chance.
- (3) This West hand is worth a try for game.

When Do You Need 5 Cards to Bid a Major?

Board 26 from Monday 15th

North (E)	South (B)	West	North	East	South
♠ A6	♠ K9842	-	-	pass	1♠
♥ Q1083	♥ AJ75	pass	1NT (1)	pass	pass (2)
♦ 532	♦ K7	pass			
♣ KJ92	♣ A6				

A reasonable 4♥ was missed, and in any case, a ♥ partscore is better than NT. Who's fault? North's 1NT at (1) is correct, the hand is not strong enough to bid at the two level when playing a strong NT (you need 11 points). Anyway, if playing a weak NT the bid would be 2♣, not 2♥. You need 5 ♥'s to respond 2♥ to an opening 1♠ bid.

So, what about South's pass at (2)? South thought that he needed 5♥'s to bid 2♥; this is incorrect. Whereas North needed 5♥'s, South needs only 4. This shows 5-4 shape and offers North a choice between 2♥, 2♠ or bidding on if he likes ♥'s. In this particular case North is max and likes ♥'s, he should bid an invitational 3♥ which South should most certainly raise to 4♥.

So, playing a strong NT the bidding should be 1♠ - 1NT - 2♥ - 3♥ - 4♥ - pass
And playing a weak NT 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♥ - 4♥ - pass

The board was played 5 times on Monday. The ♥ game was reached at other tables (making +1) except at one table where 3NT was reached (making minus two). The two players concerned have not had the wisdom of my last dozen or so news sheets; after they catch up they will doubtless know all about the power of the 4-4 fit.

Let's continue the theme, board 3 from Friday 19th :-

North	South	<u>Table 1</u>				<u>Table 2</u>			
		West	North	East	South	West	North	East	South
		-	-	-	1♠	-	-	-	1♠
♠ 86	♠ K9853	pass	1NT	pass	2♥	pass	1NT	pass	2♥
♥ K10832	♥ AJ95	3♦	3♥	pass	pass	pass	4♥	pass	pass
♦ 62	♦ Q5	pass				pass			
♣ QJ82	♣ K5								

Both North's got it right to start with. You cannot respond 2♥ with just six points and 1NT is the only bid. At table 1 there was an interfering 3♦ overcall, and with a known 9 card fit, 3♥ is correct. This is not invitational but simply competitive. At table 2 North got carried away, an invitational 3♥ is an overbid, 4♥ is way over the top; opener has shown no more than a minimal hand with 5♠'s and 4♥'s. Even though you know of a 9 card fit, the miserable doubleton in opener's first bid suit is a bad omen. What happened? ♠A was offside and just 8 tricks were available.

Passing a Negative Double?

Board 19 from Monday 15th

South (F)	West	North	East	South (me)
♠ AJ53	-	-	-	1♠ (1)
♥ Q82	2♥	dbl (2)	pass	pass (3)
♦ QJ73	pass			
♣ AK				

This hand is from Monday, I was playing Acol with Gerry. E-W were vulnerable: -

- (1) Playing Acol I will open a 4 card major only if my rebid is NT, with 17 or more points. So 1♠ here. Why do I only open a 4 card major with 17+ points? Because a 1NT response is often very awkward – I want to be able to raise 1NT to 2NT(or 3NT).
- (2) Negative, showing both minors and values to compete to the three level.
- (3) Dangerous at teams, but pass is a serious contender at pairs. If you choose to bid 3♦ then you are at the 3 level with possibly only an 8 card fit. If you set the opponents by just one trick then you get +200, a magic number at pairs. This illustrates the fallacy that you miss penalty doubles when you play negative doubles, 2♥ would not be doubled if you played old-fashioned penalty doubles.

What happened? Partner did not have much, but 3♦ makes. However, 2♥ went one down for an excellent score to N-S. At teams I would bid 3♦. This is where the type of scoring is important. You also need to consider if the overcaller is a sound bidder, letting Hans play 2♥ doubled would be very dangerous, this West was not Hans. +200 is a clear top at pairs and 2♥ making is a clear bottom; if the former is more likely then it is a good bet. The same is not true at teams scoring. Doubling 2♥ only gains 100 when it goes down but 2♥ doubled and making is a disaster.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

- Hand A 2♠ is quite sufficient. After a 3♣ overcall then you have to show your support by bidding 3♠. 4♠ is a gross overbid in both situations. If you bid 4♠ then partner will place you with a big hand and may go slamming.
- Hand B Open 1♠ and rebid 2♥ over 1NT (or 2♣/♦)
- Hand C A strong 1NT is acceptable. If you open 1♠ and partner replies 1NT then bid 2NT.
- Hand D Having overcalled 2♥ at the first go you have said it all, pass now. A double is for penalties and is absurd with a singleton trump.
- Hand E Playing a weak NT then bid 2♣. Playing a strong NT this hand is not quite good enough for a two level response and so bid 1NT.
- Hand F You have 17 points and partner has shown values. At favourable vulnerability and pairs scoring I would pass and hope for the magic +200 or +500. 3♦ is a feeble(?) alternative but is best at teams.
- Hand G A marginal opener in 1st or 2nd seat, but open in 3rd or 4th seat.
- Hands H&J Clear openers in any seat.
- Hand K Pass. Not good enough for 2♥ at this stage.
- Hand L Lead a *small* ♣. Do *not* lead the ace or king.

Last week's winners: Monday 22/9/03

Friday 26/9/03

1 st	Clive/Ken	61%	1 st	Clive/Jim	68%
2 nd	Kevin/Noreen	52%	2 nd	Tomas/Terry	55%

Up until now, most of the contents of the news-sheets have been about the bidding. There are various reasons - talking about the play is more complex and takes up more space, also my play is nowhere as good as my bidding. I have, however, covered most topics in the bidding and so it's time to branch out. There are a couple of play hands in this edition.

Bidding Quiz

Hand A Hand B With Hand A everybody is vulnerable and you dealt.
Do you open? And if so, with what?

♠ KQ95	♠ K108732
♥ 85	♥ 10
♦ -	♦ KJ
♣ Q1097632	♣ A54

With Hand B everybody is vulnerable and you dealt.
What do you open?

Hand C Hand D With hand C partner opens a strong NT, you bid 2♣
and get a 2♦ reply. Now what? Do you go slamming?

♠ K976	♠ K9
♥ KQ43	♥ J
♦ AK	♦ KJ982
♣ J94	♣ AQJ96

With hand D partner opens 1♣, RHO overcalls 1♠ and you bid 2♦. Partner replies 2♥, do you go slamming?

Hand E Hand F You open Hand E with 1♦ and partner replies 1♥. What
is your rebid?

♠ AJ8	♠ J10
♥ A	♥ Q72
♦ 98532	♦ A532
♣ AK52	♣ AKQ6

With Hand F RHO opens a strong NT and you double.
LHO passes and your partner bids 2♣. This is passed round
to LHO who bids 2NT, passed to you. What do you do?

At King Arthur's Court

Sir Lancelot was staying in a hamlet 100 miles distant from Camelot. He was due back today and King Arthur decided to meet with him on the way. They both left at the same time; the king and his court travelled at 20 mph whilst Sir Lancelot and his steed travelled at 30 mph. King Arthur sent his hunting hawk, Whirlwind, ahead and the hawk flew to Lancelot and back to the king repeatedly until the two friends met. Whirlwind flew at 40 mph and when Arthur and Lancelot met the king noted that the hawk looked rather tired, how many miles had Whirlwind flown?

A Couple of Slams

A slam was bid and made successfully on just two occasions on Monday. As it happens, both times by me – not bad as I only played 18 of the 27 boards. Credit has to go to my bidding partners, however. So let's have a look: -

A Minor Suit Fit?

Board 10 from Monday 22nd

North (D)	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ K9	♠ Q1064	-	-	pass	1♣ (1)
♥ J	♥ A1086	1♠	2♦ (2)	pass	2♥ (3)
♦ KJ982	♦ A104	pass	4NT (4)	pass	5♥ (2 aces)
♣ AQJ96	♣ K7	pass	6♣	pass	pass

- (1) I bid this one with Rosemary, let's have a look at the bidding. Playing a strong NT and 5 card majors you have to open this hand with one of a minor. Playing better minor you open 1♦, but I like the 1♦ opening to guarantee 4 cards and prefer 1♣ with this particular 4432 hand. So does Rosemary.
- (2) Obviously I was interested in slam and had to find a forcing bid. 2♣ and 3♣ are not forcing; you could leap straight into Blackwood but I prefer 2♦ and wait for partner's rebid.
- (3) This is normally a reverse, showing 16+ points with 5♣'s and 4♥'s. Some people (Chuck with me) do not play this as showing extra values after a two level response but that is not standard. If you play negative doubles then the correct bid with this hand is 2NT, showing a balanced 12-14. This is not denying a ♥ suit as partner has denied ♥'s by not bidding a negative double. If you do not play negative doubles then 2♥ is OK I guess.
- (4) I was not certain if Rosemary was showing extra values or not (are you sure with your partner?); I assumed a ♣ fit and launched into slam mode. 4NT was normal Blackwood.

Whatever the bidding is, I will always be looking for slam with that excellent North hand opposite a 1♣ or 1♦ opener. Playing better minor you get a 1♦ opening and I will bid to 6♦. Opposite a 1♥ or a weak 1NT opening it's not so clear. Anyway a slam is an OK prospect and I don't see how to avoid it after a 1♣ or 1♦ opening. 3NT (3 times) and 4NT were bid at the other tables. Note that a suit (♣ or ♦) slam is OK but 6NT is a poor contract on a ♥ lead.

I was playing this hand against Hans and Kenneth and half way through the hand I commented that I don't often find myself in 5-2 fits at the 6 level. Hans said that it served me right as I deserved to be passed out in 2♦. I subsequently made the contract, but what did Hans mean? Hans maintains that 2♦ is not forcing in this auction. Now there is a variation of negative doubles (negative free bids) where this sequence is not forcing, however it is my no means standard (and needs to be alerted). 2♦ is forcing. Hans disagrees. What's new? I said that everybody in the club (except Hans) would play 2♦ as forcing. Hans said not so. I knew it was unnecessary, but I checked with 3 of our leading players; Clive, Ken and Jim all said that 2♦ was unlimited and 100% forcing. I happen to know that both Chuck and Austin despise negative free bids and play this as forcing. Hans' comment seems strange to me as he says that the news sheet is sometimes rather complicated and I should strive to keep it simple. Agreed, and I am most certainly not going to recommend negative free bids. A new suit by responder is forcing. Simple.

A Good Slam Missed by Nearly Everybody

Board 4 from Monday 22nd

West (B)	East	West(me)	North	East	South
♠ K108732	♠ A96	1♠ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)	pass
♥ 103	♥ A942	2♠ (3)	pass	6♠ (4)	pass
♦ KJ	♦ A987	pass	pass		
♣ A54	♣ KQ				

- (1) I bid this one with Jan, let's have a look at the bidding. The opening bid is perhaps a toss-up between 1♠ and a weak 2♠. With decent intermediates in the ♠ suit and honours outside trumps I think that 1♠ is best. The hand complies with the rule of 20 (11 pts plus 9 cards in two suits) and is too good for a weak 2♠ opener.
- (2) When you pick up a hand like this and my partner opens then think of slam. As with the previous hand, you have to find a forcing bid. You cannot bid 2♥ (you need 5♥'s for the bid) and any ♠ bid is non-forcing, a 'waiting' 2♦ is best.
- (3) Obvious. Showing a minimal hand and usually 6♠'s.
- (4) With a hand bristling with controls I am going to slam. There is no point in asking for aces as the ♣A is probably irrelevant. Keep it simple. 6♠.

Partner is minimum, but is it a good slam? Yes, I calculate it at about 70%. And the play after the ♥K lead? Easy if the trumps split; I drew two rounds but they were 3-1 so I had a loser there. But still 50%; finesse the ♦J immediately. If this loses you are down; but it won so ♦K, then off to dummy with a ♣ and pitch the losing ♥ on the ♦A. The board was played 5 times and the other 4 times it was in 4♠, not even an attempt at slam. Why? Maybe West opened a heavyweight 2♠? On the odd occasions that I am dealt a good hand like this East one I will always bid slam opposite a normal opener. The bottom line? Aces are good cards.

When Do You Pre-empt?

Hand G	Hand H	Hand J	South 7 (A)
♠ 5	♠ KQ95	♠ K95	♠ KQ95
♥ K5	♥ 8	♥ Q53	♥ 85
♦ 965	♦ 5	♦ -	♦ -
♣ QJ107632	♣ Q1097632	♣ Q1097632	♣ Q1097632

When you have a weak hand and a 7 card suit it is often a good idea to pre-empt. Hand G is a classic pre-empt and should open 3♣. There are, however, a number of hand types where pre-empting is unadvisable. Hand H should not open 3♣ because it contains a decent 4 card major; partner may have ♠'s in which case a ♠ game may be on your way. Hand J should not pre-empt because of the 3 card major(s) combined with the void. If partner has a major suit then a major suit game may be missed. Hand A should most definitely not pre-empt; with a void **and** a 4 card major you could easily miss game. What happened on Monday? One player opened this hand with 3♣ and a lay-down 4♠ was missed. Do not pre-empt when you have potential playing strength in another (major) suit.

Two(!) Chinese Finesses

Board 12 from Friday 26th

West (E)	East (C)	West	North	East	South
♠ AJ8	♠ K976	1NT (1)	pass	2♣ (2)	pass
♥ A	♥ KQ43	2♦ (3)	pass	3NT (4)	pass
♦ 98532	♦ AK	pass	pass		
♣ AK52	♣ J94				

First of all, the bidding playing a strong NT: -

- (1) Strong, 15-17. What can I say? I would have thought that anybody who has read a few of the news-sheets or is past page 6 of a beginner's book knows not to open 1NT with a singleton. Apparently not. With this hand open 1♦; if partner bids 1♠ then raise to 2♠. If partner bids 1♥ or 1NT then 2♣ is the rebid. Playing a weak NT then you can rebid 1NT rather than 2♣ over a 1♥ response. A 1NT response shows 15-16 points, it is not usually a good idea with a singleton but with a singleton ace in partner's suit and both unbid suits well covered it is acceptable. A 1NT rebid playing a strong NT is 12-14 points and is obviously absurd with 16 points.
- (2) With one or two 4 card majors, bid Stayman.
- (3) No 4 card major, it is a coincidence that this hand has 5♦'s.
- (4) If opener had responded with a 4 card major then slam was worth a try. With no fit a slam is remote. 4NT (quantitative) is a possibility but even opposite a max, 6NT is not a good bet with no long suit or fit. 3NT is best.

And now the play, the contract is cold but at pairs overtricks are important. Declarer won the ♥ lead and decided to tackle ♠'s next, how would you play this suit? This declarer played the ♠J towards the dummy (East). North covered with the ♠Q and East won with the ♠K. The ♠9 back picked up the ♠10 in the South hand; the suit split 3-3 and so produced 4 tricks. Good play or just lucky?

Lucky. The correct play is to cash ♠K and finesse the ♠J. A 50% chance of trapping the ♠Q. The 'Chinese' finesse requires both ♠Q and ♠10 in the correct hands and is 25%. Needless to say, North had ♠Qxx and South ♠10xx and so this inferior play succeeded.

Flushed with success, the declarer then led ♣J. This play is even worse and has no real chance of success. The best chance of three tricks from the ♣ suit is to cash the ♣A and then lead towards ♣Jx, this succeeds whenever North has ♣Q or when ♣'s are 3-3.

The bottom line? A Chinese finesse is very occasionally the correct line, but not very often. It is usually best to have the 10 (in hand or dummy) if you lead the J.

Worth a Vulnerable Pre-empt?

Board 7 from Friday 26th

North	Both vulnerable, do you pre-empt? Just 5 points, is it good enough for a vulnerable 3♠ or is 2♠ more prudent? Perhaps pass? I held this hand on Friday and had no problem with bidding 3♠. The ♠ suit is excellent and the garbage outside makes it an excellent pre-empt. What happened?
♠ AJ109763	Opponents have 12 tricks in ♦'s but the pre-empt meant that just 5♦ was reached. I would open 3♠ in 1 st , 2 nd or 3 rd seat, any vulnerability.
♥ 1085	
♦ 7	
♣ 76	

Is It Forcing? – Reverses, Jump responses and rebids etc

I have been asked to clarify this area, which you need to be clear about with your partner. Lets have a look at some common sequences, there is no intervention: -

Opener bids a new suit: -

Non-jump bids are non forcing
 Jump bids are forcing
 A reverse is strong, some (most) say forcing
 A reverse after a 2 level response is game forcing
 A new suit at the three level is game forcing

Examples: -

1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ or 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣
 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♠ or 1♥ - 1♠ - 3♣
 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♦
 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♠
 1♥ - 2♦ - 3♣

Opener repeats his suit: -

Non-jump rebids are weakish
 Jump rebids are stronger but non forcing

1♦ - 1♠ - 2♦
 1♦ - 1♠ - 3♦

Opener supports partner: -

Non-jump support is weakish (about 12-14)
 Jump support is invitational (about 15-17)
 Jumping to 4♥/♠ shows 4 card support & 18-19 pts

1♣ - 1♠ - 2♠
 1♣ - 1♠ - 3♠
 1♦ - 1♠ - 4♠ or 1♦ - 1♥ - 4♥

Responder's Bids: -

A jump shift shows a good suit and is game forcing
 A repeated suit is weakish ...
 ... but after opener repeats it is mildly encouraging
 ... and after a jump by opener it's forcing
 A repeated suit jump is forcing
 A reverse by responder is forcing
 Any new suit is not strictly forcing (it's rarely passed)..
 ... but a jump is forcing
 ... and a new suit at the 3 level is forcing
 Minimal support for opener is weak (6-9)
 Jump support is invitational (+- 11)
 Jump to game on the 2nd round is strong...
 ... immediate jumps to game are weaker

1♦ - 2♥
 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♥
 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♥
 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦ - 3♥
 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♣ - 3♥
 1♦ - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠
 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥
 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♦ - 3♥
 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♣
 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥ or 1♥ - 2♥
 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦ - 3♥ or 1♥ - 3♥
 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦ - 4♥
 1♥ - 4♥

Bid Your Hand Just Once

South (F)	West	North	East	South
♠ J10	-	pass	1NT	dbl
♥ Q72	pass	2♣	pass	pass
♦ A532	2NT	pass	pass	? (1)
♣ AKQ6				

Board 17 from Friday 26th

What should South bid at (1)?

He should pass. Partner has shown a weak hand and West has promised invitational values.

An Endplay

Board 8 from Friday 26th

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AK107	♠ QJ5432	-	1NT (1)	dbl (2)	2♥ (3)
♥ J7	♥ KQ10	pass	2♠ (4)	pass	3♠ (5)
♦ J63	♦ 10	pass	pass (6)	pass	
♣ AQ83	♣ 1052				

First of all, the bidding, playing a strong NT: -

- (1) Strong, 15-17.
- (2) 15+ points
- (3) You have to decide with your partner whether transfers are still on after a double. Playing natural or transfers still on are both acceptable methods.
- (4) North was not sure, so bid 2♠.
- (5) invitational with 6 ♠'s.
- (6) With 4 good trumps, North should possibly bid game. However, he knows that there are 15 points sitting over him and he was not quite sure about the transfer!

Now onto the play. It is pairs and picking up an overtrick is important. East cashed the ♦A and the ♥A and continued with a ♥. You have lost two tricks, how do you avoid losing two ♣'s? The ♣ finesse is bound to fail and you lack the ♣9 for a finesse of the ♣J even if you thought that that was a good play. The answer is to delay playing ♣'s. Draw trumps (they split 2-1), ruff two ♦'s in dummy and throw a losing ♣ on a ♥. That leaves this position, with the lead in dummy (South): -

North	South	This is called stripping the hand. You have eliminated the red suits and now is the time to tackle ♣'s. Lead the ♣10 from dummy and run it round to East. East can win with his ♣J but he has to concede the last 4 tricks to you. He either leads into your ♣AQ or concedes a ruff and discard. If West had the ♣J and covered the ♣10 then you play ♣Q and East wins his ♣K. He then has similar losing options and will not make his ♣9.
♠ 107	♠ QJ	
♥ -	♥ -	
♦ -	♦ -	
♣ AQ8	♣ 1052	

At King Arthur's Court – Solutions

Whirlwind flew 80 miles. The King and Lancelot have a combined speed of 50 mph and so they met after two hours. Whirlwind flew at 40 mph and so covered a distance of 80 miles in the two hours.

Last week's solution: Remember the three coins (one with two heads, one with two tails and one normal). Hogwarts was correct. If one is placed randomly on a table then the odds are 2 in 3 that the reverse is the same as the side showing.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

- Hand A: pass
Hand B: 1♠
Hand C: No. Bid 3NT.
Hand D: Yes. Ask for aces.
Hand E: Rebid 2♣ over 1♥. A 1NT rebid is acceptable if you play a weak NT.
Hand F: Pass. Partner is bust.

Last week's winners: Monday 29/9/03

Friday 3/10/03

1 st	Dave/Gerry	60%	1 st	Dave/John G	60%
2 nd	Clive/Ken	58%	2 nd	Bob/Ken	57%

Good show Dave (& Gerry & John), goes to show that Acol and the weak NT do work. Things are looking up, 4 full tables on Friday, peak season's on it's way.

I got an interesting comment/compliment from Jim concerning my article on doubles in news-sheet 44. He said that at first reading it seemed a bit overwhelming, but upon a re-read it was excellent, clear and informative - thanks Jim. Martin also said that he liked the format and bidding quizzes. Keep the compliments coming and I'll keep on writing. I made a note this week, it takes about 6 hours to produce this news sheet, and that does not include the two hours or so for scoring the two sessions. Nice to know that the majority appreciate it. And who knows, in a year or ten maybe some of what I say may sink in? The 4-4 fit for example? Read on.

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 3♠ in 1 st seat. What is your bid? ...Jeff was the only one to get this right at the table.
♠ 102	♠ AQ97	
♥ AKQ1063	♥ 108	Suppose that you open Hand B with 1♣ and partner replies 1♥, what is your rebid? ...but Jeff got this one wrong!
♦ AKJ	♦ AK10	
♣ AK	♣ A932	
Hand C	Hand D	So, nobody's right all the time, are they? Excuse me, something's stuck in my throat.
♠ Q983	♠ Q964	With hand C partner opens 1NT, what do you bid?
♥ Q10764	♥ Q9853	
♦ 85	♦ 7	With hand D partner opens 1NT, what do you bid?
♣ 63	♣ 862	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E LHO deals and opens 1♣. This is passed round to you, what do you do?
♠ K54	♠ 73	
♥ AQJ	♥ Q5	If you play a weak NT would you open Hand F with 1NT or 1♦? Suppose that you open 1♦ and partner replies 1NT. What now? Pass or 2♣?
♦ 932	♦ KQJ83	
♣ 10876	♣ AJ73	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1♠. What is your response?
♠ 10753	♠ J1086	With Hand H partner opens 1♣. Do you pass or try 1♥?
♥ KQ4	♥ K7432	Suppose you pass, LHO doubles (take out) and this is passed round to you, what now?
♦ J94	♦ 764	
♣ A75	♣ 5	

An Interesting Hand All Round

Board 17 from Friday 3rd

I had no idea what title to put for this hand as there were a number of candidates: - Missing a 4-4 major fit, responding with sub-minimal values, balancing over 1♣ in 4th seat, bidding garbage Stayman, opening 1NT with a suitable hand, denying a 4 card major, bid NT or a penalty pass? It's all here on this one deal!

What's more, each one of the four tables produced a bidding sequence that I did not like; and I have comments on the bidding of each of the four hands – no bad eh?

Dealer: ♠ J1086
 North ♥ K7432
 Love all ♦ 764
 ♣ 5

♠ 32	N	♠ K54
♥ 965	W E	♥ AQJ
♦ QJ85	S	♦ 932
♣ KQJ4		♣ 10876
	♠ AQ97	
	♥ 108	
	♦ AK10	
	♣ A932	

Table A:

West	North (H)	East	South (B)
-	pass	pass	1♣ (1)
pass	1♥ (2)	pass	2NT (3)
all pass			

Table B:

West	North	East (E)	South
-	pass	pass	1♣ (4)
pass	pass	dbl (5)	pass
pass (6)	1♥ (7)	all pass	

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	1NT (8)
pass	pass (9)	pass	1NT (10)pass

Table D:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	1♣
pass	pass	dbl (5)	pass
	pass	pass	

Just 4 tables on Friday, and 4 different sequences. Let's start with table A. They were playing a strong NT but South elected not to open 1NT, seems like an ideal top-of-the-range 1NT to me. I suspect that the reason that South opened 1♣ was because of the weak ♥'s, I have repeatedly said not to worry about a weak doubleton when opening 1NT – you cannot recover by rebidding NT as that will always show an incorrect point range. Anyway, he opened 1♣ at (1). His partner (Alex) chose to reply 1♥ at (2) on this 4 count. Some people may prefer to pass but I could not stomach having partner play in 1♣. I totally agree with Alex's choice. The 2NT bid at (3) is silly on two counts – the bid shows 18-19 points when playing a strong NT and this hand is not good enough, also the bid denies a 4 card major. 1♠ is the bid (if you had forgotten to open 1NT). 1♠ shows anything from 12-18 points and is not forcing. It is, however, rarely passed (although it would have been, with alacrity, on this occasion). This South hand is not good enough for a forcing 2♠ (say 19-20 pts) rebid.

At table B they were playing a weak NT and South opened 1♣ at (4), (I would open 1♠ playing Acol). North passed (with which many – but not me – would agree). East then doubled in the pass out seat. Correct? Think about it. Partner (West) obviously has some points, but he could take no action over 1♣. He did not overcall and so probably does not have a 5 card ♦, ♥ or ♠ suit. He did not double, he probably has ♣'s. Where are you going if you double? You have ♣'s, partner has ♣'s. Pass and let them stew! 1NT (10-13 pts in the pass out seat) is an alternative but I prefer pass. Anyway, East made a poor double (5) and West passed (6), a good conversion into penalties. North, of course, cannot stand 1♣ doubled and pulled to 1♥ at (7). Obviously better than passing, but the correct bid is re-double. This cannot be business (you would have bid on the first round) and so it asks partner to pull it. 1♠ is then easily reached.

And the bidding at the third table was by no means perfect. The strong NT at (8) is obvious but the North hand is unsuitable for NT. Bid Stayman 2♣ at (9) (pass a 2♥ or 2♠ response and convert 2♦ to 2♥), this is preferable to passing or transferring.

Table D was similar to table B and 1NT at (10) is reasonable, although I prefer the pass chosen by Bob at table B. But then double (or passing and thus converting a double into penalties) is my favourite bid.

So, the 4-4 major suit ♠ fit was missed at every table! Looks like I have to keep on writing and spreading the word. And how should the bidding have gone?

I suggest :-

	South	North	South	North
Playing a strong NT	1NT	- 2♣	- 2♠	- pass
Playing a weak NT (5 card major)	1♣	- 1♥	- 1♠	- pass
Playing Acol	1♠	- pass		

Playing Acol. North may choose to raise the opening 1♠ to 2♠; then a satisfactory 3♠ is reached. In these last two sequences, if East balances over 1♠ then North can raise to 2♠. Having already passed the 1♠ bid, this shows (sub)minimal values. I can't tell you how 1♠ or 2♠ fared (nobody was in it), but it is clearly an excellent contract for N-S, looks like 9 tricks to me.

Raising Partner's Major

Board 13 from Friday 3rd

West	East (G)	West	North	East	South
♠ AKQ82	♠ 10753	1♠	pass	3♠	pass
♥ A52	♥ KQ4	4♠	pass	pass	pass
♦ 753	♦ J94				
♣ Q4	♣ A75				

This was the auction at the table where I was kibitzing. 4♠ was obviously one down. 4♠ was reached at another table and just one pair (Ian/Tomas) managed to play in a sensible 2♠. What went wrong here? Should West have declined the invitation or was the 3♠ bid overboard? West has a good hand and should accept; it was East's 3♠ that was too optimistic. 3♠ shows a good 10 - bad 12 pts; this is a miserable 10 pts and should also deduct a point for the 4333 shape (no ruffing values or suit to set up). 2♠ is quite adequate with this East hand. West should pass 2♠, not enough for a try.

Discards in Defence

Lavinthal (aka McKenney)

When you are defending and cannot follow suit, then you have to discard something. It is often best to convey some sort of information to your partner with this discard and there are various schemes. One of the best and most commonly used is Lavinthal, also known as McKenney. The most important point is that you DO NOT discard in a suit that you like, but discard from one of the other suits. There are two remaining suits and the size of your discard indicates which of these remaining two suits you like, a high/middle card indicates the higher ranking and a low card the lower ranking.

For example, you are discarding on ♥'s and would like partner to lead a ♦. Discard either a low club (so asks for the lowest ranking of ♠'s and ♦'s) or discard a high ♠ (so asks for the highest ranking of ♣'s and ♦'s). Note that you always have a choice of two suits to discard from and can usually make the signal clear.

A Silly NT contract

Board 17 from Monday 29th, love all

Dealer: ♠ J98
North ♥ 64
Love all ♦ A92
♣ K10965

♠ AK62	N	♠ Q1054
♥ 108732	W E	♥ AKJ9
♦ 74	S	♦ 1065
♣ Q8		♣ 42
	♠ 73	
	♥ Q5	
	♦ KQJ83	
	♣ AJ73	

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	1NT (1)
pass	pass	pass	

Table B:

West	North	East	South(F)
-	pass	pass	1♦
pass	1NT (2)	pass	pass (3)

First of all, the bidding. I was North at table A and passed my partner's weak NT. But what about that South hand? Is a weak NT at (1) correct? No. With two weak doubletons and 11 points concentrated in two suits 1♦ is the correct opening.

The bidding at Table B was that at three other tables. 1♦ is correct whether you play a weak NT or a strong NT. The 1NT response at (2) is also correct, showing 6-10 points and no 4 card major. Playing a weak NT then 2♣ is preferable to 1NT. But what about South's pass at (3)? This is wrong, partner has denied any 4 card major and you have two doubletons there; one or both of these suits could be wide open. Also, since partner has no 4 card major, he *must* have at least one 4 card minor and you have a fit. Rebid 2♣.

And now onto the play in 1NT. Opponents are not stretched to find the ♥ lead and E-W wrap up the first 5 ♥ tricks. But what does East discard on the 5th ♥? He obviously wants a ♠ led and at our table he discarded a ♠. Presumably they do not play Lavinthal; they then proceeded to make just 3 more ♠ tricks. Playing Lavinthal you discard either a ♣ or a ♦, and a high card would ask for ♠'s. In this case the ♦10 is very clear. As virtually the whole room was in this silly contract this defence of throwing a ♠ scored a near bottom. Do not throw good cards away. Play Lavinthal.

Only Gerry/Dave managed to bid this hand sensibly, they reached the excellent 3♣ contract. Just goes to show, bid sensibly and you win competitions. Nine tricks are easy in ♣'s, quite how they made 11 is a mystery to me. E-W could, of course, have interfered somewhere (they have 9 tricks in either major). But they did not so that's another story.

Preference

Board 18 from Monday 29th

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 42	♠ AK8753	-	-	pass	1NT (1)
♥ KQJ542	♥ 97	2♣ (2)	2♥ (3)	3♣	3♠ (4)
♦ J9642	♦ AQ	pass	4♦ (5)	pass	pass (6)
♣ -	♣ 1097	pass	pass	pass	

- (1) Weak, 12-14 balanced? Obviously a candidate for the worst opening bid of the year. No surprise that it is the same player who opened 1NT on the previous hand. Two small ♠'s or six to the AK, it appears to make no difference.
- (2) Natural (3) Natural
- (4) Suddenly noticing that he has a good ♠ suit?
- (5) Obviously not expecting a 6 card ♠ suit opposite and offering partner a choice of the red suits.
- (6) When you have equal length in partner's two suits, always put him back into his first bid suit. This is called simple preference and simply says that you do not prefer the 2nd suit. 3♥ or 4♥ are excellent contracts, 4♦ goes three or four off. There is an enormous difference between having 8 trumps and only 7 (5 tricks in this case!!). South should bid 4♥, the fact that the ♦'s are honours is irrelevant; length is the important thing, always give preference with equal length.

Raising Partner's Pre-empt

Board 14 from Monday 29th

West (A)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 102	♠ AQJ9876	-	-	3♠ (1)	pass
♥ AKQ1063	♥ 8	5♠ (2)	pass	pass (3)	pass
♦ AKJ	♦ 9874				
♣ AK	♣ Q				

- (1) A lovely hand for a pre-empt.
- (2) This was meant to be forcing
- (3) East assumed that 5♠ was increasing the pre-empt.

So then, what does 5♠ at (2) mean? This is not in the text books! West maintained that it was a grand slam force, requesting East to bid 7♠ with 2 of the top 3 honours. This is incorrect, 5NT is the grand slam force and, in any case, a 7 card suit with just two of the top 3 honours is insufficient opposite a small doubleton. The only sensible use that I can think of for the 5♠ bid is pre-emptive. I guess that you could play it as invitational to 6♠, 5 of a major is usually invitational to 6 in normal auctions. Without prior agreement, don't bid it over a pre-empt! Anyway, 6♠ seems an obvious bid to me with this West hand. You could try RKCB (a 5♠ response would show ♠ AKQ) but East would probably open 4♠ or 1♠ with ♠ AKQxxxx. Of course East could hold just ♠ QJxxxxx in which case RKCB is a must in order to avoid 6♠.

There was some discussion of the bidding after the hand was over. One player suggested that West should bid 6NT. I disagree, if East does not have ♠ A then there may be no entry to the ♠'s. RKCB or 6♠ are the only sensible bids with the West cards. The board was played 5 times on Monday and only Jim/Jeff reached 6♠ (everybody else was in game). Good stuff Jeff (he bid Blackwood and was looking for the grand!).

Garbage Stayman

Board 2 from Monday 29th

West (C)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ Q983	♠ KJ1072	-	-	1NT	pass
♥ Q10764	♥ A3	2♣ (2)	pass	2♠	pass
♦ 85	♦ AK3	pass	pass		
♣ 63	♣ J95				

If you open 1♠ with the East Hand then you will probably end up in 2♠ or 3♠ (perhaps 1♠ - 2♠ - 3♠ - pass), which is fine. A strong 1NT is perhaps a better opening and this was the auction at our table. I note that at one table a contract of 2♥ by East was reached, obviously via a transfer. With these weak 5-4 or 4-5 major hands, do not transfer but look for a fit via Stayman. Nine tricks were there in ♠'s and 2♥ went one down.

And a similar hand: -

Board 1 from Monday 29th

North (D)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ Q964	♠ KJ109	pass	pass	pass	1NT
♥ Q9853	♥ 72	pass	2♣ (2)	pass	2♠
♦ 7	♦ AK92	pass	pass		
♣ 862	♣ AQ7				

This was the bidding at our table. Jeff opened a strong NT and his partner (Jim) correctly bid Stayman rather than transferring. Two pairs played in 2♥ after transferring. The 4-4 fit usually produces an extra trick, 2♥ made exactly and 2♠ scored plus one.

Note that if responder does not have a 4 or 5 card major then he will reply 2♦ to Stayman. In that case, responder must then bid his 5 card suit. Thus the sequences: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ are weak and opener must pass.

The disadvantage of using Stayman rather than transferring is that in these latter two sequences when opener has no 4 card major then the contract is played by the weaker hand. A small price to pay for not missing the 4-4 or better fit. And another disadvantage if you transfer, partner may super-accept which may be sad if you have a weaker hand.

The bottom line. Don't listen to people who tell you to transfer with these hand types. Locating a possible 4-4 or better fit is all important. Playing in a 5-2 or 5-3 fit when there is a 4-4 or 5-4 fit is just silly.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

- Hand A: Bid 4NT only if you play RKCB. Otherwise 6♠.
- Hand B: If you open 1♣ then your rebid is 1♠. Do not deny a 4 card major.
- Hands C&D: Bid 2♣ Stayman. Do not transfer when you have both majors.
- Hand E: Pass. This is better than double or 1NT. 1♣ will be a sorry contract.
- Hand F: The hand is unsuitable for a NT opening. Open 1♦ and rebid 2♣ over 1NT
- Hand G: 2♠. Not good enough for 3♠.
- Hand H: I would not pass, but bid 1♥. If you do pass and LHO's double is passed round to you, then re-double. This is SOS.

Last week's winners: Monday 6/10/03

Friday 10/10/03

1st Jeff/Alex 63%
 2nd Clive/Ken 61%

1st Jeff/Alex 62%
 2nd Hans/Jan 61%

Well done Jeff/Alex. Perhaps you could try to remember your pair numbers next time? The management have finally got the air conditioning working at Soi 4. Just 5 tables on Monday when we had 4 at the smaller Friday club, perhaps the lack of air had something to do with it? Anyway, numbers are on the up now and it will soon be peak season.

And what can we say about Arnold? Guess that America is fed up with cowboys and wants a real man? I would not buy any shares in American colleges teaching politics – who needs an education in the USA? Brute strength and ignorance? Whether it's internal 'elections' or foreign policy, that's all that counts, right? And, of course, money (and oil).

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A you are playing 5 card majors. Partner opens 1♥, what is your response?
♠ 965	♠ 109	
♥ Q93	♥ AQ	With Hand B RHO opens 1♥, what is your bid?
♦ K964	♦ QJ532	
♣ A53	♣ AQJ6	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C RHO opens 1♠ and you double. LHO redoubles and this is passed round to you. What do you do?
♠ 32	♠ A9	
♥ K952	♥ AQJ7	You are lucky enough to be dealt Hand D. What do you open?
♦ AKQ	♦ AKQ65	
♣ J1085	♣ 103	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you are playing Standard American and open 1♥. Partner responds 1NT. Do you bid on or pass?
♠ J743	♠ J652	
♥ AK1072	♥ K103	With Hand F RHO opens 1♣. What action, if any, do you take?
♦ A8	♦ A3	
♣ KJ	♣ AJ63	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens a strong NT. Do you transfer or use Stayman?
♠ KJ1085	♠ AK98	
♥ AJ98	♥ AQ	With Hand H partner opens 2♥ (weak, non-vul) in 2 nd seat. RHO overcalls 2♠, what is your bid? Hint:
♦ A	♦ A10984	Do not double, that is penalties and you will not get rich.
♣ 632	♣ 102	

At King Arthur's Court

King Arthur's chief chef had a pet goldfish which he kept in a bowl on the kitchen scales. One unhappy day the goldfish died and the chef put his arm into the bowl to retrieve the dead fish. He noticed that the water level rose, but did the weight shown on the scales increase or not?

The Power of the 4-4 Fit

Board 5 from Monday 6th

North	South (G)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ72	♠ KJ1085	-	1NT (1)	pass	2♣ (2)
♥ KQ103	♥ AJ98	pass	2♥	pass	4♥ (3)
♦ 876	♦ A	pass	pass	pass	
♣ A7	♣ 632				

(1) 15-17.

(2) Stayman. This is preferable to a transfer when 5-4 in the majors.

(3) It is not easy for South to investigate slam. Perhaps 4♦ (a cuebid/splinter/whatever)?

This was the bidding at two tables where N-S played a strong NT. South bid game when the fit was uncovered and 12 tricks were made when ♥'s are trumps. Note that if you play in the 5-4 ♠ fit, then this makes one trick less. That is because the losing ♣ can be tossed on a long ♠ if ♥'s are trumps. That's what I keep saying, the 4-4 fit is golden and is sometimes even better than a 5-4 fit.

If South had transferred instead of using Stayman, then North would doubtless have super- accepted and the ♥ fit may have been lost.

Anyway, 4 pairs found the ♥ fit on Friday (with just 1 pair in a silly 3NT – quite how you can miss **two** enormous major suit fits is beyond me). Two pairs actually bid 6♥ (good stuff John/Dave, Don/Sid). 6♥ is easier to reach playing Acol (as these two pairs do) as North opens 1♥ and South immediately thinks of slam and has plenty of room to investigate. The 'Fruit Machine' Swiss convention, 4♣ by East showing a sound raise to 4♥ plus two aces and a feature (in this case a singleton) would work admirably. Swiss is mainly used by Acol players, Standard American players generally prefer the Jacoby 2NT convention. You can, actually, play both – with Jacoby 2NT being stronger. Simply jumping into Blackwood works on this deal of course.

As it happens with this hand, slam is always there (by means of two ♦ ruffs in the South hand), so 13 tricks are there in ♥'s but just 12 tricks in ♠'s.

Inviting after Partner Opens with a Weak TwoBoard 14 from Friday 10th , love all

North (H)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AK98	♠ 2	-	-	pass	2♥ (1)
♥ AQ	♥ K98743	2♠	3♥ (2)	pass	pass
♦ A10984	♦ Q7	pass			
♣ 102	♣ J863				

- (1) Weak. The 'body' in the ♥ suit makes this a pretty ideal pre-empt.
 (2) I guess that this was meant as invitational?

I was South and wound up making 11 tricks. Game is perhaps not certain from North's point of view (maybe it depends upon how sound your partner's pre-empts are? Or perhaps how good a declarer he is?). So, what went wrong?

If you play weak two's then the 2♥ opening is pretty clear-cut. The 3♥ bid at (2) is simply raising the pre-empt. Unlike when partner opens one of a suit, a raise of a pre-empt is always weak (unless you bid game, of course, when it may be either weak or strong). If you play Ogust over weak twos then this is the way to find out if partner is max or not; you have to decide if 2NT after a 2♠ overcall is still Ogust (I would assume it was). Anyway, when partner opens a weak two, any new suit is natural and forcing, 2NT is Ogust, 3 of the major is pre-emptive and 4 of the major is to play (it may be weak or strong, only you know!) and double (of 2♠ here) would be for penalties. With this particular North hand you could take the conservative approach (bid 2NT) or simply bid 4♥. I prefer 4♥.

So, fully expecting a bottom board (I was the first to play this board) I decided to write it up. Upon inspecting the traveller at home I discovered that this was the only + score for N-S and so missing game made no difference! What happened? One pair bid 4♥ but went two off, another pair played in 3♦ (minus two) by North and the last table allowed West to buy the contract in 2♠ (making +2). Shame on you (you last two anonymous pairs). I think the 2♥ opening is obvious so the final contract should be 3♥ or 4♥. I don't have their bidding, perhaps it's best kept a secret?

The 2NT openerBoard 16 from Monday 6th

North (D)

South

♠ A9 ♠ J7653
 ♥ AQJ7 ♥ 1065
 ♦ AKQ65 ♦ 83
 ♣ 102 ♣ A74

Table A:

West	North	East	South
pass	2NT (1)	pass	3♥ (2)
pass	3♠	pass	3NT (3)
all pass			

- (1) 20-22
 (2) transfer
 (3) just 5 ♠'s

Table B:

West	North	East	South
pass	1♦	all pass	

First of all, the bidding. Whether you open the North hand 1♦ or 2NT is perhaps personal preference. I would open 2NT. The bidding to game is then straightforward. At table B the game was missed. Anyone to blame? Perhaps not, but I would never pass 1♦ with that South hand (but many would – I'm not going into that again). 3NT was reached at 3 tables on Monday but 4♠ by North was reached at one. Obviously via a transfer, but at (3) it is incorrect to bid 4♠; 3NT tells opener that you have 5 ♠'s and gives him the choice. Mind you, 3NT is by no means that good a contract and 1♦ will be better on a bad lie of the card(s): -

So then, onto the play. Looks like everybody got it right as 3NT made on all 3 occasions. On a ♣ lead you have to make a decision. It does not help to hold up, so win ♣A, and then what? If opponents regain the lead then they will cash enough ♣ tricks to set you. You will not get to dummy again, so tackle the ♦'s or the ♥'s? This is all about the odds. The ♥ finesse is 50% and the odds of a 3-3 split in ♦'s is 35%. You cannot combine the chances, so finesse. If the finesse fails, then you would have been better off playing in 1♦!

When LHO Redoubles

When you double an opening bid this is generally for take-out with shortage in the suit bid. If LHO redoubles and this is passed round to you, you are usually in trouble. LHO's redouble has advertised the balance of power and partner's failure to act simply says that he does not have a 5 card suit to rescue you into. When the redouble is passed round to you, you cannot pass – that is asking for a huge minus. You must bid; bid any 5 card suit, otherwise bid your cheapest 4 carder. Let's look at **two** such disasters from Monday 6th :-

Board 19 from Monday 6th , E-W vulnerable.

West 19 (C) RHO opened 1♠ and this hand doubled. Four ♥'s and support for all unbid suits – double is fine. LHO redoubled and this was passed round to this hand – it passed! The opponents wrapped up an easy 9 tricks – that is 920 away. 4♠ was bid at all the other tables. Whether 4♠ made or not is irrelevant (it was marginal) – minus 920 is a cold bottom. This hand cannot pass the redouble, bid 2♣. 2♥ is OK but I prefer 2♣.

♠ 32
♥ K952
♦ AKQ
♣ J1085

Board 1 from Monday 6th , Love all.

South 1 (F) RHO opened 1♣ and this hand doubled. Reasonable?
NO. A take-out double should be short in the suit bid and playable in the other 3 suits. This hand should pass. The people who think that you should double with any opening hand are 100 years out-of-date. This deal is an example of why. Partner did not have 4 ♠'s and you are up the creek without a paddle. Even so, you cannot pass 1♣ redoubled. It made + 3 for 830 away. Game by opponents was dicey, 3NT either made or went one off.

♠ J652
♥ K103
♦ A3
♣ AJ63

The bottom line. Unless you are happy with conceding these huge scores when opponents cannot even make game, then don't double on unsuitable hands and do not pass redoubles.

How Many Points for Stayman?

Board 2 from Friday 10th

When partner opens 1NT then 2♣ is Stayman, asking for a 4 card major suit. But how many points does responder need to have to bid Stayman? The answer is that it depends. No, I am not a politician, that is the correct answer. In principle, you need invitational values to bid Stayman (so 8 pts if you play a Strong NT and 11 pts if you play a weak NT). There are a few exceptions when you can bid 'garbage' Stayman with lesser values. I have covered these in earlier news-sheets, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

West 2 This was my bidding partner's hand on Friday. I opened 1NT and this Hand bid 2♣, Stayman. It would work out fine if opener bids 2♠, but the odds are against that! There is no recourse if partner bids 2♦ or 2♥. This hand must pass 1NT. What happened? Partner bid 2♦ and this hand then bid 2NT. That is invitational, promising 8 pts when playing a strong NT. Luckily partner (me) was minimum and so passed 2NT. 2NT went minus one. So a bottom? Not quite, one E-W pair actually managed to bid to 3♠ by East with the 3-4 fit! How?? Anyway, do not bid Stayman unless you are happy with any reply.

♠ Q987
♥ 832
♦ K53
♣ J43

Support with Support

Board 8 from Monday 6th

West (E)	East (A)	West (me)	North	East (Hans)	South
♠ J743	♠ 965	1♥ (1)	pass	1NT (2)	pass
♥ AK1072	♥ Q93	pass (3)	pass		
♦ A8	♦ K964				
♣ KJ	♣ A53				

An easy game was missed (West actually made 10 tricks in NT). Who's fault? Should West bid on over 1NT? Did East make the incorrect response? Let's see: -

- (1) A semi-balanced 16 count. A strong NT is worth considering, but it is generally accepted not to open 1NT with 9 cards in the majors. Thus 1♥ is fine.
- (2) A balanced 9 count so 1NT? No. With Qxx you should support partner's 5 card major. 1NT is often a 'courtesy bid' and generally denies 3 card support, especially Qxx! 2♥ is more constructive than 1NT and is certainly correct with 9 pts.
- (3) Should West make a try (with 2NT)? Perhaps fairly close on first inspection, but not really. The raise to 2NT shows 17-18 points. This is a reasonable 16 but no more; partner has denied three ♥'s to the Q or J and the suits outside ♥'s all need downgrading. Pass is the only sensible bid.

But what if East had bid 2♥ at (2)? Then it's a different story. With support opposite, this West hand is worth a game try. 2NT is best and East should either bid 3NT or 4♥. So, the bidding should be: -

1♥ - 2♥ - 2NT - 3NT (or 4♥ if you prefer). The Moral: Do not suppress support for opener's major.

The Strong NT is Better?

Now in previous news-sheets I have indicated the superiority of the weak NT in various scenarios. It is, of course, all swings and roundabouts. This sequence 1x - 1NT - 2NT is not very satisfactory; the problem is that the 1NT bid may be anything from 6 pts to a poor 10 pts. When you have a balanced 15 or 16 as opener you should pass, but you will occasionally miss game. This is not usually a problem playing a strong NT as most 15-16 balanced hands would have opened 1NT to start with. The exception, however, is the hand type we have here. With points for a 1NT opening but with 5 ♥'s and 4 ♠'s you have the problem. Tough. With 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s there is no problem; open 1♠ and rebid 2♥. You cannot rebid 2♠ with the hand given as that would be a reverse, forcing.

At King Arthur's Court - Solution

The 'weight' of the tank increases. Suppose his arm has a volume of 1000cc, then this displaces 1 litre of water and the scales register an equivalent increase in weight. Another way of looking at it: - when you put your arm (or whole body or whatever) into water, it weighs less, so where does the weight go?

Ian says that Merlin was correct about the three coins. Was he? I guess that a degree in maths says nothing if I get something like this wrong? But did I?

Overcall or Double or What?

Board 12 from Monday 6th, N-S vul.

North	South (B)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQJ84	♠ 109	pass	pass	1♥	2♦ (1)
♥ 53	♥ AQ	pass	pass (2)	pass	pass
♦ K106	♦ QJ532	pass			
♣ 1085	♣ AQJ6				

An easy 3NT game was missed. Who's fault? I did not play this hand, but was called over by two experienced players and asked to comment. I said not to tell me the complete bidding, but just give me the hand in question. I was given the South hand and asked what to do over the 1♥ opening from RHO. I overcalled 1NT. There was a pregnant silence! It appears that this bid had not come under consideration. One thought that 2♦ was correct and the other thought that the South hand should double.

First of all, let's clear double out of the way. A double of 1♥ usually promises 4♠'s or a *very* good hand (such that you bid again if partner responds in ♠'s). This is not a *very* good hand and cannot double. This hand is nowhere near strong enough to double and then bid ♦'s; and double followed by NT shows 19+ points.

So then, 2♦? N-S were vulnerable and so this should show a decent hand. A vulnerable 2 level overcall should be close to an opening bid. What's more, it is usually a 6 card suit or a good 5 carder (especially if a minor). This ♦ suit is miserable. With the points outside ♦'s, 2♦ is a very poor bid. Not as bad as double, but not far off.

1NT is the obvious overcall. This shows 15-18 points and guarantees stopper(s) in the suit bid. As with 1NT openers, a 1NT overcall does not guarantee a stopper in every suit, this ♠ holding is fine. The 1NT overcall stands out a mile. Unlike 1NT openers, 1NT overcalls may sometimes be a little unbalanced as long as they contain stopper(s) in the bid suit. Many people would even open this South hand with a strong NT.

At this juncture, Hans wandered over. Upon hearing that I had said to overcall 1NT he said that 2♦ is the correct bid and that you should not overcall 1NT with a weak doubleton. I'll be diplomatic for once – no further comment. Just read Marty Bergen.

Anyway, if you overcall 1NT then game is easily reached. Playing transfers it goes: (after the 1♥ opening) - 1NT - 2♥(xfer) - 2♠ - 3NT - pass. Easy.

After a 2♦ overcall it is not so easy. Should North bid 2♠? Is 2♠ forcing? Should North jump to 3♠? Or perhaps cue bid? Or pass? If North bids 2♠ and South bids 2NT is that forcing? How many points does it show? There are no clear-cut answers to most of these questions and they are partnership agreements. It's so much easier after a 1NT overcall isn't it? If you can bid your hand in one go, do so.

And what happened at the other tables? It was played 4 times and nobody bid game. Guess people need to read up on the 1NT overcall?

Bidding Quiz Solutions

Hand A: 2♥. Better than 1NT when playing 5 card majors

Hand B: 1NT. Semi-balanced with ♥ stop(s)

Hand C: Bid 2♣ (or 2♥). Do not pass.

Hand D: I prefer 2NT, but 1♦ is equally good. Not good enough for a strong 2♦.

Hand E: Pass. Not good enough for 2NT.

Hand F: Pass. With length in their suit and not enough for a 1NT overcall, do not dbl.

Hand G: 2♣ Stayman. It's best not to transfer when 5-4 (or 4-5) in the majors.

Hand H: Are you a man or a mouse? Bid 4♥. If you play Ogust then a pessimistic 2NT is acceptable. 3♥ is weak, not invitational.

Last week's winners: Monday 13/10/03

Friday 17/10/03

1st Bob/Hans 63%
2nd Dave/John 54%

1st Bob/Eddie 74%
2nd Hans/Jan 64%

Well done Bob (& Hans & Eddie). I seem to have had a long run of not playing, we always seem to have a number of odd players – I mean an odd number of players – you know what I mean. Still, as George once said (or was it Yogi Bear?),
- 'I observe much more by watching'.

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	What do you open with Hand A?
♠ KQ4 ♥ KQ62 ♦ KJ4 ♣ A105	♠ J7 ♥ 8543 ♦ A75 ♣ A432	With Hand B you are playing a prepared ♣ and a strong NT. Partner opens 1♣. Obviously (I hope) you bid 1♥ and partner rebids 1NT (12-14). Do you pass or bid 2♣? Does partner have at least 4 ♣'s? Or maybe only 2 or 3 ♣'s?
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C partner opens 1♠ and RHO bid 2♣, what is your response?
♠ Q752 ♥ AQ965 ♦ Q109 ♣ 2	♠ K865 ♥ K1096 ♦ 7 ♣ AK42	With Hand D partner opens 1♠, what is your bid?
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you deal and pass. Partner opens 1♣, do you respond?
♠ 82 ♥ 874 ♦ Q9763 ♣ K93	♠ K104 ♥ 8 ♦ KQ652 ♣ AJ42	With Hand F RHO opens 1♥. What do you do?
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1♦ and you bid 1♥. Partner then jumps to 3♦. So 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦ - ? what do you do? Would 3♥ be weak, invitational or forcing?
♠ J865 ♥ K109752 ♦ 8 ♣ Q6	♠ AQ1075 ♥ J64 ♦ 103 ♣ Q72	We have a similar theme here with Hand H. This time it goes 1♦ - 1♠ - 3♦ - ? So what do you bid after partner's jump to 3♦ this time?

When Partner doubles 1NTBoard 12 from Friday 17th

North 12	You hold this miserable collection and RHO opens 1NT (15-17). You pass as does LHO but partner doubles (penalties, 15+ points). RHO passes, what do you do? The points are fairly evenly balanced and if this was a flat 4333 type hand pass is perhaps acceptable. However, declarer has the advantage of sitting over partner's big hand. With a 5 card suit it is best to pull the double. Bid 2♥. By bidding you tell partner that you have a weak hand (0-6 points) and he will pass.
♠ K743 ♥ J8764 ♦ 62 ♣ 72	

A Bad Hand for the System

Board 25 from Monday 13th

Every system has its advantages and disadvantages. Some hands are better suited for one particular bidding system and other hands are better for other systems. An excellent example occurred on Monday.

First of all, consider these four hands: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand E
♠ J932	♠ J93	♠ K93	♠ K93	♠ 82
♥ Q976	♥ Q9854	♥ Q9763	♥ 873	♥ 874
♦ J643	♦ J742	♦ 874	♦ Q9763	♦ Q9763
♣ 4	♣ 3	♣ 82	♣ 82	♣ K93

Your partner opens 1♣ which may be short, do you respond with any of them? I have said in earlier sheets that I am reluctant to pass a 1♣ opener (especially if it can be short) and I will often bid on sub-minimal values over partner's 1♣ opening. This is perhaps personal style or partnership understanding, but this is what I would do with these hands (many would pass with all of them, that's fine I guess): -

Hand 1	I would bid 1♦ and pass any rebid
Hand 2	I would bid 1♥ and pass any rebid
Hand 3	I would bid 1♥ and pass any rebid
Hand 4	I would bid 1♦ and pass any rebid.

So far so good, but what about Hand E? Here you have miserable majors. If you reply 1♦ and partner bids a major then you could easily be worse off than if you had passed 1♣. Also, of course, partner will take you for a better hand and may bid too high. A second bid by you would be too dangerous. I would pass this hand because I have ♣'s and am a bit short in the majors. This may, or may not, work out best however: -

North (E)	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ 82	♠ KQ4	-	pass	pass	1♣ (1)
♥ 874	♥ KQ62	pass	pass (2)	pass	
♦ Q9763	♦ KJ4				
♣ K93	♣ A105	(1) Could be short			

1♣ did not play too well, with no-trump being a far better strain. Anyone to blame? First of all, let's consider the bidding when playing different systems. Playing a strong NT system then I would open the South Hand with 1NT – it is 18 points but the totally flat shape should deduct one point. I note that two pairs on Monday did indeed open 1NT and play there, so obviously what I say in the news sheets sometimes sinks in, good show. Playing Acoll I would open 1♥. One pair reached a respectable 2♥ contract.

But what about this pair playing in 1♣? They were playing a weak NT and 5 card majors. 1♣ is then the correct opening. North passed, which I believe will often work out best, but not on this occasion. Tough luck, a bad hand for the system!

The bottom line? Bid over partner's 1♣ opening if you possibly can.

How many ♣'s?

Board 20 from Monday 13th

This hand was bid against me and I was asked about West's 2♣ bid. East thought that he should have passed 1NT. This pair also play a prepared ♣ (may very occasionally be two cards). East said that his 1♣ opening could be just two cards and so West should pass the 1NT bid. So who was right?

West (B)	West	North	East	South
♠ J7	pass	pass	1♣ (1)	pass
♥ 8543	1♥ (2)	pass	1NT (3)	pass
♦ A75	2♣ (4)	pass	pass	pass
♣ A432				

- (1) playing a strong NT and a prepared ♣
- (2) obviously you do not bypass a 4 card major, especially if I am in the vicinity.
- (3) 12-14
- (4) West preferred 2♣ to 1NT.

So, is 2♣ correct? I think that the safest contract is 2♣ provided that East really has a ♣ suit (4 cards or more), but does he? His opening bid only promised 2 ♣'s, but one should not normally worry about this, the ♣ length is usually established after opener's next bid. In this case the 1NT rebid guarantees *at least* 4 ♣'s. Why? East did not support ♥'s and so has at most 3 ♥'s. He did not rebid 1♠ and so has at most 3 ♠'s. He opened 1♣ and not 1♦, therefore he must have at least 4 ♣'s. I prefer to play in the 4-4 or better fit rather than risk a perhaps dodgy 1NT. At pairs I guess that you could take a view and pass 1NT, but then pairs scoring is not proper bridge.

A Difficult Slam to Bid?

Board 23 from Monday 13th

North (C)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ Q752	♠ AK9864	-	-	-	1♠
♥ AQ965	♥ KJ7	2♣	4♠ (1)	pass	pass
♦ Q109	♦ A3	pass			
♣ 2	♣ 95				

I was West and held ♣ AKQJ8, I would imagine that most people overcalled 2♣. 4♠ was bid (making six) at all 5 tables on Monday. 12 tricks off the top, the type of slam that you really should bid. Ken and I discussed how slam could be reached. Ken suggested that perhaps North should respond 2♥ at (1).

The ♥ fit is an important feature, but the most important thing is North's singleton ♣. Responding 2♥ may well have worked out better, but the best thing that North can do is show his ♣ shortage. The 2♣ overcall has improved this hand no-end (partner is less likely to have 'wasted' honours in ♣'s). A 4♣ splinter, agreeing ♠'s and showing shortage in ♣'s is the best bid if you play splinters (you should do!).

The Law of Total Tricks

Board 21 from Monday 6th

Dealer: ♠ Q
East ♥ 109642
N-S vul ♦ 843
♣ Q983

♠ K104	N	♠ J9532
♥ 8	W E	♥ J3
♦ KQ652	S	♦ J109
♣ AJ42		♣ K76
	♠ A876	
	♥ AKQ75	
	♦ A7	
	♣ 105	

West (F)	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	1♥
pass (1)	4♥ (2)	pass	pass
pass			

This was the bidding when Kenneth/David were N-S.

- (1) This is a shapely hand and pass is feeble. A double of 1♥ normally promises 4♠'s but is not totally unreasonable with this hand. If partner has 4♠'s then a♠ contract will be fine as the♥ ruffs will be taken in the hand with short trumps; the problem is that East may bid♠'s with just 3 cards! 2♦ is a reasonable alternative and would be the choice of many (most?) including me (I would prefer better♦'s, but there is no other bid); East will then bid his♠ suit and the♠ fit will be found either way.
- (2) Kenneth decided to put the law of total tricks to the test. With 10 combined trumps, the 4-level is 'safe' and so he bid 4♥. It is now impossible for E-W to compete. If Kenneth (North) had passed or bid only 2♥ then E-W would doubtless have found their♠ or♦ fit. 4♥ is a good bid. David, of course, knew that this was weak and did not go slamming.

N-S made 10 tricks in♥'s at both tables where it was bid. E-W can make 9 tricks in♠'s or♦'s (10 with an inspired guess for the singleton♠ Q). The total (19 or 20) is actually one more than the total number of trumps (10♥'s & 8♠ or♦'s = 18), this is because E-W have a double fit. If North does not bid 4♥ immediately then E-W will bid and even a 4♠ or 5♦ sacrifice against 4♥ gets a good score. Good stuff Kenneth/David.

What happened at the other tables? 1♥ was passed out once (so two players took no action with the West hand!). 4♥ was reached once (I don't know the bidding) and E-W sacrificed (in 5♦) at the other table. 5♦ costing 500 was a good save against the 620 for the N-S♥ game.

Of course there is no guarantee that 4♥ will make when Kenneth bid it. But if 4♥ fails then E-W can certainly make a contract in♠'s. This is what the law of total tricks is all about. Compete to the level of the combined number of trumps. And do so quickly with a weak hand.

An Easy Game Missed

Board 8 from Monday 13th

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQJ97	♠ K865	1♠ (1)	pass	2♣ (2)	pass
♥ J2	♥ K1096	2♦	pass	3♠ (3)	pass
♦ KQJ54	♦ 7	pass (4)	pass		
♣ 5	♣ AK42				

- (1) Better than opening 1♦, the pair were playing Standard American.
- (2) A reasonable bid. You cannot bid 2♥ with just a 4 card ♥ suit. Any ♠ bid is non-forcing. 2♣ followed by a subsequent 4♠ is a delayed game raise, showing a sound raise to 4♠.
- (3) I assume that East thought this was forcing – more of this below.
- (4) Whether 3♠ was forcing or not this hand should bid 4♠.

So, let's get down to the nitty-gritty. West was discussing this bidding with Hans at the end of the Monday session. Hans said that things may be different in America, but in Europe the 3♠ bid is invitational. I agree, but let's look a little deeper: -

Playing Acol (weak NT) then the initial 2♣ bid may be as few as 8 points. A 2♠ bid at (3) would simply be weak preference, usually a doubleton ♠ and 8 or so points. A 3♠ bid is thus invitational. Playing Standard American things are slightly different, the 2♣ bid should now be a good 10+ points (most Americans insist upon 11) and so the invitational 3♠ bid must be *very* invitational, West should only pass with a real heap. You could certainly play 3♠ as forcing (but you would have to agree this, it is not standard).

This actual East hand should simply bid 4♠, even if 3♠ were forcing. The 2♦ bid has devalued this hand (a singleton in partner's 2nd suit is not usually an asset) and so with no slam ambitions 4♠ (fast arrival if 3♠ is forcing) is correct.

About time for an advert for the 2/1 system. 2/1 is now very popular in the States and playing 2/1 the initial 2♣ bid sets up a game force. A 2♠ bid at (3) is then quite adequate (still game forcing) and 3♠ is undefined/unnecessary. This gives oodles of bidding space for investigating slam.

Anyway, all that is really quite irrelevant. 2♣ is not the best response at (2)! With 4 card support for partner's major and game going values the best bid is 4♦ whatever system you play. This is a splinter showing a ♦ singleton (or void). This, of course, is the worst possible scenario for West and so he simply signs off in 4♠. Easy.

Of course not everybody plays splinters – why not?

Outgunned 5-1? – Maybe, but I'm not down and out!

Board 5 from Friday 17th

North	South (G)	West	North (me)	East	South (Philip)
♠ AK	♠ J865	-	1♦	pass	1♥
♥ J4	♥ K109752	pass	3♦ (1)	pass	pass (2)
♦ AQJ10965	♦ 8	pass			
♣ 87	♣ Q6				

So what about the bidding? Looks fine to me. I was North and 3♦ made exactly. I note that one Acol pair were in 2NT(-4), did somebody really rebid NT with that North hand? Anyway, 3♦ is the bid. I played this against Hans/Jan, making, and at the end of the hand I commented that 3♥ would get a better score at pairs but it was difficult to reach. Not so, said Hans, he said that 3♥ at (2) is weak and that was the best bid. I disagreed and said that 3♥ would be forcing, pass is the only weak bid. Philip's pass was correct. Who's right?

I asked a few leading players. Eddie, Bob and John all said that 3♥ was weak. Clive also said that 3♥ was weak. I disagreed. Anyway, Clive then had a ponder, and 5 minutes later he changed his mind, suggesting that 3♥ is encouraging but not forcing. He knows me well enough by now to know that I am usually right when it comes to the bidding.

Well then, all the big guns present disagreed with me. I can take it. So is 3♥ here weak (Hans, John, Eddie, Bob, ½ of Clive) or encouraging (the other ½ of Clive) or forcing (me)?

The Fight Back

Five (or 4 ½) to one against me, could I possibly be wrong?

As always, let's consult the library. This hand is from Crowhurst's 'Precision bidding in Acol' page 121. The bidding has started 1♦ - 1♠ - 3♦
'Any rebid by responder is 100% forcing'. Finally somebody agrees with me.
♠ AQ1075 *'Bid 3♠. 4♠ could well be the best game contract on this hand, and a forcing*
♥ J64 *rebid of 3♠ gives the opener the chance to raise to 4♠ if he has any kind of*
♦ K3 *concealed support like Jx or xxx. Notice that there would be little advantage*
♣ 1085 *in playing a bid of 3♠ as non-forcing in this situation; since opener has*
shown a good 6 card suit by his jump rebid, the responder will not wish to
become involved in an unseemly brawl about which is the correct part-score to play in.'

The Bottom Line.

I could not put it better than Crowhurst has, although (with Thorlief gone) I would not expect to have an unseemly brawl. When partner jumps then he has a good hand and a good suit. If you think that game is remote then pass. Do not rebid your suit to 'rescue' him. Any bid other than pass is constructive and **forcing**. Gotcha.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

- Hand A: If you play a strong NT then - open 1NT
If you play Acol then - open 1♥
If you play 5 card majors and a weak NT then - open 1♣.
- Hand B: Partner must have at least 4 ♣'s as he has denied 4 cards in either major. I would bid 2♣ although some may prefer to gamble in 1NT at pairs scoring.
- Hand C: Bid 4♣, a splinter. Showing 4 ♠'s with game going values and a ♣ shortage. After RHO has bid ♣'s this hand improves and is worth forcing to game.
- Hand D: Many would bid 4♠, but that is wrong as it should show a weaker hand, usually with 5 ♠'s. 2♣ is probably better, a subsequent 4♠ is then a delayed game raise, showing a sound raise to 4♠. You cannot bid 2♥ as that promises 5 ♥'s. But actually the very best bid is 4♦. This is a splinter agreeing ♠'s and showing a ♦ singleton (or void).
- Hand E: Borderline. I would pass but 1♦ would have worked out better.
- Hand F: 2♦ or possibly double (I don't like to double 1♥ with only 3 ♠'s). Too good and shapely to pass. Some people may choose a Michaels cue bid. That convention is abused more often than it is correctly used and this hand is definitely not suitable.
- Hand G: Pass. 3♥ is forcing
- Hand H: Bid 3♠, forcing. You should then reach the correct game contract.

Last week's winners: Monday 20/10/03

Friday 24/10/03

1st = Kenneth/David 60%1st = Jeff/Alex 60%1st Clive/Ken 56%2nd Dave/John 55%

Eddie was amused by the way that I explained that the sequence 1♦ - 1♥ - 3♦ - 3♥ is forcing last week (he agreed of course). He'll get used to my style in time. Actually, a jump rebid features in three of the hands this week.

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1♦, do you respond 2♣ or 3♣? Suppose you choose 3♣ and partner rebids 3♦, what now?
♠ KJ	♠ AK7	
♥ AQ3	♥ A72	With hand B you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♠, what is your rebid?
♦ J5	♦ 75	
♣ KQ7654	♣ AK1096	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠, what is your rebid?
♠ -	♠ 96543	With Hand D partner opens 1♣, do you respond? Suppose you reply 1♠ and partner rebids 2NT, what now?
♥ A763	♥ KJ	
♦ K8753	♦ J962	
♣ AKQ3	♣ 43	With Hand E you open 1♦ and partner replies 3♣; strong, good ♣ suit and game forcing. You rebid 3♦ and partner says 4♦. Do you go slamming? And would you if partner had said 3NT?
Hand E	Hand F	And what would your initial rebid be if partner had responded just 2♣ initially?
♠ A62	♠ KQ75	
♥ KJ	♥ Q109	
♦ AQ97432	♦ A10	
♣ 8	♣ J1093	You are dealer with hand F, do you open? Suppose that you pass and this goes round to RHO who opens 1♣. What now?

At King Arthur's Court

King Arthur had three convicted criminals lined up for execution. Axel the arsonist, one-eyed Pete the pillager and Bromiad the blind beggar. Bromiad really was blind and Pete could only see Bromiad with his one eye. Axel could see both the others. The king had 5 hats, two black and three white, and he had a hat randomly placed on each criminal's head. He said that if any criminal could correctly state the colour of the hat on his *own* head then all three would be set free, otherwise it was off with their heads. After 60 seconds or so, one prisoner spoke up and gained their freedom. Which one? And what colour hat did he have?

With A Void in Partner's Suit ...Board 13 from Friday 24th

West (C)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ -	♠ AQJ72	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ A763	♥ 102	1♦	pass	1♠	pass
♦ K8753	♦ J96	2♣ (1)	pass	2♠ (2)	pass
♣ AKQ3	♣ J87	pass	pass		

I was spectating this hand. When the deal was over East said that West should have rebid 3♦ at (1) to 'show his points'. Was he right? No, 3♦ is a very poor bid for two reasons –

- 1- It shows a good 6 card suit (king and 4 rags certainly does not qualify).
- 2- You should devalue this hand because of the void in partner's suit.

East is a 'points' merchant, presumably he believes that with a combined 25 points you should always be in game? This deal is a perfect example of why not! No game stands much of a chance and this bidding was fine (except that East might consider bidding 2♦ at (2) and playing in the known 5-3 fit). Downgrade a hand with a void in partner's suit. The horrible 3NT was reached at the two other tables. 2♣ is the correct rebid at (1); as I said 3♦ is lousy and the hand is not worth a reverse into 2♥ nor a game forcing 3♣. A NT rebid with a void in partner's suit would be ludicrous of course.

... So How About the Jump Rebids On this Hand? Board 4 from Friday 24th

West (B)	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ AK7	♠ 96543	1♣	pass	1♠ (1)	pass
♥ A72	♥ KJ	3♣ (2)	pass	pass (3)	pass
♦ 75	♦ J962				
♣ AK1096	♣ 43				

I was kibitzing the same pair this hand. So what about the bidding this time?

- (1) I could never bring myself to pass 1♣ with this sort of hand, 1♠ is fine.
- (2) The same player who suggested 3♦ with the previous hand. This is incorrect, a jump rebid shows a good 6 card suit. It would be nice to be able to support partner's ♠'s with this hand, but it is too good for 2♠ and 3♠ or 4♠ promise 4 card support. Nothing is perfect, but I prefer a 2NT (18-19) rebid.
- (3) West claimed that East cannot pass. Wrong - he can. 3♣ is *not* forcing. Pass is the only option, 3♠ or any other bid by East at (3) would show a stronger hand and *is* forcing.

And what happened? 3♣ made +1. 1♣ was passed out (+3) at another table. So what is the best bidding sequence to reach a ♠ contract? :-

3♠ at (4) is weak. West should pass at (5) but 4♠ is perhaps worth a go at teams.	West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♠	pass
	2NT	pass	3♠ (4)	pass
	pass (5)	pass	pass	

The bottom line? Jump rebids show *good six card* suits. 3♠ makes 9, possibly 10 tricks.

Going Slamming?

Board 26 from Monday 20th

I was sitting behind Mike, South (giving the occasional bit of advice) when he bid this slam on Monday playing with Jim (Sco).

North (A)	South (E)	West	North	East	South (Mike)
♠ KJ	♠ A62	-	-	pass	1♦
♥ AQ3	♥ KJ	pass	3♣ (1)	pass	3♦ (2)
♦ J5	♦ AQ97432	pass	4♦ (3)	pass	4NT (4)
♣ KQ7654	♣ 8	pass	5♦ (5)	pass	6♦ (6)
		dbl (7)	pass	pass	pass

(1) The jump shift shows a good hand (say 15+ pts) and a good suit. It is game forcing.

I personally would bid just 2♣ as the ♣ suit has no 'body', but I guess that 3♣ is OK.

(2) 3♦ is best, the auction is always game forcing.

(3) With points in both unbid suits I prefer 3NT, but 4♦ worked out well.

(4) Normal Blackwood.

(5) One ace.

(6) There is an ace missing, but partner had gone past 3NT. With ♦ support opposite I think it's clear to bid the slam.

(7) West held ♦Kx and assumed that east had an ace. A poor double.

Let's start with the play for a change. West led a ♠ and the ♠J won. The ♣ loser was then discarded on the 3rd round of ♥'s and only then were trumps tackled and a trick lost to ♦K. East then commented that the double did not cost as nobody else (but me) would bid slam when partner had shown a suit in which you have a singleton. I disagreed (and was proved to be correct), no prizes for guessing who East was. Partner has supported ♦'s (4♦) and going past 3NT strongly suggests slam. 7 card suits usually come in quite handy and I would always look for slam with the South hand. Also, 5♦ will get a poor score compared with 3NT. 6NT would be a silly contract of course.

And what if North had bid 3NT at (3)? Not so obvious then, but 3NT promises some sort of ♦ support and I would still go slamming. It could be that the ♥K needs protecting from the opening lead (obviously a major) and 6♦ will be played from the correct hand.

I note that nobody was in 5♦. Clive and Eddie were also in 6♦ and the other 3 tables were all in 3NT. Good show, I have frequently said that 5 of a minor is often a silly contract as 3NT (+1 or 2) scores more. I bet that a year or so ago a number of pairs would be in 5♦, obviously the word is spreading.

Now I said that Clive and Eddie also reached 6♦, their auction is *well* worth noting: -

West	North (Clive)	East	South (Eddie)
-	-	pass	1♦
pass	2♣ (1)	pass	3♦ (2)
pass	4NT	pass	5♥
pass	6♦	all pass	

I prefer Clive's 2♣ bid at (1) to a jump shift. And how about Eddie's jump rebid at (2)? This is a fine example – a good 6(+) card suit. Normal Blackwood then got to the reasonable slam. I like this bidding sequence. 6♦ is not solid, but it's a nice contract.

Open or come in Later?

Board 1 from Friday 24th

North (F)	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ75	-	pass (1)	pass	pass
♥ Q109	1♣	dbl (2)	and onwards to disaster.
♦ A10				
♣ J1093				

- (1) 12 points with excellent intermediates. It conforms to the rule of 20 and is a perfectly acceptable opener. Open 1♣ playing a strong NT or otherwise open a weak 1NT.
- (2) Now I am willing to accept that some people will choose not to open this hand, but a double here is a really poor bid. Refer back to previous news-sheets if you are not sure what sort of hand constitutes a take-out double. If you cannot open this hand then you certainly cannot produce a miserable double now, pass!

At King Arthur's Court – Solution

It seems unlikely I know, but the blind beggar Bromiad spoke up. Despite seeing nothing he knew the colour of his own hat after a while! His reasoning was as follows: - Axel obviously cannot see two black hats as he would then have known that his own was white. Thus I know that the two hats (on me and Pete) must be both white or one of each colour. Pete has also worked this out I hope, thus if Pete can see a black hat on me then his own must be white and he would have spoken up by now. Hence he cannot see a black cap on me and so mine is white.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

- Hand A: I prefer a slow 2♣, but 3♣ is OK I guess. If you bid 3♣ then this shows about 15+ points and a good ♣ suit. After partner's 3♦ I would then bid 3NT which I think describes this hand pretty well.
- Hand B: 2NT. 18-19 (or 17-19 if you play a weak NT).
- Hand C: 2♣ is quite sufficient with this misfit.
- Hand D: I would respond 1♠. After partner's 2NT then 3♠ is OK as this is a weak bid.
- Hand E: If partner bids 4♦ at his second turn then I am definitely looking for slam. Partner has gone past 3NT and 5♦ will lose to those in 3NT. And if partner had bid 3NT? I would still look for 6♦, even with the singleton in partner's suit, 7 cards suits still play pretty well!
And if partner had responded 2♣ initially? This hand is good enough for a 3♦ jump rebid. Again, a decent 7 card suit is an asset.
- Hand F: I would always open this hand – either 1♣ or a weak 1NT, but I guess that some may choose to pass. If you passed, then do not double RHO's 1♣ opener but pass again, a double shows short ♣'s and is a very poor bid with this flat hand.

Last week's winners: Monday 27/10/03

Friday 1/11/03

1st Clive/Eddie 58%
2nd Alex/Jeff 57%

1st John G/Dave 56%
2nd Hans/Philip 54%

Bidding Quiz

Hand A Hand B You open Hand A with 1♥ and partner responds 1♠,
What is your rebid?

♠ A7 ♠ -
♥ A9743 ♥ J10962
♦ A10632 ♦ 103
♣ A ♣ AK10765

What do you open with Hand B?

Hand C Hand D With Hand C partner opens 1♥, do you respond?

♠ Q6542 ♠ Q5
♥ 5 ♥ J1086543
♦ 54 ♦ K
♣ QJ954 ♣ AJ3

What would you open with Hand D?

And what would you bid if RHO had opened 1♦?

At King Arthur's Court

Conan the conman had been sentenced to death. The courtyard by the gallows was covered in pebbles, either black or white. King Arthur loved his games of chance, especially if somebody's life was at stake. He said to Conan 'I'll pick up two pebbles, one white and one black. If you can pick the white one out of my hat then you will go free'. King Arthur then proceeded to pick up two pebbles, but having no intention of letting the villain off, he secretly chose two black pebbles. Conan noticed this deceit, but how did he save his head without calling the King a cheat?

Unauthorised InformationBoard 11 from Monday 27th

West	West	North	East	South
♠ A2	-	-	-	1NT (1)
♥ J872	pass	2NT (2)	pass (3)	3♦
♦ J87	3♥! (4)		
♣ J1084				

(1) 15-17 (2) Transfer to ♦'s

(4) Obviously absurd. What actually happened is that East (a learner) called me over at (3) and asked if he should bid. I said that either bidding or passing were reasonable with his hand. This is similar to a long pause (partner knows that you are thinking of bidding). West's bid at (4) is unethical in the extreme. The Director (me) was called and would have awarded an adjusted score had it been necessary. You are not allowed to take advantage of partner's hesitation, questions, explanations or anything else. Any information conveyed to you by such means is unauthorised and cannot be used by you. This particular example is perhaps the most blatant case of unethical conduct that I have ever seen. Ian has been warned, it's in my black book.

Bid Your Hand Just OnceBoard 13 from Monday 27th

Dealer:	♠ A862	West	North	East	South
North	♥ A1074				
Both vul	♦ QJ32	-	pass (1)	1♣	1♠ (2)
	♣ 7	2♣	4♠ (3)	dbl (4)	pass
		5♣ (5)	5♠ (6)	dbl (7)	pass
♠ 5	N	♠ 74	pass	pass	
♥ J63	W E	♥ K952			
♦ 109654	S	♦ AK8			
♣ AQ93		♣ K1054			
	♠ KQJ1093				
	♥ Q8				
	♦ 7				
	♣ J862				

This was the bidding I saw at one table.

- (1) With 11 points and good shape with both majors, many would choose to open. It does not quite conform to the rule of 20, but I would open 1♦.
- (2) A sound 1♠ overcall
- (3) With excellent ♠ support and good shape, it's worth a raise to 4♠. There are more sophisticated methods to show a sound raise, but with no agreements then 4♠ is fine.
- (4) I've no idea what East meant this as. I would assume penalties but I cannot see that East has any sensible option other than pass. If you wish to compete, then bid 5♣.
- (5) Presumably West understands his partner and removed the double.
- (6) Now this really is silly. North stated his hand pretty well last time and should leave it up to partner, especially as East's double last time may have been for penalties. If North feels that his hand is worth two subsequent bids then why did he not open??
- (7) It sure is for penalties this time.

4♠ made and 5♠ failed. North simply got what he deserved (a bottom). 5♣ is probably two, maybe three down. Once you have bid your hand, leave it up to partner.

BalancingBoard 5 from Friday 1st

South	West	North	East	South
♠ K873	-	pass	1♥	pass
♥ 10842	2♦	pass	2♥	pass
♦ Q762	pass	2♠ (1)	pass	pass
♣ Q	3♥	pass	pass	3♠ (2)
	pass	pass	pass	

- (1) North's 2♠ bid here is in the so-called balancing (the pass-out) seat. He has already passed twice and is simply making a noise. E-W are prepared to play in 2♥ and so the points are fairly evenly spread, North has already taken into account that South has some values and probably 4 ♠'s. North is quite likely to have only 4 ♠'s for this bid.
- (2) South should pass. North's 2♠ bid has pushed them up into (an unmakeable) 3♥ on a 5-2 fit. Also, this South hand has defence against ♥'s.

The bottom line? When partner balances, he is already bidding your hand.

The Jump Rebid in a 2nd suit

Board 15 from Monday 27th

North (C)	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ Q6542	♠ A7	-	-	-	1♥
♥ 5	♥ A9743	pass	1♠ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♦ 54	♦ A10632	pass	pass (3)	pass	
♣ QJ954	♣ A				

- (1) 1♠ looks pretty obvious to me. Hans was East and predictably stated that North should have passed the opening 1♥ bid. To each their own.
- (2) So what is your rebid? 4 aces and 16 points so jump to 3♦? NO. True, the hand has 4 aces, but that's all. The suits have no other honours and the singleton ace and doubleton in partner's suit are not great. 3♦ would (should) be forcing. 2♦ is quite sufficient with this hand. If game is on, partner will bid again.
- (3) I think that pass is very prudent. Some would give 'false' preference to ♥'s (just in case partner has 5 ♥'s and just 4 ♦'s, but with a (sub) minimum and a miss-fit it's best not to bid again and give partner the opportunity to go leaping about.

And what happened? 2♦ was a fine contract. It was bid and made at one other table but a third went overboard in 3♦. At the 4th table E-W got a good score by playing in 2NT (-1). Presumably this was not doubled because North failed to respond?

A Silly Pre-Empt (and much more)

Board 6 from Monday 27th

West	East (B)	West	North	East(Ian)	South
♠ AQ87	♠ -	-	-	3♣ (1)	pass
♥ 7	♥ J10962	4♣ (2)	pass	4♥ (3)	
♦ AQ984	♦ 103	5♣	pass	5♥ (3)	dbl
♣ J98	♣ AK10765	etc and onto -1700			

Eddie called me over after he had played this board and asked about this silly result at the previous table (above) – is there even any point in scoring when people bid to ludicrous contracts like this? I happen to know what happened: -

- (1) This is a very poor pre-empt. I have stated in previous news-sheets that you should not normally pre-empt with an outside 4 card major, with a 5 card major it is just silly. But then Ian is not often accused of being sensible.
- (2) I was asked what to bid here. Opposite a normal pre-empt (non-vul against vul) then there could be a game your way, but not for sure. Opponents may possibly be able to make 4♥ and I suggested that 5♣ or 4♣ are possibilities. West chose 4♣.
- (3) Of course it never occurred to me that anyone would take this as asking for aces! And also take a subsequent 5♣ as asking for kings!!

The bottom line. Most experts and experienced players only use 4♣ to ask for aces after partner has bid NT. Simplest is only to play Gerber directly after a 1NT or 2NT opening. I gave a more comprehensive summary in news-sheet 31 for more experienced pairs. If you insist that 4♣ is always your ace ask, then it cannot work after a ♣ suit is trumps (you need to be able to sign off or raise ♣'s) and so 4♦ is then the ace ask.

A New Suit at the 4 level!

Board 23 from Monday 27th

Now we all know the saying 'a new suit at the 3 level is forcing'. There are, of course numerous exceptions; but how about this new suit at the 4 level from Monday?

Dealer:	♠ 764	West (D)	North	East	South
North	♥ A7				
Both vul	♦ 32	-	-	-	1♦
	♣ KQ10642	3♥ (1)	4♣ (2)	pass	4♦ (3)
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ Q5	N	♠ J109			
♥ J1086543	W E	♥ K			
♦ K	S	♦ A10754			
♣ AJ3		♣ 987			
	♠ AK82				
	♥ Q92				
	♦ QJ986				
	♣ 5				

- (1) Supposed to be weak, the only 'weak' aspect of this hand is the ♥ suit. With all the points outside the ♥ suit, a 1♥ overcall is quite sufficient.
- (2) So what is a 4♣ bid here? Partner has not shown the suit and you are bidding at the 4 level. It obviously has to be a good suit, but how good a hand? Is it weak, invitational or forcing? The player who bid this on Monday maintained that the bid was pre-emptive and that partner should pass. Obviously nonsense, there is no jump and so no pre-empt. Anyway, it is a well-known saying that one does not pre-empt over a pre-empt. So is the bid encouraging or forcing? Eddie, Clive, Bob, Dave and myself discussed this on Friday. We all agreed that it is not weak and should show a good hand/suit (much better than this one). As to whether it is forcing or not, we agreed that it is really a matter of partnership agreement (I would take it as forcing with no agreement to the contrary). All pretty irrelevant with this actual hand, pass is the only sensible option.
- (3) South asked me about this bid, I thought that 4♣ was forcing and agreed that 4♦ is probably better than 4♠. North disagreed and said South must pass, all his years of experience and 86,000 or so master points dictate that 4♣ is pre-emptive. Just goes to show exactly how much master points are worth (I have none). All pretty irrelevant as any bid over 3♥ (except a penalty double) gets (and deserves) a bottom. 3♥ goes 3 down.

At King Arthur's Court - Solution

Conan picked a pebble out of the King's hat, but 'accidentally' dropped it on the floor amongst the other pebbles before anyone could see the colour. He then said 'Sorry your Highness, but we can establish its colour by looking at the pebble remaining in your hat'.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

- Hand A: 2♦. Not good enough for 3♦
- Hand B: Pass (or 1♥ or 1♣ if you really want to open), but do *not* pre-empt with 3♣.
- Hand C: Some people would pass, but not me; I would bid 1♠.
- Hand D: 1♥, 1♥. Totally unsuitable for a pre-empt (either opening or overcall).

Last week's winners: Monday 4/11/03

Friday 8/11/03

1 st	Alex/Jeff	71%	1 st	Dave/John	59%
2 nd	Bob/Hans	62%	2 nd	Bob/Allan	58%

Bidding Quiz

Hand A Hand B You are playing Standard American with Hand A. Partner opens 1♠, what do you reply?

♠ K93	♠ 952
♥ Q765	♥ AK76
♦ AJ8	♦ 1098653
♣ 872	♣ -

Standard American again with Hand B. Partner again opens 1♠, what do you reply?

Hand C Hand D You are playing Standard American, what do you open with Hand C? Suppose that you choose 1♠, what would you do if partner replied (a) 2♠ or (b) 1NT?

♠ AJ1042	♠ J2
♥ K2	♥ AQ
♦ 765	♦ A975
♣ AKJ	♣ KQ642

With Hand D partner opens a weak 2♥, what do you bid?

Hand E Hand F With Hand E partner opens 1♥, what is your bid?

♠ AK9	♠ Q976543
♥ Q1093	♥ 6
♦ Q97	♦ QJ8
♣ A83	♣ J9

With Hand F RHO opens a weak 2♥, what is your bid?

Hand G Hand H What do you open with Hand G, non-vul against vul?

♠ K	♠ A108
♥ KJ9854	♥ 10732
♦ 10	♦ K6432
♣ 108753	♣ A

With Hand H LHO opens 2♥ (weak) which RHO raises to 4♥, what do you do?

At King Arthur's Court

King Arthur had just one convicted criminal for execution this week. As was his custom, he gave the criminal a chance of freedom. He was placed in a room with two doors, each guarded by a knight. One door led to freedom and the other to the gallows. The criminal was told that one knight always told the truth and that the other always lied, and that he could ask just one question to one knight before he had to choose which door to walk through. What question did he ask to ensure his freedom?

Raising Partner's Pre-empt

Board 16 from Friday 8th

Dealer:	♠ J2	West (F)	North (D)	East (H)	South (G)
South	♥ AQ				
E-W vul	♦ A975	-	-	-	2♥ (1)
	♣ KQ642	pass (2)	4♥ (3)	dbl (4)	pass
		pass (5)	pass	pass	
♠ Q976543	N	♠ A108			
♥ 6	W E	♥ 10732			
♦ QJ8	S	♦ K6432			
♣ J9		♣ A			
	♠ K				
	♥ KJ9854				
	♦ 10				
	♣ 108753				

- (1) Well then, should you open a weak two when you also have a 5 card minor? Many would say no. I have no problem with it, and it certainly worked here.
- (2) As I said last week, you cannot pre-empt over a pre-empt. Over a 1 level opening a 3♠ bid would show this type of hand (although most would prefer a better hand when vulnerable). A weak jump to 2♠ is also a possibility. However, over a weak 2♥ opening any ♠ bid here would show a much stronger hand.
- (3) So what would you have bid with this hand? Opposite a 6 card ♥ suit, 4♥ seems obvious to me but nobody else reached this contract. 4♥ here is a double-edged bid; it can be a good hand (with a view to making, as here) or it can simply be raising the pre-empt. This ambiguity really makes it difficult for the opponents – it does not matter that partner is also in the dark, you are the captain and partner (having said his hand) should not bid again.
- (4) East meant this as penalties. In fact he was so proud of the bid that he showed his hand to dummy and partner (!) before play had commenced! So is it penalties? I think it is best played as values (penalty orientated with something in ♠'s). I do not feel, however, that this hand is good enough, I would pass.
- (5) Now West was very unhappy. Apparently his partner had made it very clear on previous occasions that he should not remove his 'penalty doubles', so he passed. Penalty double or not, I would bid 4♠ even if my partner was bigger than me.

So what happened? Obviously 4♥ is cold and in fact E-W mis-defended and it made 12 tricks for 100% of the matchpoints. Contracts at other tables were 5♣, 3♣ and 3♠ (by E-W). Did nobody else open a weak 2♥?

As you can see, E-W can make 4♠, maybe 5♠. But how can they bid it if, as I said, the East hand is not good enough for a double? It's not easy (that's why pre-empts were invented), but if I was West I would bid 4♠ at the 2nd turn even if partner had not doubled. Having failed to even overcall on the previous round a 4♠ bid now must show this sort of hand. It could cost a bundle, but then nothing is certain in this world except death, taxes and bush waging war (thus expediting the first two).

Good 7 card suits

Board 2 from Friday 8th

Dealer:	♠ -	West	North	East	South
East	♥ K8752	-	-	1♦	pass
E-W vul	♦ KJ64	1♠	dbl (1)	pass	1NT (2)
	♣ KJ98	2♠	pass	3♠	pass
♠ AQ76432	N	pass (3)	pass		
♥ Q43	W E				
♦ Q	S				
♣ 52					
	♠ J1095				
	♥ J9				
	♦ A108				
	♣ 10743				

- (1) It is usually best to overcall with a 5 card major rather than double, but here it would be at the two level and the suit is not very robust. A double (thus also showing ♣'s) is best.

- (2) West (Hans) was not impressed with this bid, but with a stopper in both of the opponent's suits and good intermediates I think it's fine. 2♣ is a reasonable alternative.
- (3) Now this pass beats me. West presumably placed South with the ♠K for his NT bid (?), it looks as if all the cards lie well. West has 10 points, partner has opened and made an encouraging free bid (3♠). I admit that a singleton in partner's suit is not great, but after partner has (belatedly) supported ♠'s nothing on earth would stop me bidding 4♠. The 3♠ bid simply has to be Kx or xxx, doesn't it?

And what happened? 3♠ made +2 but got a poor score as 4♠ was bid and made at other tables. The bottom line? Good 7 card suits play well when partner has supported.

A Solid Raise of Partner's Major

Board 1 from Friday 6th

North	South	West	North	East	South (E)
♠ QJ62	♠ AK9	-	1♥	pass	2♣ (1)
♥ AJ754	♥ Q1093	pass	3♣ (2)	pass	3♥ (3)
♦ K	♦ Q97	pass	4♥ (4)	pass	4NT
♣ Q54	♣ A83	pass	5♦	pass	5♥

- (1) It seems a bit strange, but unless you have a means of showing a good raise to game (Jacoby 2NT, Swiss or something) then you have to bid a minor at the two level. 2♥ and 3♥ would be non-forcing and 4♥ would show a weaker hand with (usually) 5 trumps.
- (2) North does not really have any other bid. 2♠ would be a reverse and rebidding this motley ♥ suit is to be avoided if possible. 2NT is out with a singleton ♦.
- (3) South presumably intended this as forcing. If you play the 2/1 system then it is (an example of the benefits of 2/1); playing standard methods it is invitational – showing 3 card support. So what are the alternatives here? 4♥ would be a delayed game raise, showing a sound raise to 4♥ and is probably best as this hand is flat and partner has shown nothing more than a minimum opener. You could try 4NT if you feel optimistic.
- (4) North really had no good reason not to pass 3♥, just a gut feeling?

5♥ made, so all's well that ends well? The bottom line - It's worth checking up on which sequences are forcing. Preference back to partner's suit is not unless you play 2/1.

A Minor Suit Game/Slam Missed

Board 3 from Friday 8th

Now I frequently say not to look for minor suit games when 3NT is a viable option, but when opponents can run 5 tricks off the top against NT: -

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ K6	♠ A54	pass (1)	pass	1NT (2)	2♥ (3)
♥ 976	♥ 3	3♥ (4)	dbl (5)	3NT (6)	pass
♦ AJ8643	♦ KQ95	pass	pass	pass	
♣ 96	♣ AK752				

- (1) I believe that E-W were playing Benjamin two's, and so a weak 2♦ opening was not an option for West.
- (2) An extremely poor bid – you cannot open 1NT with a singleton. This hand should open 1♣ with a view to reversing into 2♦ next go.
- (3) Natural
- (4) This is *not* natural. In fact it denies ♥'s; with reasonable ♥ stop(s) West would bid 3NT, with good ♥'s West would double for penalties. The 3♥ bid here was asking partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stop, otherwise bid something else. Some people play 3♥ here as Stayman but you would have to agree that. Either way, it does *not* show ♥'s.
- (5) North had good ♥'s and wanted a ♥ lead
- (6) You cannot bid NT here with no ♥ stop. Anyway, after the double East is off the hook and can pass if in doubt as to what's going on (his partner gets another bid).

N-S took the first 5 ♥ tricks. But how should the hand be bid to reach 6♦, bearing in mind that a weak 2♦ opening was unavailable and that there will be ♥ interference? How about: -

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	1♣ (1)	1♥
2♦ (2)	2♥	4♥ (3)	pass
4NT? (4)			

- (1) The correct opening. If there is no intervention then rebid 2♦ (a reverse) over partner's 1♥/♠/NT. If partner bids 1♦ (as he would in this case if he were allowed) then bid 3♥, a splinter agreeing ♦'s. A splinter is always one above the forcing natural bid. After 1♣ - 1♦ then 1♥ would be natural but not forcing, 2♥ would be natural (usually a NT stopper) and forcing and so 3♥ is the splinter.
- (2) A bit pushy, but it is a reasonable 6 card suit and it is a passed hand (thus not forcing). As it happens, I believe that this pair play negative free bids (?) and so 2♦ shows this type of hand I think (I don't play them so I'm not too sure).
- (3) East obviously has values for 5♦ or better. 4♥ here is a splinter showing a singleton (possibly void) ♥.
- (4) West just loves ♥ shortage opposite as he has no wasted values. He can either try Blackwood or settle for 5♦ if in a pessimistic mood (I guess that he has already pushed a bit).

Nobody actually bid 6♦, but two pairs reached the fine 5♦ contract (well done Alex/Jeff & Ian/Mike).

Inviting to Game I was asked about inviting when in competitive situations on Friday.

Consider the sequence (with no opposition bidding), 1♥ - 2♥ - 3♥. The 3♥ bid here is normally played as invitational, asking partner to bid 4♥ with a maximal hand. When there is interference, however, things are different as you need to be just competitive with weaker hands as well as being able to invite game with stronger hands. For example: -

West	West	North	East	South
♠ J2	1♥	1♠	2♥	2♠
♥ KQ9752	3♥ (1)		
♦ AJ7				
♣ 84				

(1) This hand does not have game invitational values. With no opposing bidding it would have passed a 2♥ response. However, selling out to 2♠ is feeble when you have a 6 card suit and so a competitive 3♥ is correct. How does East know that you are not looking for game? - Any bid other than 3♥ would be a game try.

When a 5-3 fit is better than 4-4 Board 16 from Monday 4th

I am continually stating that you have to look for the 4-4 major suit fit, it is generally better than a 5-3 fit. The 5-3 fit is often better playing in NT unless you can get a ruff in the hand with 3 trumps. A classic example occurred on Monday: -

West	East (B)	West	North	East	South
♠ AQ1074	♠ 952	1♠	pass	2♥ (1)	pass
♥ Q985	♥ AK76	3♥	pass	3♠	pass
♦ A	♦ 1098753	4♥	pass	pass	pass
♣ 654	♣ -				

(1) This 2♥ bid is wrong; when partner opens 1♠ then a 2♥ bid always promises a 5 card suit. With just 4♥'s and a good hand, reply in your best minor, if opener has 4♥'s he will then bid them and so a♥ fit is not lost.

4♥ failed but 2♠ made +1 or +2 at other tables. Now this particular East hand is very interesting. You know that there is a 5-3♠ fit, and with the♣ void then a♠ contract will almost certainly play better than a possible 4-4♥ fit as you can ruff in the short hand. This East hand should not bother with the♥'s but look for the best♠ contract. An initial 2♠ is perhaps a bit feeble and 3♠ would suggest 4♠'s, I would respond 2♦. The hand does not have the values for a 2 level response, but with the great shape for a♠ contract (prepared to go to 3♠) then it's OK. After a 2♥ rebid from opener I would then bid 3♠. This sequence (1♠ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3♠ shows values for 3♠ but just three trumps). West would probably pass 3♠, a very decent spot. I don't think that the East hand is strong enough for an initial splinter.

At King Arthur's Court - Solution

The criminal asked one knight 'which door would the other knight tell me was safe if I asked him?'. The criminal then walked through the other door.

When NT is better than a 5-3 FitBoard 1 from Monday 4th

As I said just now, the 5-3 fit is sometimes better playing in NT: -

North (A)	South (C)	West	North	East	South
♠ K93	♠ AJ1042		pass	pass	1♠ (1)
♥ Q765	♥ K2	pass	2NT (2)	pass	3NT
♦ AJ8	♦ 765	pass	pass	pass	
♣ 872	♣ AKJ				

- (1) When dummy came down, North said that South should have opened a strong NT – that really simplifies things as you have no rebid problem. I (sort of) agree with North here, although it is my no means generally accepted to open 1NT with this type of hand.
- (2) What is generally accepted, however, is that a 2NT response to partner's opening 1♠ should show a decent 11-12 count and no primary fit (Kxx or similar) for partner if playing 5 card majors: - So, what is the correct response with this North hand? A totally flat 10 count, the hand is nowhere near worth a new suit at the two level, and 2NT is doubly bad as a possible ♥ fit may be lost. The hand is not worth a jump to 3♠ either (and this should show 4 trumps). So 1NT? This hand is very similar to Hand A from news sheet 50 – the same player (Hans) chose to bid 1NT then when he had Qxx in partner's major. It was wrong then and it's still wrong now. If you bid 1NT then South should pass – this South hand is not worth a try for game with no ♠ support opposite. The correct bid with the North hand is 2♠, simple. Support with support. South would then invite (3♦ or 3♠ or 2NT or whatever you play as a game try here) and North should then bid the good 3NT game. South, of course, had points to spare and so North got away with his overbid. But how would it have turned out if South had an eleven point (or less) 3rd seat opener?

The bottom line. When you are 4333 type shape with three to an honour in partner's major - support him. Do *not* bid NT. The 1NT response is often a courtesy bid – avoid it with support. 2NT shows 11 to 12 points and a doubleton (or *weak* triplet) in partner's 5 card major.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

Hand A: 2♠. Support partner and it's not good enough for a new suit or NT at the two level.

Hand B: I prefer 2♦, but 2♠ is fine. You cannot bid 2♥ with just 4♥'s.

Hand C: I would open 1NT, but there are many who would prefer 1♠.

(a) if partner replies 2♠, then try for game.

(b) if partner replies 1NT, then pass. It's not good enough for 2NT (17-18 pts).

Hand D: 4♥. AQ is adequate support opposite a 6 card suit.

Hand E: 2♣. Your hand is easily good enough for 4♥, but a direct 4♥ shows a weaker hand with 5 trumps. If you do not play any conventional raises (Jacoby 2NT, Swiss or anything) then simply 'dig up' a minor suit for now. So bid 2♣ now and then bid 4♥ if partner makes a simple non-strong rebid.

Hand F: Pass. Any bid now would show a much stronger hand – there is no such thing as a pre-empt in this position. You should pass for now and bid ♠'s next go if it looks like a good idea.

Hand G: Seven points and a decent 6 card ♥ suit, looks like a fine weak 2♥ opening to me. The 5 card ♣ suit simply gives it a bit more playing strength and would certainly not affect my decision to open with a weak two.

Hand H: Pass. This Hand is not good enough for a double, no matter if you play it as values, penalties or take-out.

Last week's winners: Monday 11/11/03

Friday 15/11/03

1st Bob/Allan 65%
2nd Ian/Terry 59%

1st Clive/Jim 60%
2nd Ian/Mike 54%

Ian commented on my very accurate description of his 3♥ bid (news sheet 53) being 'the most blatant case of unethical conduct that I have ever seen'. Instead of apologising, he asked 'did he pick the right suit?'. I guess that it's time to give him another warning after his unnecessary rudeness/raising of his voice against Tomas/Wendy on Friday –
be carefull.

Bidding Quiz**Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A Hand B

♠ QJ97 ♠ 95
♥ 9543 ♥ A1098
♦ J85 ♦ AK1083
♣ 83 ♣ A3

With Hand A LHO passes and partner opens 1♣. Do you bid? If yes, then what?

What do you open with Hand B? Suppose that you choose 1♦, then what is your rebid after 1♠ from partner?

Hand C Hand D

♠ 753 ♠ 6
♥ KJ52 ♥ J
♦ K3 ♦ KJ108753
♣ A853 ♣ QJ72

You are dealer and pass with Hand C. Partner opens 1♥, what do you reply?

With Hand D partner opens 1♠. You are playing a strong NT and so have insufficient values for 2♦; so you bid 1NT. Partner then rebids 2♥. Great! But what do you do??

Hand E Hand F

♠ 98754 ♠ A52
♥ KQ108 ♥ 9854
♦ - ♦ -
♣ AK54 ♣ Q98762

You choose to open Hand E with 1♠, fine. Partner responds 1NT. 2♥ is best now (you don't want to lose a possible ♥ fit) but partner then bids 3♦. What do you do?

What do you do with Hand F as dealer (I don't mean burn it)?

Hand G Hand H

♠ 102 ♠ -
♥ K86 ♥ AQJ10
♦ QJ1054 ♦ AKQJ6
♣ A72 ♣ K642

With Hand G partner opens 1♥. As you will read soon, with 3 card support and values for a 3♥ bid, it is best to bid 2♣/♦ first and then bid 3♥ (thus showing 3 card support). So you bid 2♦ and partner replies 3♦, so what is your bid now?

With Hand H partner opens 1♣, what are you going to do?

Passed Hand BiddingBoard 24 from Monday 11th

When you are a passed hand you may sometimes have to adjust your bidding as many bids that are normally forcing no longer are.

West (C)	West	North	East	South
♠ 753	pass	pass	1♥	pass
♥ KJ52	2♣ (1)	pass	pass (2)	2♠ (3)
♦ K3	3♥	pass	4♥	pass
♣ A853	pass	pass		

- (1) This is an incorrect bid for two reasons. With values for a limit raise (to the 3 level) you should simply bid 3♥ when you have 4 trumps. You only go via 2 of a minor to show three card support. However, when you are a passed hand you no longer have the luxury of distinguishing between 3 and 4 card support as 2♣/♦ may be passed out. So with a similar West hand with just 3♥'s you would also have to bid 3♥. There is a solution, it's called 2-way Drury, popular in the USA but not common in Europe.
- (2) East had just a 12 count with 3♣'s and saw no reason to bid on.
- (3) Luckily South came to the rescue, 4♥ was a comfortable contract.

Don't pass 1♣ with ♣ shortage.Board 23 from Monday 11th

Not everybody agrees with me, but I will not pass a 1♣ opener (maybe short) if I can avoid it. I was East on this deal and would bid the same if playing better minor: -

West	East (A)	West	North	East (me)	South
♠ A642	♠ QJ97	-	-	-	pass
♥ Q8	♥ 9543	1♣ (1)	pass	1♦ (2)	pass
♦ KQ9	♦ J85	1NT (3)	pass	pass	pass
♣ K1076	♣ 83				

- (1) We play a prepared ♣, and so this could be just 2 or 3 cards.
- (2) I would never pass here. South is a passed hand and is quite likely to pass again (indeed he did at another table when 1♣ was passed out). 1♣ is very likely to be a miserable contract looking at the East cards (it was -2). But why 1♦ and not 1♥? I learned this trick from Chuck – yes, one is never too old to learn! A year or so ago I would have bid 1♥ but Chuck had this sequence with a similar hand a few months back, I am always willing to learn from a master - he had a very persuasive argument: -
If you bid 1♥ then partner is quite likely to go leaping off into 2,3 or even 4♥; so bid 1♦ and then pass any response from partner. Also, the strong hand will be declarer in any major suit contract. All very logical, I liked it. This was my first opportunity to put it to the test.
- (3) Obviously it should have worked out fine; West should simply rebid 1♠ which is an excellent contract. Never deny a 4 card major.

Your next bid after transferring.Board 20 from Monday 11th

I've been all through this before (news sheet 19), but somebody still got this totally wrong on Monday, an easy 3NT was missed: -

West (B)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 95	♠ AJ1072	1NT (1)	pass	2♥	pass
♥ A1093	♥ Q6	2♠	pass	3♠ (2)	pass
♦ AK1083	♦ Q7	pass	pass		
♣ A3	♣ Q982				

- (1) Not everybody would open 1NT(15-17) with two doubletons, I think it's fine with this hand. If you don't open 1NT then you may have problems later showing the strength and balanced nature of the hand. I would like a better hand to reverse.
- (2) Wrong on two counts – First of all, it has game values and so East must either bid game or make a forcing bid. Secondly, when you rebid the transfer suit, this shows a 6 card suit (you have already shown 5 with the transfer). A 3♣ bid here would be game forcing and show a ♣ suit so is OK, but I prefer 3NT as the hand has honours in both doubletons. Either way you end up in 3NT.

Another Game MissedBoard 11 from Monday 11th

As I said just now, you should try to open 1NT with a balanced 15-17 points as otherwise you may have trouble telling partner your strength. This West hand is possibly a little too strong and unbalanced (points concentrated in two good suits) for a strong 1NT opening. I think that the opening bid is fine, but this auction goes to show how difficult it can be to show a 17 point hand having not opened 1NT.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AKJ95	♠ 1065	-	-	-	pass
♥ 32	♥ AJ964	1♠ (1)	pass	1NT (2)	pass
♦ KQJ10	♦ A93	2♦ (3)	pass	2♠	pass
♣ K3	♣ 106	pass (4)			

- (1) Similar to the last hand and 1NT is a possible opening. However, the strength is located in two excellent suits and with a 5 card major I think that 1♠ is fine.
- (2) East is spoilt for choice here. I think it's not good enough for 2♥ when playing a strong NT. 2♠ and 1NT are the two possibilities. With an honour in the ♠ suit, I would bid 2♠. Without a ♠ honour I prefer 1NT (especially as there may just be a ♥ fit). I would not, however, argue with anybody who bids 2♠. Either is fine by me.
- (3) Here we see the problem with not opening 1NT. 2♦ is a reasonable bid but does not show the strength of the hand. Most people play 3♦ here as game forcing and this hand is good, but not good enough to force to game. I would bid 2NT (showing 17-18 points). East would then have bid 4♠, fine. The 2♦ bid here could still have worked out OK, however: -
- (4) After partner's belated support, I would make a try for game with 3♠ (or 2NT).

I was East and we played this against Hans/Clive. Hans, of course, was openly critical of my bidding, stating that a 1NT response must have a stopper in all the unbid suits. I have never heard such drivel in my life. Just look at the next hand (D) where North correctly replied 1NT with two small singletons!

A New Suit by a Limited Hand

Board 26 from Monday 11th

Back in news-sheet 36 I said that a new suit at the three level is usually forcing. I was, however, very careful with my wording and said by an unlimited hand. So what is it when the hand is already limited?

Table 1

North (D)	South (E)	West	North (me)	East	South
♠ 6	♠ 98754	-	-	pass	1 ♠
♥ J	♥ KQ108	pass	1NT (1)	pass	2 ♣ (2)
♦ KJ108753	♦ -	pass	pass	pass	
♣ QJ72	♣ AK54				

Table 2

West	North	East	South
-	-	pass	1 ♠
pass	1NT (1)	pass	2 ♥ (3)
pass	3 ♦ (4)	pass	3NT (5)
pass	??? (6)		

- (1) Sometimes a 1NT response has to be made on a very unbalanced hand, especially when the opening is a major suit; this happens when the responder has insufficient values to bid at the two level. 2♦ is OK playing a weak NT, but not with a strong NT.
- (2) Now I prefer 2♥ here (as otherwise a ♥ fit may well be lost forever). This simple rebid generally offers partner the choice of passing or preference to the first suit. 2♣, however, worked out very well on this deal as it was the best contract!
- (3) As I said, I prefer this 2♥ bid to 2♣.
- (4) Now then, crunch time. What does this bid mean? a new suit at the 3 level. North thought that it is a weak bid with a long suit and that South should pass. South (Hans) later maintained that it shows 9-10 points with a good suit and is invitational (to 3NT). Who is correct? Think about it logically, and in fact this is well-defined in Bridge literature.
North is correct. The bid is weak, showing a long suit, a misfit for partner's suits and a statement that 3♦ is the best contract. South *must* pass. Obviously it is not an invitation for 3NT, North's first bid was prepared to play in 1NT, so upon discovering a mis-fit he is certainly not now looking for 3NT. The same bid would be made by North on a much weaker hand. With the afore mentioned 9-10 pt hand, North would bid 2♦ or 2NT at once.
- (5) Pass is the only option here. 3NT with a minimum and void in partner's suit is gross.
- (6) Obviously a lottery now, the pair went on to bid a poor 5♣ (-1). But not as bad as the pair who played in 3NT (-4). Do *not* bid NT with mis-fits, PASS a.s.a.p.

At King Arthur's Court

A gang of ruffians had been raping and pillaging throughout the kingdom of Camelot. King Arthur had had enough and so he sent Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain off to deal with the situation. The gang was led by Frederick and Friedrich, father and son. After a week the knights encountered the gang; the father, Frederick, was killed in the ensuing battle and his son, Friedrich, was taken back to Camelot. King Arthur was fed up with too many criminals getting off by means of hats, pebbles, coloured doors etc and so decided to have Friedrich executed immediately. But upon arrival at the gallows, the chief executioner said 'I can't execute this man, he's my son'. How is that possible?

A fairly uninteresting board, but then nothing is mundane these days when Hans and myself meet at the bridge table. The hand seemed bog standard to me, but not to Hans who had no hesitation in quickly criticising my bidding (he was South): -

West	East (G)	West	North	East (me)	South
♠ Q9	♠ 102	1♥	pass	2♦ (1)	pass
♥ A9532	♥ K86	3♦ (2)	pass	3♥ (3)	pass
♦ A87	♦ QJ1054	pass	pass		
♣ QJ9	♣ A72				

- (1) I mentioned this earlier, with a limit raise (to 3) of partner's major, bid a minor suit at the 2 level and bid 3 of his major next time. This distinguishes 3 card support from 4 card support. Some might say that this hand is not worth a limit raise to 3♥ (I would not argue, it is close).
- (2) An interesting problem, what is the best rebid with this hand after partner's 2♦ response? 2♥, 2NT or 3♦? Doubtless some person(s) will have strong views, but I am not so quick to criticise others. I think that any of these 3 are reasonable but they all have their flaws: -
 - Decent support for partner, so 3♦ cannot be wrong. But 4 card support would be nice.
 - A balanced 13 count, so 2NT (12-14) cannot be wrong.
 - A bit weak, so 2♥ in preference to 2NT. Some would bid this, but it's a poor suit.
 And me? I would not argue with any of these bids (I'm an easy goin' guy), but I slightly prefer my partner's choice of 3♦.
- (3) You (I mean me, i.e. East) started off with the intention of bidding 3♥ now, I don't see that partner's choice of a 3♦ rebid has changed anything. Hans sees it differently. He said that I should bid 4♥ as partner's response has improved my hand. Let's see; the East hand has 8 losers (2 in each suit), if partner covers 5 of them then 4♥ makes. Partner has shown no more than a minimum hand so far, it is *very* unlikely that he can cover 5 of these losers if he is going to pass 3♥.

As I said, I think that East's bidding is fine, so how good is a 4♥ contract on this hand? Hans says that it is good and that 4♥ only failed because there was an adverse 4-1 trump split (thus losing 2 ♠'s and 2 ♥'s). He cynically added that I did not look at the hand closely to see why 4♥ failed. Really??? Let's see who did not look closely, 4♥ is a *very* poor contract. You have 3 automatic losers (2 ♠'s and 1 ♥). To make 4♥ you need ♣K onside, ♦K onside and trumps split exactly 3-2. I make that about a 15% proposition. With just one thing 'wrong' it goes one down, with two things 'wrong' then 4♥ is two down. To say nothing of a possible 5-0 trump break or being doubled (note that the hand is missing important trumps – the Q,J, and 10). Now Hans is welcome to continue to bid 15% games (please do when I am the opposition), but please don't try to tell me that I should do so.

One final point. As I said, the East hand has 8 losers and with only 3 trumps many people would consider that it is only worth a raise to 2♥ (I would not argue – the (delayed) raise to 3♥ is perhaps a slight overbid). I think either is fine but bidding 4♥ is just silly.

Finally (I really mean that this time), think about what a 3♥ bid at (3) means. It says 'I have invitational values (+- 11 points), a ♦ suit and 3 card ♥ support, it's up to you'. Doesn't that sum up the East hand in a nutshell?? I believe that the East hand is minimum for this bid. Bridge is a partnership game, and it relies upon good co-operative bidding. Some person(s) simply do not understand that and bid like a bull in a china shop.

A terrible Pre-empt

Board 27 from Monday 11th

South (F) Ian opened this hand with 3♣. I went over this in some detail in news-sheet 48 when he bid 3♣ on a similar hand. This is a very poor bid for a number of reasons: -

- ♠ A52
 - ♥ 9854
 - ♦ -
 - ♣ Q98762
- 1- only a 6 card suit, and a very weak one at that.
2- if partner has ♥'s or ♠'s then this hand plays very well in either.
3- if the opponents end up in a ♥ or a ♠ contract then partner will probably lead a ♣, wouldn't you prefer a ♦?

At What Level Do You Overcall?

Board 10 from Friday 15th, both vul.

You have a ♠ suit and RHO opens 1♣, do you overcall 1♠, 2♠ or 3♠?.

South	West	North	East	South
♠ KJ10852	-	-	1♣	3♠ (1)
♥ Q107	pass	pass	pass	
♦ Q2				
♣ 106				

- (1) A reasonable 6 card suit. N-S were playing strong jump overcalls and so the holder of this hand elected to bid 3♠, reasonable? I don't think so. A 3♠ pre-emptive overcall should be a 7 card suit, and what's more, this hand has decent ♥'s. I can see no reason for bidding anything other than a mundane 1♠. And what if you were playing 2♠ as weak? I would still overcall 1♠, take away the ♥Q and a weak 2♠ overcall would be acceptable, although many (including me) would not bid it vulnerable.

What happened? It was a miserable partscore hand and 3♠ (two down, vulnerable) scored a cold bottom.

Bidding Quiz Solutions

Hand A: I would never pass. Although partner had 4 ♣'s, 1 ♣ was still a miserable contract (minus two). A 1♥ bid is obviously reasonable, but I prefer 1♦.

Hand B: I opened this hand with a strong 1NT. If you choose 1♦ then you have a rebid problem: - Suppose you open 1♦ (perhaps you play a weak 1NT when 1♦ is correct), then what do you do when partner responds 1♠? Playing a weak NT it's easy, 1NT showing 15-16 pts. But playing a strong NT the 1NT rebid shows 12-14 points and this hand is too good. So 2♦? This normally promises a decent 6 card suit. So a reverse into 2♥? It's not really good enough. There is no satisfactory rebid (2♦ is the best of a bad bunch), that's why the (strong) 1NT opener is best. Always think about your rebid before you make your opening bid.

Hand C: 3♥. You cannot bid 2♣ with a view to bidding ♥'s later (even if you thought it was a good idea) as your bid is non-forcing and partner may pass.

Hand D: 3♦. Once you have limited your hand with 1NT then a subsequent new minor suit (2 or 3 level, makes no difference) is weak and demands that partner passes.

Hand E: Pass. You have said your hand and partner wants to play in his long ♦ suit.

Hand F: Pass. 3♣ is a terrible bid.

Hand G: 3♥. Partner's ♦ support is not enough to make this hand worth a game bid.

Hand H: Jon was my opponent here and he had a very easy solution. Ask for aces (two), kings (two), count the tricks (12, 13 if the ♦'s produce 5 tricks) and bid 7NT. If the ♦'s don't behave there must be another chance for a 13th trick. Good stuff Jon, but why do it against me? Two pairs reached 6NT (reasonable but rather pessimistic. Much better, however, than the two pairs that ended up in miserable ♣ contracts. Opener has not even promised 4 ♣'s and playing in ♣'s (five, six or seven) with this poor suit is just silly.

Last week's winners: Monday 18/11/03

Friday 22/11/03

1st Bengt/Ken 58%
 2nd Phillip/Jeff 57%

1st Phillip/Jeff 57%
 2nd John G/Terry 51%

Bidding Quiz**Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A Hand B

♠ A ♠ A54
 ♥ 1086432 ♥ 107
 ♦ KJ6 ♦ AK9872
 ♣ 643 ♣ A7

With Hand A LHO opens 1NT and RHO bids 2♦ (xfer). Obviously you pass, LHO bids 2♥ and RHO raises to 4♥, what is your bid?

Hand C Hand D

♠ KQ10653 ♠ 953
 ♥ 9 ♥ AKQJ5
 ♦ KJ87 ♦ 52
 ♣ A5 ♣ 1092

With Hand C partner opens 1♥, you bid 1♠ and partner rebids 2♣. What do you bid?

With Hand D partner opens 1NT and you transfer with 2♦. But what is your bid after partner's expected 2♥ reply?

Hand E Hand F

♠ 9752 ♠ 4
 ♥ Q10753 ♥ AQ942
 ♦ 72 ♦ KQ103
 ♣ Q2 ♣ A75

With Hand E partner opens 1♦ (better minor), do you bid or pass?

With Hand F RHO opens 1♥! What do you do?

Hand G Hand H

♠ K74 ♠ Q93
 ♥ A10654 ♥ 2
 ♦ J ♦ QJ62
 ♣ AK109 ♣ J7532

With Hand G you open 1♥ and partner replies 1♠. What is your rebid?

With hand H LHO opens 1♣, partner overcalls 1♠ and RHO bids 2♥. (a) what do you do? *Suppose* that you pass. LHO bids 3♥, partner tries 4♦ and RHO bids 4♥. (b) what now?

Is it Forcing?

Something new this week, I've run out of 'King Arthur' teasers for a while, so how about testing your knowledge on whether some bidding sequences are weak, invitational or forcing – a very important area of Bridge bidding which even the most experienced seem to get wrong. Is the last bid in these sequences weak or forcing? (No opposition bidding).

Sequence J 1♦ - 1♥ - 2NT - 3♥?

Sequence K 1♦ - 1♥ - 2NT - 3♣?

Sequence L 1♥ - 1♠ - 2NT - 3♥?

Sequence M 1♠ - 2NT - 3♣?

Is it Forcing?

There was an interesting hand on Monday that prompted a few (incorrect) statements from one individual about weak/forcing bids after partner has bid 2NT. We shall consider two main sequences (there is no intervention): -

(a) 1x - 1y - 2NT - ? and (b) 1x - 2NT - ?

In sequence (a), 2NT shows 18-19 points (17-19 if you play a weak NT)

In sequence (b), 2NT shows 11-12 points and denies a 4 card major or 3 card support if 'x' was a major suit.

Let's start with Monday's hand. It was played six times and nobody reached the best contract. This is how I think that the bidding should go, a poor 3NT was reached at 4 tables and 1♦ was passed out at the other two: -

Board 19 from Monday 18 th , E-W vul					
North	South (E)	West	North	East	South
♠ KQJ	♠ 9752	-	-	-	pass
♥ J2	♥ Q10753	pass	1♦ (1)	pass	1♥ (2)
♦ AQJ6	♦ 72	pass	2NT (3)	pass	3♥ (4)
♣ AJ84	♣ Q2	pass	pass	pass	

- (1) I would open 1♣, but it appears that most opened 1♦.
- (2) I would never pass 1♦ (or 1♣) with a hand like this with both majors. 1♥ is fine.
- (3) Some players rebid 3NT here. It is best to play 2NT as 18-19 (17-19 if you play a weak NT) and reserve 3NT for hands with a good long suit.
- (4) 3♥ is weak here.

So then, what bids are weak after partner has bid 2NT in sequence (a)? Simple, there are just two, pass and a rebid of responder's suit. Any other bid, *including belated support for opener*, is forcing. And in sequence (b)? The only weak bid here (apart from pass) is a simple rebid of opener's suit, any other bid is forcing.

To summarize, in response to partner's 2NT bid in both of these sequences, everything is forcing except a repeat of your suit (or pass!). This really does make a lot of sense; in both sequences the 2NT bid has advertised values for game unless partner is extremely weak for his bidding so far, to have more than two weak options really is silly as game will be there most of the time. The important thing is to find the best game/slam contract.

Hand N	Now then, let's get serious (perhaps this is for the more advanced bidder?).
♠ 9752	Suppose that you hold this hand as South and the bidding has gone the same
♥ KQ753	(1♦ - 1♥ - 2NT - ?). What do you bid? As I said, 3♥ is weak and you have
♦ K7	values for game. You could just bid 3NT but that could be wrong if partner
♣ 32	has 3♥'s. You do not really want to bid this anaemic ♠ suit, so how do you find
	out if partner does have 3♥'s? Bid 3♣, forcing. This is a form of Checkback, checking if
	partner has 3 card support for your major. With the actual North hand, he would bid 3NT, fine.

Bidding Game With No Support?

Board 5 from Friday 22nd , N-S vul

When you have values for game, you may have to work a little to get to a playable spot: -

North	South (C)	West	North (me)	East	South
♠ -	♠ KQ10653	-	1♥	pass	1♠
♥ AQ1063	♥ 9	pass	2♣	pass	4♠ (1)
♦ A1095	♦ KJ87	pass	pass	pass	
♣ QJ63	♣ A5				

A poor contract that went two off, what went wrong? South has a reasonable 6 card major with 13 points opposite an opener, so just unlucky?

I don't think so. I mentioned bulls and china shops last week, there is absolutely no need to charge into game at (1). The first thing to consider with this South hand is 'do you want to insist upon game?' You do not like partner's two suits and a non-forcing 3♠ would be the choice of many. But with a reasonable 6 card major, going to game is reasonable and then you have to find a forcing bid (2♠ or 3♠ are not forcing), best is 2♦. This happens to be natural, but it is 4th suit forcing; partner would then describe his hand further, he should bid 2NT with a decent ♦ stop and would support ♠'s with something like ♠Ax, ♠Jxx or ♠Jx at a push with no ♦ stop. A subsequent 3♠ by South is then forcing, showing a decent suit and partner should be able to fix the best final game contract (he would support ♠'s with ♠Jx or even a small doubleton). There are various possible ways that the auction may go (I give two examples below) but anything is better than just charging into 4♠ when you know nothing about partner's trumps.

1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3♠ - 3NT or 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♦ - 3♠ - 3NT.

There are various other auctions possible, including landing in a not totally unreasonable 5♦. What happened? 4♠ was two down for a bottom. One pair stopped in 3♠ (reasonable) and the third found the decent 3NT (it made +1).

The bottom line. Take your time, preserve the china.

An Easy Ride

Board 3 from Friday 22nd , E-W vul

North	South (H)	West	North (me)	East	South
♠ AK854	♠ Q93	-	-	-	pass
♥ Q4	♥ 2	1♣	1♠	2♥	pass (1)
♦ A7543	♦ QJ62	3♥	4♦	4♥	pass (2)
♣ 8	♣ J7532	pass	pass	pass	

The same N-S pair. E-W made a comfortable 10 tricks, what went wrong for N-S? 3♠ made +1 at another table and E-W were pushed up to 5♥ (minus one) at the third. The answer is that North made valiant efforts (some would say too pushy), non-vul, on his 13 count without hearing the minutest whisper from partner. But at some stage one simply has to give up. If South, with a singleton in opponent's suit, cannot bid 2♠ at (1), or 4♠ at (2) upon learning about the double fit, then what can one do? Another complete bottom.

The bottom line. Support with support. The law of total tricks dictates that South should bid 2♠ at (1) (8 combined trumps). With a double fit he should most certainly compete to 4♠ at (2). Don't give the opponents easy rides, especially when you are non-vul against vulnerable opponents. Take advantage of the possession of the ♠ suit.

Qui Culpa?

Board 17 from Friday 15th, love all.

Dealer:	♠ KJ7	West (A)	North	East	South (D)
North	♥ 97				
Love all	♦ AQ1098	-	1NT (1)	pass	2♦
	♣ AQ7	pass	2♥	pass	4♥ (2)
		dbl (3)	pass	4♠ (4)	dbl
♠ A	N	♠ Q108642	pass	pass	pass
♥ 1086432	W E	♥ -			
♦ KJ6	S	♦ 743			
♣ 643		♣ KJ85			
	♠ 953				
	♥ AKQJ5				
	♦ 52				
	♣ 1092				

I was asked to comment on this board, no doubt the asker will not like my answer, but then perhaps one should not be so quick to criticise partner if one's own bidding is suspect? 4♠ went 4 down, so -800 for a very poor score. Who was to blame? I like to be fair, and so I will say that the only person who's bidding was sensible was North (it was not him who asked me)! Everybody else contributed to the silly final contract.

- (1) A sound strong 1NT opener, much better than 1♦, do not let a weak doubleton deter you from opening 1NT with a balanced hand within your range; and with tenaces in three suits, North most certainly should strive to be declarer.
 - (2) Just last week I again repeated that with just 5 of the transfer suit, don't rebid them. The correct bid here is 3NT, showing game values and exactly 5♥'s. The fact that the♥'s are very good is largely irrelevant, they will score just as many tricks in NT. Leave it up to partner to convert to 4♥ if he wishes to with 3♥'s.
 - (3) Now this, in my opinion, is the root cause of the ensuing problem. West can count and knows exactly what is going on; he knows that South has 5 good♥'s and that 4♥ is an inferior contract (to 3NT). But why double? Let them play in 4♥, you know that most of the field will be in the superior 3NT (*everybody* else was). 4♥ may go down, in which case you get a top board anyway; and if 4♥ makes (as it should here) then you still get the top board as obviously NT will make the same number or more tricks. But if 4♥ doubled makes then you get zilch. Doubling is a poor bid even if it were not for the unpredictable – North or South may pull it to 4NT, are you going to double that? it makes with an overtrick – or partner (who you know is void in♥'s and must have long♠'s) may pull it.
 - (4) That said, I would never pull the double. West's double says that he can set 4♥ on his own (South is unlimited and you could have zero points for all West knows) – the fact that West cannot set 4♥ is largely irrelevant. So pass and let partner explain his bid after the contract makes and the dust has settled. The bottom lines: -
 - (a) With a 5 card major, a balanced hand and game going values opposite partner's 1NT opening, transfer and then bid 3NT.
 - (b) When you know that the opponents are in an inferior contract, do not double and give them a chance to get off the hook. And if you do double, it helps if you have sufficient to defeat the contract.
 - (c) If partner says that he can defeat the contract on his own, then let him prove it.
- ♠ J109864 Just in case you think that I'm making it up and that I could not resist a
♥ KQ5 double when holding 6 trumps, remember this hand from news-sheet 31?
♦ A (under the title 'How Greedy are You?'). The opponents bid to 4♠ and I
♣ J64 most certainly did not double and let them escape (5♦ was making easily).

A Jump Rebid

Board 7 from Friday 15th , both vul.

A horrible 5♣ contract was reached on this board

South (G)	West	North	East	South
♠ K74	-	-	-	1♥
♥ A10654	pass	1♠	pass	3♣ (1)
♦ J	pass	4♣	pass	4♥ (2)
♣ AK109	pass pass	5♣	pass	pass

5♣ was one off, what went wrong? South's 3♣ rebid at (1) is way over the top, 2♣ is quite sufficient although many may prefer 2♠. Even 2♥ is reasonable (the pair were playing 4 card majors). 3♣ at (1) is forcing (most people say game forcing). I don't like the 4♥ bid at (2) either, if I had got myself into this mess (it most certainly was not me) then I would try 4♠, this miserable ♥ suit is not worth rebidding, especially with decent support for partner.

What happened? 5♣ went one down; two pairs stopped in a sensible 2♣.

When RHO bids Your Suit

Board 1 from Friday 15th , love all

West (F)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 4	♠ Q652	-	pass	pass	1♥
♥ AQ942	♥ 72	dbl (1)	pass	2♠ (2)	pass
♦ KQ103	♦ A87	2NT (3)	pass	3NT	pass
♣ A75	♣ QJ84	pass	pass		

- (1) An excellent 15 points, so what do you do when RHO bids your suit? A double of 1♥ promises 4♠'s or a very good hand, this hand is totally unsuitable for a double. A 1NT overcall (15-18) points is a reasonable possibility (a singleton is OK for a NT overcall, the important thing is to have stop(s) in the suit opened). However, I prefer to wait and see, so my vote goes for pass
- (2) You should respond to partner's double of 1♥ in a similar way as you would if partner had opened (a 4 card) 1♠. So bid ♠'s at the minimum level with 0-9 points and jump in ♠'s with a good 10 - poor 12. I think that 2♠ is a slight overbid here as the suit is weak.
- (3) Now a 1NT overcall is 15-18 points. If you double and then bid NT it shows a hand too good to overcall 1NT immediately (so 19-20 points). Here we see the problem with the initial double at (1).

And what happened? North led a ♠ and 3NT was doomed. At other tables E-W got good scores by simply letting N-S play the hand. The bottom line? Don't be too eager to make a take-out double with an unsuitable hand, and remember that a double of a major suit generally promises 4 cards in the other major.

Your opening 1NT MUST be within your allotted range (and NO singleton).

Hand N	Hand P	On Friday one player opened both (!) of these hands with a strong 1NT. There is little point in me scoring the sessions if people bid like this. One point outside your range is allowed, 3 (with a singleton) or 5 (!) is <u>not</u> . 1NT on these hands is an (inverted) psyche – illegal. And twice in one (18 board) session is way over the top. Now this really messes up the scoring. I will automatically award a zero score for bids like this, so
♠ AQJ	♠ AKQ64	
♥ 87	♥ K	
♦ AK82	♦ KQ83	
♣ AKJ9	♣ K107	

there really is little point in even playing the hand. And to be fair to all the other players, I don't see why opponents should be gifted a top, so they get their average for the board – this only causes ill-feeling. The perpetrator has been warned.

And what should the opening bids have been? Hand N is a balanced 22 count, so an obvious 2NT (or 2♣ followed by 2NT, depending upon your system). Hand P is a not-so-balanced 20; some people will open 2NT with a singleton A or K (it is allowed for 2NT) and that is quite reasonable on this hand. Another sensible alternative is a simple 1♠. The hand is just short of the playing strength for a strong 2♠, but that would be my choice.

Raising Partner's Pre-empt

Board 4 from Friday 15th, both vul

North	South (B)	West	North (me)	East	South (Garry)
♠ J	♠ A54	pass	2♥ (1)	pass	4♥ (2)
♥ KQ9632	♥ 107	pass	pass	pass	
♦ 653	♦ AK9872				
♣ 1084	♣ A7	(1) Weak			

So what can we say about South's 4♥ bid at (2)? Should he have bid 2NT (or a forcing 3♦) in order to find out more about opener's hand? No. 4♥ as chosen by Garry is the best bid. You want to try 4♥ even if partner is minimum. Do not mess about (with 2NT Ogust or whatever), bid 4♥ and be happy to double opponents if they come in. What happened? 4♥ made exactly. One pair played in 2♦ (+2), I guess they don't play weak twos?

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: Pass, opponents are in a bad contract. As the Beatles and Rambo said 'let it be'.
- Hand B: 4♥ (and double if opponents come in). Do not mess about (with 2NT etc).
- Hand C: 3♠ (invitational) or 2♦ (forcing). Do *not* leap off into a possibly silly 4♠.
- Hand D: 3NT. With just 5♥'s and a balanced hand you should not bid 4♥.
- Hand E: You know me by now, I would never pass 1♣ or 1♦ with this hand containing both majors. I would bid 1♥, 3♥ was the best contract.
- Hand F: Pass! With just one♠ you cannot double. 1NT (15-18) is a reasonable alternative but I prefer to pass and await developments.
- Hand G: 2♣ is quite sufficient (2♠ is equally good). 3♣ is over the top.
- Hand H: (a) support partner with 2♠. (b) having been a coward once, bid 4♠ now.
- Sequence J: Weak, although opener may bid 4♥ (but never 3NT) with a suitable hand.
- Sequence K: Forcing. With a weak hand with ♣'s (and ♥'s) responder should pass (or bid 3♥ with 5♥'s). This type of bid is often looking for the 5-3 major fit.
- Sequence L: Forcing. Presumably 3 card support, suggesting 3NT or 4♥; but maybe slam.
- Sequence M: Forcing, natural, a ♣ slam may be there. 4♣ would be asking for aces (4NT would be quantitative) so we need 3♣ as forcing.

Last week's winners: Monday 25/11/03

Friday 29/11/03

1 st	Clive/Hans	69%
2 nd	Jim/Garry	56%

1 st	Clive/Terry	69%
2 nd	Hans/Jan	54%

Well done Clive, two impressive scores. Clive is off on his travels (to Australia this time) and so that gives everybody else a chance to shine. At least he won't get treated like he was in Malaysia (anti-Farang), but then Aussies don't really love the poms do they? (especially after the rugby).

Bidding Quiz**Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1♠, what do you reply.
♠ 74	♠ AQ10532	With Hand B LHO opens 1♥ which RHO raises to 2♥.
♥ 873	♥ 103	You bid 2♠ and LHO bids 3♥, round to you, do you bid again? (vulnerable, pairs)
♦ AKQJ	♦ AK63	
♣ 9842	♣ 6	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C you open 1♠ and LHO overcalls 2♦. Partner bids 2♥ (forcing, a good 5+ card suit). What do you bid?
♠ A10764	♠ 953	
♥ K63	♥ AJ965	With Hand D partner opens 1NT and you transfer with 2♦.
♦ -	♦ KQ2	But what do you do after partner's 2♥? Are you going slamming (4♣ asks for aces)? Or perhaps 4NT quantitative?
♣ KQ653	♣ A9	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E partner opens 3♠ (vul), what do you bid?
♠ A	♠ Q32	
♥ 1032	♥ AJ109	With Hand F LHO opens 1♥, partner doubles and RHO bids 2♥, what do you do?
♦ A2	♦ J732	
♣ AK108653	♣ 96	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1NT, you transfer and partner bids 2♥, what now?
♠ K73	♠ J74	
♥ A10983	♥ K9	You choose to open Hand H with 1♦ (I prefer 1♣ but never mind), LHO overcalls 2♥ (weak) and partner bids 2♠. What do you do now?
♦ J109	♦ AQJ3	
♣ J3	♣ Q873	

Space Filler.

A new patient goes to see a psychiatrist: -

Patient: I have a problem Doc, I can't stop lying.

Psychiatrist: I don't believe you.

Texture!

Hans' favourite word, and it's important on the following two boards: -

Once is Enough

Board 13 from Friday 15th, both vul.

Dealer:	♠ KJ9	West (B)	North	East	South
North	♥ KQ874				
Both vul	♦ 4	-	1♥	pass	2♥
	♣ Q1042	2♠ (1)	3♥ (2)	pass	pass
		3♠ (3)	dbl (4)	pass	pass
		pass			
♠ AQ10532	N				
♥ 103	W E				
♦ AK63	S				
♣ 6					

- (1) Vulnerable, at the two level, you really need a hand as good as this to come in with an unlimited opener on your left.
- (2) This bid is merely competitive. 2NT, 3♣ or 3♦ would be game tries. I would play a double here as penalties or optional (you already have a fit and so there is no need for a take-out double).
- (3) I don't like this, the ♠ suit has no 'body' or texture. This hand has decent defensive values and should pass, especially at this vulnerability.
- (4) A typical pairs double. North (me) expected 3♥ to make, scoring +140. If 3♠ goes minus one then that is just +100, you need to double to get the 'magic' +200. At teams scoring it is different and I would pass with the North hand.

3♠ went minus 1 for a good score to N-S. If west had passed 3♥ then that would have made exactly and the resulting - 140 would have been a good score for E-W. The bottom line? You need a better suit than AQ10532 to venture in at the 3 level vulnerable, especially if you have already bid the suit once and LHO has the power.

Twice, OK. But three times?

Board 8 from Friday 22nd, love all

East	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ6	pass	pass	1♥	2♦
♥ AQ9642	pass	pass	2♥ (1)	3♦
♦ 5	pass	pass	3♥ (2)	pass
♣ K107	pass	dbl	all pass	

- (1) I assume that E-W were not playing negative doubles? Playing negative doubles, a double is 'obligatory' here, certainly with this hand. Anyway, if not playing negative doubles I suppose that 2♥ is OK.
- (2) So what about this bid? Partner has passed throughout and LHO obviously has the lion's share of the outstanding points. To bid this threadbare suit yet again is suicidal. Think about texture (body)! Just think what Hans would say. This suit has more holes than a sieve. Minus 300 was a deserved bottom.

About Transfers

There is no doubt that transfers over partner's 1NT are one of the most powerful bidding tools to be developed 'recently'. The basics are not complicated and really should be learnt. One player got the following two hands wrong on Monday: -

Your Rebid Having Transferred

Board 27 from Monday 25th, love all

West (G)	West	North	East	South
♠ K73	-	-	-	pass
♥ A10983	pass	pass	1NT	pass
♦ J109	2♦	pass	2♥	pass
♣ J3	3♥ (1)	pass	4♥ (2)	all pass

- (1) The following is an **exact** quote from my comments on Hand D from last week:
'Just last week I again repeated that with just 5 of the transfer suit, don't rebid them. The correct bid here is 3NT, showing game values and exactly 5 ♥'s.' Looks like I have to keep plugging away until we get it right? With an excellent ♥ suit and a ♦ holding that is worth more than one point, West has an easy game force, so 3NT.
- (2) West's 3♥ bid at (1) should show 6 ♥'s and invitational values (so 8 points playing a strong NT or 11 points playing a weak NT). East had a max with ♥Kx and so correctly raised to 4♥. 3NT was a better contract (it made +1 at other tables).

About Super-Accepts

Board 10 from Monday 25th, both vul

The same player (South this time) went wrong again here. It is probably best not to play super-accepts until you have completely mastered transfers.

North (D)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 953	♠ AK86	-	-	pass	1NT
♥ AJ965	♥ K87	pass	2♦	pass	3♥ (1)
♦ KQ2	♦ A85	pass	4♣ (2)	pass	4♠
♣ A9	♣ Q62	pass	6♥	all pass	

- (1) A super-accept. I covered the various options for super-accepting in news sheet 43. Perhaps the simplest is to only super-accept with a maximum and 4 trumps. This South hand fails on both counts, it is minimum with only 3 trumps, and what's more, it's totally flat. Apparently South did not want to bid 2♥ as he was afraid that North might pass – no problem, South has described his hand perfectly with 1NT. North is now the Captain, leave it up to him unless you have something definite to say (i.e. 4 trumps and a maximum).
- (2) Ace ask. With ♥'s agreed I prefer 4NT as the RKCB here (4♣ is then a cue bid).

6♥ failed by one trick. Simply bidding 4♥ (1NT - 2♦ - 2♥ - 3NT - 4♥) would have scored a joint top as two tables were in 3NT. So, in this recommended sequence should South convert 3NT to 4♥ with this flat hand? With 4 ♥'s he should, with 2 ♥'s it's best to pass 3NT. With 3 ♥'s it's debatable, my personal opinion is to convert to 4♥ with 3 to an honour (A,K or Q) and play in NT if all the points are spread outside the trump suit.

Getting Too High

Board 3 from Monday 25th, E-W vul

There was a mixed bag of final contracts by N-S on this board (2NT, 2♥, 2♠ and passed out). This was the bidding I saw at one table.

North	South (A)	West	North	East	South
♠ J10863	♠ 74	-	-	-	pass
♥ QJ	♥ 873	pass	1♠ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♦ 3	♦ AKQJ	pass	2NT	pass	pass
♣ AK1053	♣ 9842	pass			

- (1) I have mentioned the opening bid when 5-5 in the black suits a few times, opinion is divided. 1♠ is often chosen, but then you have a rebid problem if partner replies with 2♦ or 2♥. 3♣, of course, would be game forcing and so you have to choose between 2♠ and 2NT. This ♠ suit is a miserable suit to rebid and 2NT is certainly no thing of beauty. One solution is to open 1♣ when the ♠ suit is miserable; you then have no rebid problem (1♠) but you may miss a 5-3 ♠ fit. I would open this hand 1♣ unless I was playing 2/1 (when 1♠ - 2♦/♥ - 3♣ would not promise a strong hand).
- (2) I have said on umpteen occasions that you need 11 points (or a *good* 10) to reply with a new suit at the two level when you play a strong NT. This South hand is not good enough (add a 5th ♦ and it would be). 2♦ is, of course, doubly bad as it indicates more ♦'s than ♣'s – a bit of a shame as partner had a ♣ suit. This hand clearly demonstrates why 10 points is not enough, if opener rebids 2NT on a 12 – 13 count (or even a shapely 11 as here) then 2NT will probably be too high. The correct response to 1♠ with this hand is 1NT. This would have worked out very well here and partner would have rebid 2♣. So, it was played 4 times and nobody landed in 2♣, shame on you.

And what happened? 2NT went minus one, as did 2♠ (1♠ - 2♦ - 2♠) bid at another table. One player passed the North hand, a reasonable option but I would open 1♣ (the bidding then goes 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♣ - pass) unless playing 2/1 (open 1♠). And what about that silly 2♥ contract? That was, of course, Ian - simply trying to be clever. And why bid 2♥? He was playing with Mike and Mike asked me what he should bid as South (pointing to his ♦ suit). I said that he could not bid a suit at the two level as he had insufficient points and that 1NT was correct. He bid 1NT and the next hand overcalled 2♦, so an excellent result for N-S? NO!! Ian (North) just had to demonstrate how clever he is; he had heard what I had said and tried to take full advantage of it. Figuring that partner had a suit and that it was unlikely to be ♣'s or ♦'s, he bid 2♥ (thus scoring a frigid bottom). Totally ridiculous of course, but also TOTALLY unethical. I have warned Ian about this type of behaviour before. My policy is to help beginners but I will be unable to assist anybody in future if Ian is their partner.

The bottom line (ignoring Ian). It does not really matter what your policy of opening with these 5-5 hands is, that was not the root cause of getting too high here. The problem is the one which I see every week, bidding at the two level with insufficient values when playing a strong NT. You need 11 points (or a *good* 10), do not listen to people who say ten is enough, a poor 10 (like this South hand) is not, you need a decent five card suit (or decent 3 card support for partner's major) to venture at the two level with just 10 points, this board demonstrates why – you have to be able to cope with a 2NT rebid from opener. If your partner cannot understand that bidding at the two level on hands like this is poor bidding (some do it week after week), then open 1♣! An excellent reason for not playing 4 card majors with a strong NT (keep the bidding low, only open 1♥/♠ with 5 cards).

An Easy Slam Missed by Everybody

Board 14 from Friday 15th, love all

North	South (C)	West	North	East	South
♠ 9	♠ A10764	-	-	pass	1♠ (1)
♥ AJ10852	♥ K63	2♦	2♥ (2)	pass	4♥ (3)
♦ A103	♦ -	pass	pass	pass	
♣ A42	♣ KQ653				

- (1) Many players prefer 1♣ to 1♠ when 5-5 in the black suits. I have no problem with either (I stated my preference earlier).
- (2) 2♥ here is forcing of course and shows a good 5+ card suit with 10+ points.
- (3) You want to be in game (the ♦ overcall has improved your hand immensely), so bid it? That's what all four South's did on Friday, but is it the best bid?

6♥ is obviously an easy contract (7♥ made), but how do you reach slam? The answer is that South must splinter with 4♦ at (3), showing ♥ support, values for game and shortage (singleton or void) in ♦'s. I know it's only 12 points and 3 card support, but look at those top cards and the void in opponent's suit. Partner has promised a 5+ card suit and 5-3 fits play well when you get ruffs with the short hand. North will settle for 4♥ with a minimum or if he doesn't like ♦ shortage, he has a simple 6♥ bid here. Splinters really are worth mastering.

Is It Forcing or Just a Noise?

Board 2 from Friday 15th, N-S vul.

It really is worth knowing which bids are weak, invitational or forcing. I gave a brief summary in new-sheet 48 for when there is no interference. But what if opponents interfere?

South (H)	West	North	East	South
♠ J74	-	-	pass	1♦ (1)
♥ K9	2♥ (2)	2♠ (3)	pass	pass (4)
♦ AQJ3	pass			
♣ Q873				

- (1) I prefer 1♣ when 4-4 in the minors, but others prefer 1♦, so OK.
- (2) Weak
- (3) Now then, is 2♠ here weak, invitational or forcing? Standard is that it is 100% forcing with a good (5+ card) suit (as in the example above with the 2♥ bid).
- (4) South cannot pass. He has 3 reasonable alternatives, they are simply the same bid as he would have made if there was no interference and partner had responded 1♠ (although one level higher). Do not worry that you are up a level, partner has forced you to bid this high, trust him. So what do you rebid? 2NT, 3♣, or 3♠?

Presumably South opened 1♦ (and not 1♣) with the intention of rebidding 2♣? If so then 3♣ now is consistent but I would assume a 5 card ♦ suit. So 2NT? with a ♥ stop, quite reasonable. Or 3♠? Equally good, partner has promised a good 5+ card suit and this support is adequate. Anyway, I would not particularly argue with any of these bids, *but do not pass!*
And what happened? Partner had a 13 count, an easy 3NT was missed.

When Partner Doubles

Board 21 from Friday 22nd , N-S vul

West	East (F)	West	North	East	South
♠ A1084	♠ Q32	-	pass	pass	1♥
♥ 4	♥ AJ109	dbl (1)	2♥	dbl (2)	pass
♦ AK108	♦ J732	pass	pass		
♣ Q854	♣ 96				

2♥ made comfortably, what went wrong for E-W?

- (1) A classic take-out double.
- (2) A double here is best played as responsive, asking partner to pick the suit and (in the case of a double of 1♥) promising both minors and (usually) exactly 3 ♠'s. E-W had not agreed this and this double was for penalties. A poor bid. 2NT is a possible bid, but it really is not strong enough (East would bid 1NT if North had not raised). Pass is obviously a very sensible option, but so is 2♠. A moysian fit, but it should play reasonably well and E-W were non-vul. Who knows, bid 2♠ and N-S may just bid on to 3♥? I prefer 2♠ to 3♦ as the 3 level really is too high.

Raising Partner's Pre-empt

Board 16 from Friday 29th, E-W vul

West	East (E)	West (Ian)	North	East (Mike)	South
♠ KQJ8753	♠ A	3♠	pass	4♠ (1)	pass
♥ 54	♥ 1032	pass	pass		
♦ J75	♦ A2				
♣ 2	♣ AK108653				

- (1) Nice to see a sound pre-empt from Ian. Some would not pre-empt with this hand at unfavourable vulnerability but I would (this suit is classic), points in the right places.
- (2) This really is an excellent bid with this hand. You have a 7-1 major suit fit and 4♠ should be a doddle. Well bid Mike. The board was played at two other tables, once in 5♣ (minus 3) and once in 5♠ (doubled, minus one). Presumably East kept on bidding ♣'s? It really is silly to even mention this ♣ suit, the ♠A is excellent support for a 7 card suit and 10 tricks are easier than 11. Also, this East hand will provide 4 (maybe more) tricks for West's ♠ contract (note that the West hand provides nothing for a ♣ contract by East).

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 1NT. Not enough for a 2 level response. 2♦ is a doubly poor bid as it indicates longer ♦'s than ♣'s.

Hand B: Pass. The suit is not good enough to bid again at the three level.

Hand C: Bid 4♦, a splinter showing ♦ shortage and ♥ support. 4♥ is rather feeble and 3♥ would be pathetic.

Hand D: 3NT. It's not quite good enough for slam unless partner super-accepts.

Hand E: 4♠. Don't bother to bid the ♣ suit.

Hand F: 2♠ or pass are OK. 2NT and 3♦ are overbids, but far better than double.

Hand G: 3NT. You have values for game and rebidding ♥'s would show a 6 card suit.

Hand H: 2NT, 3♣ or 3♠, I don't care. Anything, *but do not pass!*

Last week's winners: Monday 1/12/03

Friday 5/12/03

1st Norman/Dave 69%
 2nd Clive/Hans 65%

1st Terry/Kaj 63%
 2nd Joe/Don 53%

Bidding Quiz**Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A

Hand B

With Hand A you open 1♣, LHO overcalls 1♦, partner bids 1♥ and RHO bids 2♦. All the bids have improved your hand immensely, so what is your bid now?

♠ 10864
 ♥ AKJ7
 ♦ 7
 ♣ AKQ4

♠ KJ73
 ♥ A97
 ♦ Q1062
 ♣ K7

With Hand B RHO opens a weak 2♥, what do you bid?

Hand C

Hand D

With Hand C partner opens 1♣, what is your response?

♠ AK2
 ♥ 832
 ♦ 954
 ♣ AK43

♠ 1043
 ♥ K8
 ♦ 9
 ♣ KQJ9876

With Hand D partner opens 1♦ and RHO doubles (take-out). What do you do?

Hand E

Hand F

With Hand E partner opens a strong NT, Do you transfer or simply pass with this weak heap?

♠ J96
 ♥ 108542
 ♦ J9
 ♣ 852

♠ 2
 ♥ J653
 ♦ QJ108654
 ♣ 5

With Hand F LHO opens 1♦ and partner doubles (take-out). If RHO passes what would you do?

Hand G

Hand H

I made up these last two hands. I have included them because it is clear (when you read this news-sheet) that bidding after the opponents have made a take-out double needs to be explained. I will produce something on this topic soon, but for now test your knowledge with these two. With both of these hands partner opens 1♥ and RHO doubles, what is your bid?

♠ KJ94
 ♥ 5
 ♦ KJ94
 ♣ KJ94

♠ 5
 ♥ KJ954
 ♦ J54
 ♣ 7654

Is It Forcing?

West

North

East

South

Sequence J

1♣
 2♠ (J)

1♦

1♥

2♦

Is West's 2♠ at (J) weak, invitational or forcing?

West

North

East

South

Sequence K

1♦

dbl

2♣ (K)

Is East's 2♣ at (K) weak, invitational or forcing?

Is it Forcing?

First of all, two basic auctions (no opposition bidding): -

(a) 1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ and (b) 1♣ - 1♥ - 2♠

The 1♠ bid in (a) can be anything from 11 to about 17 points, it is non-forcing.

The 2♠ bid in (b) is forcing, say 18-20 points.

Hand L	Hand M	Hand N	You are dealer with each of these hands.
♠ AJ107	♠ AK107	♠ AKQ7	In all cases you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♥.
♥ 74	♥ Q4	♥ K6	With Hand L you rebid 1♠
♦ 54	♦ 54	♦ 54	With Hand M you rebid 1♠
♣ AQ975	♣ AQ975	♣ AKJ75	With Hand N you rebid 2♠, forcing.

That's all quite simple, but consider the case when there is opposition bidding, this sequence occurred on Monday.

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♦	1♥	2♦
2♠ (1)			

So which of the three hands above would qualify for the 2♠ bid here at (1)? With Hand L you have a minimum opener and it is probably best to convey that message by passing. With Hand M you certainly want to bid and 2♠ is 'obvious'. Thus this 2♠ bid cannot now be forcing – opponents are pushing you and it is competitive. So what do you bid now with Hand N? You need to find a forcing bid; 3♠ is forcing but I prefer double – opponents have agreed ♦'s and so this is not penalties, it shows 4 ♠'s and offers partner a choice of strains. With 3 ♥'s I would support partner's ♥'s.

Find a forcing bid

Board 1 from Monday 1st , love all.

As I have said many times, when you have support for partner's major it is often best to bid another suit and subsequently raise partner. It is, however, important to be sure that your bid is forcing. Also, it is very dangerous to bid a major suit, especially ♠'s (they are higher ranking than partner's ♥'s and partner may pass or subsequently put you back into ♠'s).

West (A)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 10864	♠ Q95	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ AKJ7	♥ Q653	1♣	1♦	1♥	2♦
♦ 7	♦ J10	2♠ (1)	pass	pass (2)	pass
♣ AKQ4	♣ J976				

4♥ is a very reasonable contract (♠J was onside and so it makes unless opponents find a ♠ ruff). A ♠ contract is silly, so what went wrong in the bidding?

- (1) West assumed that this was forcing, intending to bid ♥'s next time.
- (2) with his minimum and good ♠ support, East was happy to pass.

In my opinion the fault lies with West, 2♠ (as I explained in the previous section) is not obviously forcing and East's pass is understandable, although 3♣ is a reasonable alternative. So what should West bid at (1)? There is no point in introducing the ♠ suit (3♠ would be forcing).

Another forcing bid is 3♦; and also double would be for take out. All rather silly as there is a great ♥ fit. So bid 4♥? A very sensible bid. However, those of you who have digested recent news-sheets will know the best bid – 4♦, a splinter, agreeing ♥'s and showing ♦ shortage. Even with a passed hand opposite, there could be a slam. With this minimal hand East would, of course, sign off in 4♥.

A Take-out Double?

Board 15 from Friday 5th, N-S vul.

North (B)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ KJ73	♠ Q98	-	-	-	pass
♥ A97	♥ J2	2♥ (1)	dbl (2)	pass	3♣ (3)
♦ Q1062	♦ A843	pass	pass	pass	
♣ K7	♣ 8432				

- (1) Weak.
- (2) A take-out double.
- (3) Nothing is attractive, but South has to bid. The cheapest 4 card suit is recommended.

So, a very silly contract that went minus 5 for a cold bottom. Anyone to blame? Yes. The double at (2) is a very poor bid. A take-out double needs to be playable in the other three suits (or strong enough to bid again if partner chooses your weak suit). This North hand should simply pass (especially vulnerable when partner is a passed hand).

3NT is usually better than 5 of a minor

Board 9 from Friday 5th, E-W vul.

West (C)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AK2	♠ 8	-	pass	1♣ (1)	pass
♥ 832	♥ AK75	2NT (2)	pass	3♦ (3)	pass
♦ 954	♦ AK82	5♣ (4)	pass		
♣ AK43	♣ 10965				

- (1) Hans and myself actually agree here, we both prefer 1♣ when 4-4 in the minors.
- (2) This should be 11-12 points (and denying a 4 card major). Non-forcing.
- (3) forcing
- (4) I would not have bid like West has, but surely 3NT must be best now?

So, a very silly contract that made +1 because the ♣QJ were doubleton. 3NT is far superior (it makes +1 for the same reason but scores more). So what can we say about the bidding? As I said, the 1♣ opening is fine, but what should West respond at (2)?

2NT is incorrect as it is non-forcing and this hand is too strong. So 3NT? An excellent choice, it shows about 13-15 points and no 4 card major, usually exactly 3334 shape (in that order); but I prefer 1♦ (it's OK to 'lie' in a minor). The reason I prefer to take it slowly instead of a direct 3NT is the ♦ *and* ♥ weaknesses. After a 1♦ response, East would then bid 1♥ and then West bids 3NT with a fair degree of confidence.

In the actual auction 3♦ at (3) is forcing but I don't like it as it implies more ♣'s than ♦'s. I would punt 3NT at (3). But, as I said, the auction should go 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 3NT.

The bottom line? 3NT is usually better than 5 of a minor – especially when you have *two* stops in *every* suit!

A Two-level Response after an Intervening Double

Board 12 from Friday 15th

Dealer:	♠ KQJ93	West	North	East (D)	South (F)
West	♥ Q1092				
N-S vul	♦ -	1♦	dbl	2♣	etc...
	♣ A1032				

... to 3NT by E-W which went one down.

♠ A876	N	♠ 1043
♥ A74	W E	♥ K8
♦ AK732	S	♦ 9
♣ 4		♣ KQJ9876
	♠ 2	
	♥ J653	
	♦ QJ108654	
	♣ 5	

This was the bidding at a two tables on Friday and I have no problem with it. Hans, however, does. At the end of the session he criticised East's 2♣ bid in front of an 'audience' of half a dozen or so players, saying that 2♣ here shows 10+ points, is unlimited and forcing. He said that the East hand should pass as there is no fit, adding

that after North has doubled East has no obligation to bid with a mis-fit.

This was more than I could take. I came to East's defence, saying that East's 2♣ bid was fine. A heated conversation along the following lines ensued (I have added the italicised comments in brackets for clarity): -

Hans: 2♣ is fine? really?? So what **exactly** does this 2♣ bid show??? **I want to know!**

Terry: About 7 – a poor 10 points, a good 5+ (at least) ♣ suit and obviously non-forcing (*with more values one would re-double*).

Hans: Utter nonsense. That is not any system that I have ever heard of. The bid shows 10+ points, unlimited, could be a 4 card suit and is forcing (*just the same as if there had been no double*).

So, two **totally** opposite opinions. I'm sure that Hans will agree that one of us certainly is talking absolute nonsense. Let's clear up who: -

First of all, what is this system that Hans has never heard of? Well; I maintain that it is Acol, or Standard American, or any other basically natural system that you care to name. Moreover, whether you play a strong or weak NT is irrelevant for this sequence. A couple of quotes should suffice (both refer to non jumps): -

'A new suit at the two level after the take-out double is non-forcing. It is a correction by responder who will have very limited values, no fit for opener's suit and at least 5 cards in the suit of the response.' – Standard Bidding for the 21st century – Max Hardy.

'A two-level bid in a new suit after an intervening double shows a goodish 5 card or longer suit and 6-9 points; non-forcing.' – Acol in Competition – Eric Crowhurst.

So then, pretty clear in Standard American and Acol – I have no idea what system Hans plays. Hans believes that East should pass with this hand. Presumably South and West then both pass and E-W should take their medicine like grown men? Note that this South hand is one of those rare ones when you can convert a one level take-out double into penalties, although bidding 1♥ is also an acceptable bid for South.

The bottom line. If one wishes to continually criticise others and tell them how to bid, it really does help if you know what you are talking about. Furthermore, if anyone tells me in front of an audience that I play a system that they have never heard of, expect to get the answer back in full in the next news-sheet. '*Be prepared*' – Baden Powell.

A Solid Lead Board 5 from Friday 15th Nov, N-S vul

South	West	North	East	South
♠ K95	-	1 ♠	pass	2 ♣
♥ A2	dbl	3 ♣	3 ♥	4 ♠
♦ Q72	5 ♥	dbl	pass	pass
♣ QJ1064	pass			

So what can we say about South's bidding? I think it's fine, he has shown his ♣ suit, 3 card ♠ support and game values. Excellent. Partner has elected to go for the penalty, so what do you lead? Answer at the bottom of this page.

What do you open? Board 9 from Monday 25th Nov, E-W vul

North There was a discussion on Monday 25th about the best opening bid with this hand. Assuming Standard American then it's not clear. The hand is not worth 2 ♣, so 1 ♦ or 2NT? 2NT is 20-21(22) and a (high) singleton is acceptable for a 2NT opening. I would not argue if my partner chose either but I would open 2NT, especially with a partner who is prone to pass 1 ♦ with an 'unsuitable' hand and 4-5 points. But what if you play strong two's? Easy, 8 playing tricks so open a strong 2 ♦. And what if you play Benjamin two's? Not quite so clear, a strong ♦ hand is shown by the sequence 2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♦ and as you are at the 3 level, 9 playing tricks are needed. This hand is about 8 ½ playing tricks, so slightly short. With the nice controls and good ♦ suit (texture!), I would open this hand with a Benjy 2 ♣. The main problem is that if you end up in NT then the wrong hand (partner) may be declarer. Still, you can't have everything and the sequence is quite likely to go 2 ♣ - 2 ♦ - 3 ♦ - 3 ♠ - 3NT and so no problem.

Passing Partner's Better Minor? Board 6 from Friday 15th Nov, E-W vul.

West	East	
♠ 10973	♠ Q2	This board was played 3 times on Friday and each time the opening bid by East (1 ♣, 1 ♦ and a weak 1NT) was passed out. 1 ♦ was a poor score. Was anyone at fault? First of all, I always prefer to open 1 ♣ when equal length in the minors, but that is perhaps personal preference although there are a number of sound reasons why it is best. Anyway, should West pass an opening bid of 1 ♣ or 1 ♦? Passing 1 ♣ is a close call, you have ♣'s and so there is no real reason to bid. However 1 ♥ is perhaps reasonable. So passing 1 ♣ is fine (I would), but what about a 1 ♦ opening? Playing better minor it could be 3 cards and I would never pass with this hand (although many would). 1 ♥ is my choice. A 1NT rebid then lands in a good spot. What happened? 1 ♣ and 1NT went minus 1 but 1 ♦ was minus 2 for a bottom.
♥ 10973	♥ J84	
♦ 64	♦ AK85	
♣ KQ5	♣ A942	

A Solid Lead Answer to the lead problem above.

South actually led a small ♠ and East held ♠ AQ, so the contract was just 3 off (+500) instead of minus 4 (+800). As 4 ♠ makes exactly (+620) this converted a cold top into a cold bottom. Was South just unlucky? No. The correct lead stands out a mile, partner's 1 ♠ opening does not promise the ♠ A or the ♠ Q (he had Jxxxx), the clear safe lead is ♣ Q. The bottom line? Leading (top) from a sequence is usually good, especially if partner has supported the suit.

Transfer with a weak hand?

Board 9 from Friday 29th, E-W vul

It is probably even more important to transfer when you hold a weak hand opposite partner's 1NT than when you hold a stronger one: -

North	South (E)	West	North	East	South
♠ K1083	♠ J96	-	1NT	pass	pass (1)
♥ AQ7	♥ 108542	pass			
♦ K86	♦ J9				
♣ KQ4	♣ 852				

1NT really was a nightmare for North to play (I know – I was North) – no communication to dummy.

Playing in ♥'s this dummy will provide two or three tricks – it was useless in NT. So it may turn out to be a 5-2 fit, even that will usually play better than 1NT. South must transfer.

And what happened? 1NT went 1 down, and it went 3 down at another table (presumably the same bidding?). At a third table they got too high in a 3♥ contract by North (minus 1). As North was declarer, it must have been via a transfer but why they got to the 3 level baffles me. A super-accept? The North hand is maximum but you should only super-accept with a max and 4 card support, this deal demonstrates why – partner may be bust.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 4♦, a splinter agreeing ♥'s and showing ♦ shortage. Bid 4♥ if you (or your partner) do not yet understand splinters.
- Hand B: Pass. Not good enough for 2NT and not shapely/strong enough for double.
- Hand C: I would bid 1♦ although 3NT is not wrong. But 2♣, 3♣ and 2NT are all incorrect as they are not forcing.
- Hand D: 2♣, non-forcing. You can redouble with 9 points but I would like a little more in at least one major suit. Pass could be a disaster if LHO also passes. Actually, I prefer 3♣ with this hand if you have agreed that it is a weak bid.
- Hand E: Transfer. This hand is probably useless in a NT contract. Even a 5-2 ♥ fit will probably play better in 2♥ than 1NT, and partner may have 3,4 or 5 ♥'s!
- Hand F: Pass or 1♥. This hand is one of those *very rare* cases when it is OK to convert partner's take-out double at the one level into penalties. 1♥ is also fine.
- Hand G: Redouble. This shows 9+ points and (generally) no fit for partner. It often means (as in this example) that you wish to double the opponents in their final resting place (hopefully the graveyard).
- Hand H: Do not redouble just because you know that 1♥ doubled will make!! If you pathetically redouble in the (mis)belief that this shows ♥'s then what are you going to say to partner after opponents easily bid and make their 4♠ contract? With support for partner, raise him as high as you dare after a double. I would bid 4♥ with this hand (law of total tricks) but for the feint hearted I guess that 3♥ is OK, 2♥ is far too feeble for me. I cannot find a suitable adjective for pass (I will give you a few lessons if you chose pass).
- Sequence J: I would say invitational, I made my case earlier. I guess that one could make a case for it being forcing but I would not make the bid with a strong hand unless that had definitely been agreed (one can always double and subsequently bid ♠'s if necessary with a strong hand).
- Sequence K: Weak, non-forcing (about 7-9 pts). Generally a good suit with shortness in partner's suit when a complete pass-out of the double would be disastrous.

Last week's winners: Monday 8/12/03

Friday 12/12/03

1st Knut/Rolf 62%
 2nd Johannes/Bjarne 61%

1st = Hans/Jan 64%
 1st = Chuck/Terry

Three Scandinavian pairs boosted the Monday numbers up to 7 tables. The 'home team' managed to stop a complete route by the Viking visitors with an excellent 59% by our most consistent pair, Jeff and Philip, in the Bronze medal position. In the past I have always played a Mitchell (N-S stationary) with 7 tables (it is far easier for the director; 4 boards a round and only half the field moving just 6 times). This time I experimented with a 7 table Howell which is fairer (and more sociable) in that all pairs play all other pairs; the drawback is that there is a lot of moving (with just two boards a round).

Which movement do you prefer? Let me know. If there is a sit-out (6 ½ tables) then obviously the Howell is better as one's sit-out is then just two boards, and everybody sits out as opposed to 50%. With 7½ or more table then a Mitchell is mandatory.

Onto current affairs. Three Western tourists kidnapped near the Iran/Pakistan border and a few million \$ asked in ransom. I would be most upset if my government paid a Baht. If people wish to visit these problem areas (Columbia etc) on holiday, it's up to them; I don't see why taxpayers should pay a cent for their stupidity. The same applies to the stupid man who's aeroplane ran out of fuel over the Antarctic.

Bidding Quiz**Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens a strong NT. Suppose that you ask for aces (partner has none), then what final contract would you be aiming for?
♠ QJ	♠ A10965	
♥ AJ	♥ J9	
♦ AQ87653	♦ J753	Both vul. With Hand B RHO passes as do you. LHO bids 1♣, partner bids 1♠ and RHO bids 2♦, what do you do?
♣ A6	♣ Q8	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C RHO opens 1♦, what is your bid?
♠ J87	♠ 743	
♥ A532	♥ A93	With Hand D you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♦. Obviously you rebid 1NT. But what if RHO had overcalled 1♠? Same bid regardless?
♦ A94	♦ KQ4	
♣ Q65	♣ A743	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E LHO opens 1♠, partner overcalls 1NT (15-18) and RHO bids 2♠. What do you do? And what would 3♣ by you mean. Natural? – (Weak? Forcing?) or Stayman?
♠ 98	♠ AQ1053	
♥ QJ82	♥ A10	
♦ 106	♦ J754	With Hand F you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT. Do you pass or bid something?
♣ A9832	♣ K10	
Hand G	Hand H	With Hand G partner opens 1♦ and RHO doubles. What do you do?
♠ A1093	♠ KQJ73	
♥ 6	♥ Q1065	With Hand H RHO opens 1♣, what is your bid?
♦ J10853	♦ 86	
♣ K107	♣ K3	

6NT scores more than 6 of a minorBoard 22 from Monday 8th, E-W vul.

North (A)	South	West	North (me)	East	South
♠ QJ	♠ K108	-	-	pass	1NT
♥ AJ	♥ KQ7	pass	4♣ (1)	pass	4♦
♦ AQ87653	♦ K2	pass	6NT	pass	pass
♣ A6	♣ KJ1085	pass			

(1) Gerber

I was North, playing with an unfamiliar partner. Even so, it seemed straightforward to me; ask for aces and bid 6 or 7NT accordingly. I can see no point in ending up in ♦'s in a pairs competition. And what happened? At our table the opponents took their ♠ A at trick one and partner claimed the rest. The board was played 6 other times and just one other pair (Johannes/Bjarne) bid 6NT (+1). When you have a long suit and plenty of stops, 6NT is nearly always better than 6 of a suit as it scores more. 6 of a suit will normally only be better if there is a *fit* and you get an extra trick with a ruff. And what happened? Just two pairs bid 6NT, one bid 6♦ and **four** pairs failed to even bid slam!

A Take-out Double - and then what?Board 23 from Monday 8th

Dealer:	♠ 62	West	North	East (C)	South (G)
South	♥ K1084				
Both vul	♦ KQ72	-	-	-	pass
	♣ AJ2	pass	1♦ (1)	dbl (2)	pass (3)
		pass (4)	pass		
♠ KQ54	N	♠ J87	A very silly final contract that made +3 (an off-the-scale top for N-S, vulnerable doubled overtricks are 200 a time). So what went wrong with the bidding?		
♥ QJ97	W E	♥ A532			
♦ 6	S	♦ A94			
♣ 9843		♣ Q65			
	♠ A1093				
	♥ 6				
	♦ J10853				
	♣ K107				

(1) 4+ ♦'s

(2) A poor double. It is not short in ♦'s and has miserable major suits. I would pass.

(3) Pass cannot be correct here. I would bid 1♠ (natural, 6-9 points) but a pre-emptive 3♦ is perhaps not totally unreasonable (it is correct without 4♠'s).

(4) This is terrible. E-W were a first time partnership and presumably West thought that East's bid was penalties?? 1♥ is correct here, but having already passed then 2♦ (or even a splinter of 3♦, agreeing either major in this case) are reasonable. But not, of course, if partner doubles with hands like this East one.

The bottom lines. A take-out double (as I have emphasised on many occasions) is not just any opening hand. Unless it is very strong, it needs to be short in the suit opened. That was not the cause of this disaster however, it is *virtually never* correct to pass a take-out double at the one level. In last week's Hand F, even ♦ QJ108654 (as Hans pointed out) is insufficient to defeat 1♦ doubled with best declarer play.

One does not have to rebid if RHO intervenesBoard 6 from Friday 5th, E-W vul.

West	East (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ 98	♠ 743	-	-	1♣	pass
♥ J4	♥ A93	1♦ (1)	1♠	1NT (2)	2♠
♦ A107	♦ KQ4	3♠ (3)	dbl	pass	pass
♣ KQJ852	♣ A743	4♣ (4)	pass	pass	pass

- (1) West's response to a 1♣ opening is interesting on this deal. The hand is too good for 2♣ and (in my opinion) too good for a non-forcing 3♣ (partner needs very little for 3NT to make). I was West and made the 'waiting' bid of 1♦. If you play 'inverted minors' it's easy (bid 2♣, forcing).
- (2) Obviously the correct rebid with no interference. However, after an overcall East is under no obligation to bid. With this minimal flat hand with no ♠ stop East should pass.
- (3) West still figures to make 3NT if East has a ♠ stop, he probably should have for his 1NT bid at (2), but best to check?
- (4) The correct spot is finally reached.

The bottom line. When you don't have to bid (in this case because RHO has intervened) then only bid if you have something definite to say, pass with a flat minimum; partner has another bid.

Stayman etc when RHO intervenes?Board 5 from Friday 12th, both vul

North (E)	West	North (me)	East	South (Chuck)
♠ 98	-	-	1♠	1NT (1)
♥ QJ82	2♠	3♠ (2)	pass	4♥
♦ 106	pass	pass	pass	
♣ A9832				(1) 15-18

So you hold this North hand and have to bid at (2). First of all, you are already up near the 3 level, and so bids are either weak or forcing to game (no room left for polite invitations). The first decision: - is this hand worth a stab at game or do you sign off (in 3♣)? With two decent suits, I considered it worth a game force.

Now you need a bid to be able to sign off in 3♣ (if you were weak), you also need a bid to show a game forcing hand with ♣'s, and you need to have a Stayman bid (3♦/♥ would be natural, forcing and a 5± card suit). Impossible? No. Enter Lebensohl.

Playing Lebensohl you can do everything: In this situation 3♣ is (5+)♣'s and forcing, 3♥ is (5+)♥'s and forcing, 3♠ is Stayman and 2NT (forcing) is the weak bid to sign off in any suit (partner must bid 3♣). 4♥ was a comfortable contract.

When dummy appeared, East asked what the 3♠ bid was; upon hearing that it was Stayman, he asked if it should have been alerted. When one cue bids the opponent's suit it is rarely natural and often has a defined systematic meaning. As far as I am concerned it need not be alerted, it's up to opponents to ask if they wish.

And as for the question 'what is Stayman after intervention?'. The answer is that it's best to play a bid of their suit as Stayman. I also covered this in news-sheet 23.

Defending against RHO's take-out double

I have covered what constitutes a take-out double (and what partner of the doubler should do) in earlier news-sheets, but one area as yet not fully covered is what the partner of opener should do when RHO doubles. Everything stated here is 'standard practice', any partnership may agree to play something different if they wish – but it is not standard. So, partner opens (let's assume 1♥ in all of the examples) and RHO doubles; let's see what all of the bids should mean: -

1- Pass

Similar to when you would pass with no double. So any hand with less than 6 points will normally pass. With support for partner however, you can shade a 2♥ response.

2- Raising Partner's Suit

When RHO doubles (so generally showing values in the other three suits) you really should go out of your way to support partner when you have support (4 card support, or 3 card support if a major and playing 5 card majors). Basically, you should bid as high as you feel is 'safe'. Jump raises (to the 3 or 4 level) are pre-emptive.

So after 1♥ - double - ?

Hand J	Hand K	Hand L	Hand M	Hand N	Hand P
♠ A5	♠ 75	♠ 5	♠ A5	♠ 5	♠ A5
♥ K98	♥ K98	♥ K983	♥ KJ9	♥ KJ983	♥ KJ98
♦ J763	♦ J763	♦ J763	♦ Q763	♦ A763	♦ A763
♣ 8542	♣ 8542	♣ 8542	♣ 8754	♣ 875	♣ 854

Hand J: Bid 2♥, just as though there had been no interference.

Hand K: Bid 2♥, you would have passed if there was no double, but after RHO has doubled, bid 2♥

Hand L: Bid 3♥, pre-emptive – that's fine according to 'the law'.

Hand M: This is a sound raise to 3♥. We show this my means of a conventional 2NT (a direct 3♥ is pre-emptive). We do not need 2NT as a natural bid showing a balanced 11 points as we would re-double with such a hand.

Hand N: Bid 4♥, pre-emptive.

Hand P: This is a sound raise to 4♥. You cannot bid 2♦ as that is weak bid and 4♥ is also weak. You could re-double (showing 9+ points) and then bid 4♥ later. I'm not so keen on that approach and prefer 2NT followed by 4♥ if partner tries to sign off in 3♥. The best approach, however, is to use the Swiss convention, so that 4♣/♦ show a solid raise to 4♥. I feel it is best to show your support and strength immediately just in case the opponents get into the act with ♠'s. If you prefer to use 4♣/♦ as pre-emptive bids, then it's best to use 3NT as this sound raise to 4♥.

3- Redouble

We no **not** redouble with support for partner. A redouble shows 9+ points (unlimited) and generally no fit for partner. It advertises that your side has the balance of power and, in principle, is often looking to double opponents in their final contract.

4- Bidding NT

In theory 1NT is similar to normal (6-bad 10) but generally denies a fit with opener. However, since RHO's double means that partner gets another shot if you pass, there really is little point in bidding with a poor 6-7 points or unsuitable shape.

2NT, as I mentioned earlier, is conventional.

And 3NT? Certainly not a balanced 13-15 count (you would redouble). If you don't use this as a sound raise to 4♥, then I would play it as a log running (minor) suit, asking partner to pass with a stop in ♠'s and a minor, otherwise to bid 4♣ (pass or correct).

5- A New Suit

Limited to 8 points. A new suit at the one level may be played as forcing or not, as you wish (expert opinion is divided, but forcing is probably best). Up to you. At the one level a suit may be 4 card, at the two level a *decent* 5 carder is required. A new suit at the two level is non-forcing. How you play jump bids in a new suit is up to you, most people these days play everything as pre-emptive.

Hand Q	Hand R	Hand S	Hand T	Hand U	Hand V
♠ QJ7	♠ Q7	♠ QJ76	♠ J8	♠ J8	♠ KJ97
♥ 76	♥ J6	♥ K7	♥ 9	♥ 9	♥ 9
♦ Q1076	♦ Q10762	♦ Q1076	♦ J542	♦ J54	♦ KJ97
♣ K1084	♣ J843	♣ 754	♣ KQJ984	♣ KQJ9876	♣ AJ97

Hand Q: Bid 1NT

Hand R: Pass. You would have made a 'courtesy' bid of 1NT with no interference, but now you can happily pass.

Hand S: Bid 1♠

Hand T: Bid 2♣. Weak, a mis-fit and a decent suit.

Hand U: Bid 3♣. Pre-emptive

Hand V: A typical re-double. 9+ points and no fit for partner. You will subsequently double anything that they bid (for penalties).

So, a brief, non-exhaustive look at what is *generally accepted*. I guess that if you need to know more then you need a book? Feel free to ask me if you have any specific questions.

Opener is 5-4 and partner responds 1NT

Board 11 from Friday 12th, love.

North (F)	South	West	North (me)	East	South
♠ AQ1053	♠ J	-	-	-	pass
♥ A10	♥ Q9632	pass	1♠	pass	1NT
♦ J754	♦ K1062	pass	2♦ (1)	pass	pass
♣ K10	♣ 865	pass			

When you have a 5 card major and another lower ranking 4 card suit, it is usually best to pull partner's 1NT. If you are lucky (as here) you will land in a 4-4 fit; if not, then there is usually a 5-2 major fit which usually plays better than 1NT. The hand was played 3 times on Friday and the 1NT bid at the other two tables went one down (2♦ made exactly).

You don't always have to bid as high as 'The Law' allows.

Board 7 from Monday 8th, both vul.

West (B)	East (H)	West (me)	North	East (Jan)	South
♠ A10965	♠ KQJ73				
♥ J9	♥ Q1065	-	-	-	pass
♦ J753	♦ 86	pass	1♣	1♠ (1)	2♦
♣ Q8	♣ K3	3♠ (2)	pass	pass	pass

- (1) 1♠ is a far better bid than double (what do you do if partner replies 2♣?). So overcall 1♠ and subsequently bid 2♥ if you can.
- (2) This worked out fine.

What happened? 3♠ was one down (-100) for a joint top for E-W. N-S made 10 tricks in ♦'s or ♣'s at the other tables. When it was over, my partner asked me why I had not bid 4♠ (law of total tricks). The reason was that the opponents had not bid ♥'s, they were unlikely to have game, and may not venture to the 4 level over 3♠'s. Also, being vulnerable it is risky to bid at the 4 level if opponents have no game - two down (or one down doubled) vulnerable is -200, so a bottom on a partscore deal at pairs.

Also, of course, you have the edge when your suit is ♠'s. Even if you are prepared to go to the 4 level, you can try 3♠ first (and only later bid 4♠ over a possible 4♥). With this particular West hand I would go on to 4♠ if opponents had bid and agreed ♥'s (obviously East's hand would not have these ♥'s) - two down doubled in 4♠ would be -500, so a good save against their 620. On this deal the opponents have had three bids before (2) and so a 4♠ bid has little pre-emptive effect and is too risky with little to gain.

The bottom line? 'The Law' dictates the 'safe' level, but don't go to the limit if you feel that opponents have no game and you are vulnerable. Avoid -200 at pairs.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 6NT. 6♦ scores less and if 6NT goes down (very unlikely) then so will 6♦. 6 of a suit is usually only superior to 6NT when you have a *fit*.
- Hand B: 3♠. 2♠ is too little and 4♠ is too much vulnerable. If you bid just 2♠ then one opponent may support the other's minor and they will reach 4 of a minor after a subsequent 3♠ by you; 3♠ immediately is just enough to make life difficult for them (my favourite pastime).
- Hand C: Pass. Totally unsuitable for a take-out double.
- Hand D: Pass. This really is a miserable opener and you are now under no obligation to bid. A 1NT rebid should be the upper range (so a good 13 or 14) and most players would like a ♠ stop. 2♦ is possible, but I prefer pass with just 3♦'s.
- Hand E: Bid Stayman. Chuck and I play 3♠ as Stayman here and 3♣ as natural (forcing). Are you sure what 3♣ and 3♠ mean in your partnership?
- Hand F: 2♦. Better than passing. Look for a fit, and even a 5-2 ♠ fit is usually better than 1NT. Also, partner may have a long (♥ or ♣) suit.
- Hand G: 1♠, 6-9 points and 4+ ♠'s. Most partnerships play this as forcing.
- Hand H: I prefer 1♠ to double (what do you do if partner replies 1♦?). So overcall 1♠ and subsequently bid 2♥ if you can. If you double and subsequently pull a 1♦ bid from partner to 1♠, that shows a far stronger hand.

Last week's winners: Monday 15/12/03

Friday 19/12/03

1st Hans/Chuck 63%
2nd Mike/Terry 61%

1st Dave/Norman 60%
2nd Mike/Don 53%

It's time for a repeat of what I stated in news-sheet 6. The Pattaya Mail available at the Amari is for Hotel guests (residents) only. You are free to read the papers in the lounge, but please **do not** remove them.

And what's happening in the world? Just for a change I agree with the USA here: -The American taxpayers are funding loads of contracts in Iraq; America says that only allies in the war can compete for contracts. This seems to upset France, Germany, Russia etc. I simply don't understand (maybe somebody can explain it to me?). *America* is paying for this reconstruction, it would seem fair to me if only *American* firms were allowed to tender. They are being generous by letting allies in - am I missing something?

Bidding Quiz**Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A Hand B

♠ K10983 ♠ K63
♥ Q4 ♥ KQJ6
♦ 64 ♦ A75
♣ 9653 ♣ KQ9

With Hand A partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♥, do you take any action?

With Hand B partner opens a strong NT. Do you bid Stayman? Suppose that you do and partner shows 4♥'s, (he also has 3 aces and one king if you ask). What final contract do you bid?

Hand C Hand D

♠ AKJ84 ♠ K543
♥ AJ7 ♥ 8
♦ 9 ♦ AKQ43
♣ A975 ♣ KQ6

With Hand C you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT. A nice shapely 17 count, so what now?

With Hand D you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. What is your bid?

Hand E Hand F

♠ A8 ♠ 52
♥ AJ ♥ K98653
♦ AQJ108753 ♦ AJ2
♣ K ♣ K4

What do you open with Hand E?

With hand F RHO opens 1♦, what is your bid?

Hand G Hand H

♠ Q63 ♠ AQ73
♥ Q832 ♥ AK10753
♦ A102 ♦ 8
♣ Q95 ♣ K5

With Hand G partner opens 1♥, what is your response?

With Hand H you open 1♥ and partner bids 2♦. What is your rebid?

Is it Strong, Weak, Forcing or whatever?

What type of hand does the last bid in these sequences show? No intervention. Are J & M forcing?

Sequence J: 1♠ - 1NT - 3♣ ?

Sequence K: 1♣ - 1♠ - 4♠ ?

Sequence L: 1♠ - 4♠ ?

Sequence M: 1♥ - 2♦ - 3♥ ?

Checking that Terry's got it right

Occasionally I will place the wrong boards on a table - difficult to believe, I know, but nobody gets it right all the time. However, I know my limitations and so I have gone to the trouble of making up movement cards for every movement that we could possibly have. So, will North (or somebody) please check the pair numbers (with opponents) and that they have the correct boards before the play of each round. Easy really.

That Law Again

Board 1 from Monday 15th

Dealer:	♠ K10983	West (F)	North (A)	East	South
North	♥ Q4				
Love all	♦ 64	-	pass	pass	1♦ (1)
	♣ 9653	1♥ (2)	1♠ (3)	2♥ (4)	2♠ (5)
		3♥ (6)	pass	pass	3♠
♠ 52	N	pass	pass	4♥ (7)	4♠
♥ K98653	W E	pass	pass	pass	
♦ AJ2	S				
♣ K4					
	♠ AQ76				
	♥ A				
	♦ K973				
	♣ QJ108				

A somewhat prolonged auction, but the 'par' contract was eventually reached: -

- (1) I prefer 1♣, but I guess 1♦ is OK playing better minor.
- (2) A sound overcall, this hand is too good for a weak 2♥.
- (3) I would never pass, how else will partner know that you have these fine ♠'s?
- (4) With 4♥'s this hand can go to 3♥, but with values for just 2♥ I think that's fine. You can always go one more later and this initial response has indicated your high card strength.
- (5) This South hand is a good one, and every bid so far has improved it immensely. I would not mess about, but bid 4♠ here. It may not make, but it's where you belong.
- (6) With one more♥ than already shown, this is fine. Bidding 3♥ here has little to do with the high card strength, it shows 6♥'s; 'safe' after partner has supported.
- (7) With one more♥ than already shown, this is also excellent bidding for the same reason – the law. East now knows that E-W have 10♥'s between them.

As I said, this is the 'par' contract, 4♥ would make and 4♠ went minus one. I would have bid 4♠ at (5), but everything else was very sensible. E-W both got it absolutely right.

And how does 'the law' fit in? E-W have 10 'trumps' (♥'s), N-S have 9 'trumps' (♠'s), a total of 19 'trumps' and so 'the law' says that there are 19 tricks available between the two contracts. Spot on, E-W have 10 tricks in♥'s and N-S have 9 in♠'s. This *total* remains the same if you swap cards around; put the♦K in the North hand and N-S make 4♠ whereas 4♥ would then go one down. Still 19 tricks in total.

The bottom line? In a competitive auction, obey 'the law'. The simple version says that with roughly equal high cards (as here), it is safe to bid to the level of the total number of trumps held by your partnership.

All the Aces and all the Kingsmen (but they couldn't put Humpty together again)

Board 9 from Monday 15th, E-W vul

North	South (B)	North opens a strong NT, so which contract should South be aiming for? <i>All 7 tables</i> on Monday got this one wrong! First of all, South has to think 'how many combined points?'. The total is 18 + (15-17), so 33-35. With a flat hand this is often enough (but only just) for a small slam, quite why <i>five</i> pairs bid a grand baffles me.
♠ A87	♠ K63	
♥ A1072	♥ KQJ6	
♦ KJ10	♦ A75	
♣ A72	♣ KQ9	

And next, something equally important. Should South bid Stayman (looking for a ♥ fit) or should he simply respond 6NT? You know the answer already if you have read previous news sheets – the 4-4 fit will usually provide an extra trick. Three pairs failed to find the ♥ fit and bid 7NT! Two pairs were also too high in 7♥. One pair got to the poor 6NT and one pair stopped in just 4♥. *Nobody* found the correct contract of 6♥!

And how should the bidding go? How about 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 6♥. Simple. South does not have the values for a grand, and even a small slam in NT may be dicey – go for the sanctuary of the 4-4 fit. With insufficient values and shape for a grand, I don't see the point in asking for aces (and kings). Simply bid what you can make.

And why is 6♥ preferable to 6NT? 6NT depends upon finding the ♦Q, so little more than 50%. 6♥, however, is 100% when ♥'s split 3-2. Since both the pairs in 7♥ made just 11 tricks, just for a change, I'll have a diversion into the play of the hand: -

North	South	<u>The Strip...</u>
♠ A87	♠ K63	North wins the opening lead, draws trumps in three rounds and plays 3 rounds of ♣'s, leaving this position.
♥ 10	♥ J	This is called stripping the hand – eliminating suit(s) where the opponents have a safe exit.
♦ KJ10	♦ A75	
♣ -	♣ -	

...	<u>and Throw-in</u>	Playing in ♥'s (as opposed to NT) North does not need to guess the position of the ♦Q. He simply now plays ♠A, ♠K and a third round of ♠'s - simultaneously stripping the hand of ♠'s and throwing the opponents in at the correct moment. It is immaterial if East or West wins this third round of ♠'s; he either gives declarer three ♦ tricks by leading a ♦ or he concedes a ruff and discard. Just one declarer found this play on Monday (wasted when in 4♥?).
North	South	
♠ -	♠ -	
♥ 10	♥ J	
♦ KJ10	♦ A75	
♣ -	♣ -	

The bottom line? I've said it time and time again – look for the 4-4 fit. Even when both hands are totally flat (with duplication) then the 4-4 fit is usually superior.

Also, of course, brush up on stripping and throw-ins, and remember that you need about 37 points for a grand slam if you have no long suit to run. And note that all the aces and all the kings is only 8 tricks; in a

small slam you need 4 more from somewhere (and a 4-4 fit often helps).

A Comfortable slam missed**Board 12 from Monday 15th, N-S vul**

6♠ was bid at just one of the seven tables on Monday, this auction was typical: -

North (D)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ K543	♠ AQ1076	pass	1♦	pass	1♠
♥ 8	♥ 52	pass	4♠ (1)	pass	pass (2)
♦ AKQ43	♦ 85	pass			
♣ KQ6	♣ A842				

- (1) This is not a shut-out bid. It shows a strong hand with 4 card support, typically 18-19 points.
- (2) Should South press on to slam? A nice hand; the two aces and a good 5 card trump suit are plusses, however, there could be two ♥ losers. Difficult. Blackwood is normally a poor bid with a weak doubleton. A 5♣ cue bid could work out well (5♣ - 5♦ - 5♠ - 6♠) if North realises that his singleton ♥ is golden. The best solution, however, is for North to tell South that he has a singleton ♥ at (1), how?

The answer is, as always, surprisingly simple. Play splinters (this N-S pair did not). A 3♥ bid at (1) would show this hand exactly, values for a ♠ game (usually 4 card support) with a singleton ♥. South would then have an easy 6♠ bid. If you play 3♥ as natural here (I would not as 2♥ is a reverse, showing a strong hand with ♥'s – so an unnecessary jump is a splinter) then 4♥ would be the splinter. I would play 4♥ here as a splinter with explicitly a void (with 3♥ showing exactly a singleton). Imagine that same North hand with the ♥ 8 replaced by any minor suit card – wouldn't it be nice to bid a cold 7♥ on a combined 27 points! Splinters really do work.

Five of a Minor is rarely the best contract**Board 13 from Friday 19th, both vul.**

North (E)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ A8	♠ J642	-	2♣ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)
♥ AJ	♥ 863	pass	3♦ (3)	pass	3NT (4)
♦ AQJ108753	♦ K64	pass	pass (5)	pass	
♣ K	♣ A86				

3NT makes +3. This was an above average score as two pairs played in 5♦, just one pair found a slam (6♦) Let's look at this bidding first: -

- (1) A clear 2♣ opener, far too strong for just 1♦. A 2♣ opener does not guarantee 23+ points if it has playing strength. I would also open this hand with the strongest opening bid if playing strong two's (it's too good for a strong 2♦).
- (2) This pair play 2♦ as a not completely bust hand (at least one king or ace).
- (3) Game forcing.

Now South would also make this same 3NT bid at (4) on a far weaker hand. North felt that South should bid 4♦ at (4) – North has shown a very strong hand. South felt that North should not pass 3NT but make a slam try with a (forcing) 4♦. Who's right? Dunno. Maybe both? Anyway, I would never bid 5♦ with this North hand at pairs. That loses out to anyone in slam but also to anybody playing in NT. If you decide that NT is too risky because of the singleton ♣ then I would bid 6♦.

A Comfortable SlamBoard 8 from Monday 8th, love all.

West	East	West (H)	North	East	South
♠ AQ73	♠ 2	1♥	pass	2♦	pass
♥ AK10753	♥ J94	2♥ (1)	pass	3♥ (2)	pass
♦ 8	♦ AKQ72	4♥	pass	pass	pass
♣ K5	♣ AJ62				

This pair play Acol and it looks like they had difficulty even reaching game.

- (1) Playing Acol (or Standard American) this is weakish. 3♥ or a 2♠ reverse are sensible bids, I prefer 2♠ (forcing) as partner may pass 3♥. 3♥ here is not strictly forcing in Acol (although it's rarely passed in practice).
- (2) This bid is only invitational playing Acol or Standard American.

Anyway, this pair reached just 4♥, as did two other pairs on Monday; 6♥ is easy and 7♥ makes with correct play (eight ever nine never). 7♥ was bid and made once. Now 7♥ is probably pushy, but how do you reach 6♥ playing Acol or Standard American?

West	North	East	South
1♥	pass	2♦	pass
3♥	pass	4NT	pass
5♥	pass	6♥	pass

There really are umpteen different auctions to get there, this is a simple one.

Too High, Even With a FitBoard 15 from Friday 12th, N-S vul

West (C)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ AKJ84	♠ 5	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ AJ7	♥ K654	1♠	pass	1NT	pass
♦ 9	♦ 8763	3♣ (1)	pass	3♥	pass
♣ A975	♣ KJ32	4♥	pass	5♣	all pass

So, a hopeless contract that went two down. 2♥ made +1 at other tables. Anyone to blame? Let's see.

- (1) A strong bid. This is forcing, most play game forcing.

West (Hans) tried to blame East, saying that 3♣ is not forcing and that East should pass because of his singleton ♠. Obviously totally incorrect on three counts. 1st East is not minimum, 2nd he has a ♣ fit, 3rd the 3♣ bid is *forcing*.

No, the fault lies with squarely on West's shoulders. The 3♣ bid at (1) is forcing. Partner's initial 1NT response has denied a ♠ fit, and with a singleton ♦ a NT game looks unlikely. With a rather poor ♣ suit, West should be satisfied with a 2♣ bid - any game looks remote, even opposite a max. To force to game with 3♣ you need a better hand and/or a decent 5 card ♣ suit.

Too High

Board 1 from Friday 19th, love all.

North	South (G)	West	North	East	South
♠ J107	♠ Q63	-	1♥	pass	3♥ (1)
♥ AK1096	♥ Q832	pass	4♥ (2)	pass	pass
♦ QJ75	♦ A102	dbl	pass	pass	pass
♣ 3	♣ Q95				

The contract was one down for a poor score, anybody to blame? Let's see: -

First of all, is this South hand worth a raise to 3♥ at (1)? A 2♥ bid is 6-9, a 3♥ bid is 11-12, with 10 points you have to take the rest of the hand into account. 4 trumps, so a + factor, but the totally flat shape and three queens (bad cards) are – factors. I would bid just 2♥. And North's raise to 4♥ at (2)? Again borderline, but with excellent shape, excellent trumps and good intermediates it's perhaps worth a go.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 1♠. Pass is feeble. This ♠ suit is great (texture!) – bid it.
- Hand B: 6♥. Go for the 4-4 fit. 34+-1 points is usually enough for a small slam when you have a *fit*. Do not bid NT and do not go overboard at the 7 level.
- Hand C: 2♣. This sort of hand is one that, it appears, even the more experienced players get wrong. 3♣ would be (game) forcing; partner has denied ♠ support and so what game do you expect to make? 4♠ on a 5-2 fit when you may continually be forced with ♦ leads? 3NT with a singleton ♦?
5♣ on a combined +- 25 points? And, of course, partner may only have a 6 or 7 count! No, be realistic, settle for a partscore at the two level.
Now I expect that most of you chose 3♣ here? And some (certainly one) may even try to argue that 3♣ is correct (in spite of what I have said)?
If you think that I'm wrong, then check with Chuck (perhaps the most knowledgeable bidder in our club?). I believe that I pissed him off a couple of months back, so he won't side with me unless I am certainly correct!(?)
- Hand D: 3♥, a splinter agreeing ♠'s and showing a singleton ♥. If you do not play splinters then bid 4♠, showing about 18-19 points. 3♠ would not be forcing (it's invitational, about 15-17 points)
- Hand E: 2♣ (or your strongest bid). Too good for 1♦ or a strong 2♦.
- Hand F: 1♥. Too strong for a weak 2♥.
- Hand G: 2♥. Not quite good enough for 3♥.
- Hand H: 2♠ or 3♥, but 3♥ only if you play it as forcing. You have values for game after partner's two level response. 4♥ is too unilateral. This is the sort of hand where I prefer to play 2/1 (a simple 2♥ rebid is forcing as partner's 2♦ is forcing to game playing 2/1).
- Sequence J: Obviously strong, and *forcing*. Most people play *game* forcing.
- Sequence K: Strong. This shows 4 card support and about 18-19 points. If you play splinters then the bid denies a shortage. Partner is welcome to investigate slam.
- Sequence L: Weakish. Generally 5 card support and less than 10 points. Opener should only investigate slam with a *very* strong hand.
- Sequence M: Obviously strong, but not strictly forcing in Acoll (but rarely passed). Playing Standard American the 2♦ response promises 11 points and so 3♥ is best played as (game) forcing.

Last week's winners: Monday 22/12/03

Friday 26/12/03

1st Rolf/Willy 70%
 2nd Dave/Norman 68%

1st Dave/Norman 65%
 2nd Chuck/Terry 57%

Bidding Quiz**Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A

Hand B

What do you open with Hand A?

♠ KQ984

♠ AKQJ8753

♥ AK8743

♥ K107

What do you open with Hand B?

♦ K

♦ 10

♣ 2

♣ 9

What do you open with Hand C?

Hand C

Hand D

♠ AKQ985

♠ AKQ10652

What do you open with Hand D?

♥ A4

♥ AQJ106

♦ KQJ104

♦ -

♣ -

♣ 2

You may recognise Hand E, it's the hand E from last week. Hans and Chuck both say that it is not good enough for a 2♣ opener, so this week's question(s) is - You open 1♦, what is your rebid after partner responds

Hand E

Hand F

(a) 1♥, (b) 1♠, (c) 1NT, (d) 2♣, (e) 2♦?

♠ A8

♠ AKQJ6

♥ AJ

♥ AKQ53

♦ AQJ108753

♦ KQ

♣ K

♣ 3

With Hand F RHO opens 1♦, what do you bid?

Hand G

Hand H

With hand G you open 1♠, LHO overcalls 2♦ and partner doubles (promising 4♥'s and at least values to compete to 2♥). What is your bid?

♠ AJ752

♠ 92

♥ AQ74

♥ AJ987

♦ Q9

♦ AJ2

♣ Q4

♣ 862

With Hand H you are playing Strong jump overcalls. LHO opens 1♥ and partner bids 3♣ (strong), what do you do?

Is it Forcing?

There is no opposition bidding: -

Sequence J: 1♥ - 2♦ - 2♠

Is 2♠ passable, forcing or game forcing?

Sequence K: 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠

Is 2♠ passable, forcing or game forcing?

For sequence L you are playing strong twos: -

Sequence L: 2♠ - 2NT - 3♦

2NT is a negative, is 3♦ forcing?

The 2♣ opening.

Strong and artificial. There are two general hand types that warrant a strong 2♣ opening:

- (a) a balanced hand with 23+ points (many play 22+ these days).
- (b) a strong hand that is within one trick of game in it's own hand.

Type (a) is obvious, but let's look at what qualifies for type (b) and what does not: -

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D	Hand E
♠ KQ984	♠ AKQJ8753	♠ AKQ985	♠ AKQ10652	♠ A8
♥ AK8743	♥ K107	♥ A4	♥ AQJ106	♥ AJ
♦ K	♦ 10	♦ KQJ104	♦ -	♦ AQJ108753
♣ 2	♣ 9	♣ -	♣ 2	♣ K

Hand A is West Board 12 from last week. Nice, but it only has about 6 or 7 playing tricks. Open 1♥ and rebid 2♠. Even if you play strong twos (or Benjamin) the hand is only worth a 1♥ opening in my opinion. We cover this hand in detail later.

Hand B is East Board 7 from last week; it has 8 playing tricks + ♥K, so just short of the playing strength for a 2♣ opener. However, 2♣ should not be considered with this type of hand as you really need more in the way of high card strength for a 2♣ opener; the correct opening with this hand is 4♠ - even if you play strong twos.

Hand C has 11 playing tricks, a clear 2♣ opener. We cover this hand in detail later.

Hand D is from an American magazine, one expert opened 1♠. When we come to discuss Hand A later, you will see that it is sometimes unwise to open 2♣ with two suited hands, this is especially true if the longer suit is lower ranking than the other long suit (as in Hand A). This Hand D, however, is so powerful that you simply have to open 2♣; and the fact that the suits are 'in the correct order for easy bidding' make it a straightforward 2♣ opener. Hans and Chuck would both bid 2♣.

Hand E is last week's Hand E; it has 9 tricks plus the ♣K and ♥J, so well worth a 2♣ opening in my opinion. Hans said not so, and would open 1♦; Chuck agreed. I don't believe Chuck - he partnered me last week when I opened 2♣ and rebid 3♦ - he settled for 3NT with ♦K and ♣A opposite. If the 2♣ (followed by 3♦) promises 10 tricks then he would obviously have bid slam? I think that it's very difficult to 'catch up' sensibly if you open just 1♦ (see answer to question E in the Bidding quiz solutions). Joe agrees with me and would open 2♣.

And just compare Hands A and E. Anybody (Hans) who says that Hand A is worth a 2♣ opening but Hand E does not most certainly 'does not play the same system as me'. I've said it before - I have no idea what system Hans plays. And if an American expert opens hand D with just 1♠ then I hate to think what they would say about opening Hand A with 2♣.

Incidentally, have you agreed what a double means when RHO overcalls partner's 2♣ opening? I think it's probably best (and simplest) to play it as penalties (with pass as the usual negative/relay or whatever you play). This comes up later.

And what does one do if you have a genuine 2♣ rockcrusher but RHO opens in front of you? We have an example later.

Too High

Board 14 from Friday 26th, love all.

N-S got too high here, can you spot the poor bid?

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ AJ752	♠ 104	-	-	pass	pass
♥ AQ74	♥ J10532	pass	1♠	2♦	dbl (1)
♦ Q9	♦ J63	pass	3♥ (2)	pass	4♥
♣ Q4	♣ A85	pass	pass	pass	

(1) Negative, promising 4 ♥'s

(2) game invitational

4♥ went two off, anyone to blame? Let's see. South's double at (1) promises just 4 ♥'s and a 2♥ bid at (1) would show 5 ♥'s but would show a far better hand. It would normally be forcing, but not in this instance as South is a passed hand. Anyway, a negative double is the correct bid (showing values to compete to 2♥). And what can we say about North's 3♥ bid? Optimistic is perhaps an understatement. 3♥ here should be about 15-17 points. This is a *very* poor 15. The two Qx's are bad, it has poor shape and no intermediates. The correct bid is a simple 2♥. This North really should know better – but no names.

A Play Problem – for the more advanced player

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 93	♠ AKJ4	-	-	pass	1♣
♥ A82	♥ Q764	pass	1♦	pass	1♥ (1)
♦ K109874	♦ Q	pass	3♦	pass	3NT
♣ K10	♣ AQ62	pass	pass	pass	

First of all, the bidding. With this sort of South hand it really helps if you are playing a form of the multi 2♦ which incorporates the 4441 type shapes – they are notoriously difficult to bid with standard methods. The 'problem' is that 1♥ at (1) is not forcing, but then 2♥ (forcing) does not look too attractive with this ropey ♥ suit. Anyway, it all worked out fine and this is about the play of the hand, not the bidding: -

West leads the ♠5, you play the ♠9 from dummy, East plays the ♠10 and your ♠J wins. It is a team's competition (so overtricks are relatively unimportant – the important thing is to ensure the contract). How do you continue?

Answer at the end of this news sheet.

Double with 6 top ‘trumps’?

Board 25 from Monday 19th, E-W vul

When the opponents have obviously had a bidding disaster, it may be best not to double. Who knows, maybe they can escape after the double? I have mentioned this a couple of times before, if they are in a silly contract, ‘let it be’ unless you are sure that they have no escape.

The commentary for the meaning of the bids is what they should mean: -

Dealer:	♠ K754	West	North	East	South
North	♥ A52				
E-W vul	♦ AK9	-	1NT	pass	2♥ (1)
	♣ Q76	pass (2)	2♠ (3)	pass	2NT (4)
		pass	4♠ (5)	pass	4NT (6)
♠ AQJ1098	N	♠ 32	dbl	pass	pass
♥ 104	W E	♥ KJ73			
♦ J2	S	♦ 754	(1) transfer to ♠’s		
♣ K98		♣ J1054	(3) not good enough to super-accept		
	♠ 6		(4) invitational (8 points and 5 ♠’s)		
	♥ Q986		(5) with 4 ‘trumps’, let’s try the ♠ game		
DUMMY	♦ Q10863		(6) oops		
→	♣ A32				

Well then, quite amusing. But to be fair, South is just beginning, but did West do well?

First, let’s look at the bidding. At (2) West ‘knows’ that South has forgotten about transfers and so made a very sensible pass. North’s 4♠ bid was music to West’s ears, but what should he do after South’s 4NT (It was obvious that he had probably forgotten about transfers)? West doubled, joyfully saying that he had loads more doubling cards in his box. Since South had made a non-forcing bid at (4) then this 4NT bid at (6) is obviously (?) to play and everybody knows what’s going on anyway.

And how did the play go? East led a ♣, low from Dummy (South) and West won with the ♣K. Now West can play this pretty well double dummy, he knows that North probably has exactly ♠Kxxx, leaving partner (East) with ♠xx. So which ♠ do you lead? A five in six chance of getting it right – but West chose ♠A, followed by another – the only defence to give North a shot at the contract.

Dealer:	♠ -	North won the ♠K and discarded a ♥ from dummy.
North	♥ A52	Five rounds of ♦’s followed and then the two top
E-Wvul	♦ -	♣’s left this end position and East got just one ♥ trick.
	♣ -	Holding onto a ♣ would have been no better for East
		(North would have played on ♥’s before relinquishing
♠ J109	N	the top ♣’s). But if East had had a ♠ left
♥ -	W E	
♦ -	S	The moral? I guess that ♠AQJ1098 is not good
♣ -		enough to double? But seriously, don’t double
	♠ -	‘silly’ contracts if opponents may make 4NT.
	♥ Q98	And if you do double, then don’t bang down
	♦	top cards (♠AQ) if you have no entry left
	♣	– you have a partner.

Worth a (2♣) Game Force?

Board 12 from Monday 22nd, N-S vul

How good is this West Hand? Here are the auctions from two tables last Monday -

West (A)	East	<u>Table A:</u>			
		West	North	East	South
♠ KQ984	♠ 652	1♥ (1)	2♦	dbl (2)	pass
♥ AK8743	♥ J9	2♠ (3)	pass	2NT	pass
♦ K	♦ Q10864	3♥	pass	pass	pass
♣ 2	♣ K83				

<u>Table B:</u>			
West	North	East	South
2♣ (4)	2♦	dbl (5)	pass
2♥ (6)	pass	2NT	pass
3♠	pass	3NT (7)	all pass

3♥ went two down, 3NT failed by 3 tricks. So obviously too high (especially 3NT), but is anybody to blame? The hand is a mis-fit but I cannot see how to sensibly stop below 3♥ (although 2 pairs managed that on Monday – playing in 2♠). All the other 5 pairs went down (three were in game with just two managing to stop in 3♥). Let's look at the bidding of two tables.

At Table A West was a learner and I gave advice. West asked me what to open and I said that the hand was not worth a 2♣ opening, so open 1♥ (with the intention of reversing into 2♠ next go). The double at (2) was penalties (they did not play negative doubles) and 2♠ at (3) was forcing (for one round). The pair managed to play in a good spot.

At Table B West opened a strong 2♣ and East's double at (5) was penalties. 2♥ at (6) is game forcing and we immediately see the problem with opening 2♣; West wants to show both his suits and is at the 3♠ level by the time he has achieved this. East had a difficult decision at (7), West thought that he should bid 4♥. Perhaps, but that was not the cause of getting too high (4♥ was also 3 off), the West hand is not worth a 2♣ opener, lacking both high cards and playing strength.

The bottom line. A 2♣ opener is either a balanced 22(23)+ points or a hand that can make game by itself with virtually nothing from partner. The norm is 9 tricks if a major suit. Also, the hand should contain decent high card strength (15 is pushing it). This West hand is nowhere near the required playing strength – the board was played three times in ♥'s and just 7 tricks were made on every occasion. Since partner is far from bust, obviously this West hand is *way* short of the required 9 tricks.

The ♦K is not worth 3 points. I would not even open this hand with a strong 2♥ (or 2♣ followed by 2♥ if playing Benjamin twos). Open 1♥ and then a reverse into 2♠ is fine.

Traditional Acol

It's not played much these days, but I have a couple of hands from a few weeks back: -

The Strong Jump Overcall

Board 10 from Friday 22nd Nov, both vul.

I rarely mention strong jump overcalls as most people play weak ones these days. However I was playing them here and it should have worked out fine on this deal.

North	South (H)	West	North(me)	East	South
♠ K5	♠ 92	-	-	pass	pass
♥ 10	♥ AJ987	1♥	3♣ (1)	pass	pass (2)
♦ KQ10	♦ AJ2	pass	pass	pass	
♣ AKQ10543	♣ 862				

- (1) A strong jump overcall. 15+ points. When one makes a strong jump overcall in a minor at the three level this shows a strong hand and a good running (or near-running) suit. It generally asks partner to bid 3NT with a stop in the suit opened.
- (2) Words fail me. If you cannot respond with this hand, then read up on strong jump overcalls or convert to the more popular weak type.

Now I rarely play strong jump overcalls but my partner on this occasion (John Gavens) did and I am fairly knowledgeable about the most commonly played systems, especially Acol. I did, however, receive some flack here. One player (the usual suspect - Hans) said that the hand was too strong and that I should first double and then bid ♣'s. This statement shows a fundamental lack of knowledge of *strong* jump overcalls (it is a valid statement if you play intermediate or weak jump overcalls). It really would be nice if people who have no idea about a particular topic would keep quiet. In traditional Acol the jump overcall at the three level is the *strongest* bid available except the cue bid (1♥ - 2♥) which is game forcing. I will mention strong jump overcalls just this once as most players play weak (or intermediate) jump overcalls and are not really interested in the strong variety. A strong jump overcall is not the same as the more popular intermediate jump; a strong jump overcall is *strong*. The jump to 3♣ here shows a better suit (solid or near-solid) than a double followed by bidding ♣'s, in particular it encourages partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stop (9 tricks are usually easier than 11).

South could bid 3NT here, as he should with a much weaker hand with a ♥ stop (say without the ♦A). The ♠ holding is irrelevant, partner is not asking for a ♠ stop. For those people who still play traditional Acol, Crowhurst is the Bible, refer to Vol 2 page 247.

Now I said South 'could' bid 3NT. I think the hand is perhaps too good and that a 3♦ cuebid (looking for slam) is a very real alternative. Note that 3♦ here is not a suit, North has advertised an excellent self sufficient ♣ suit and the final contract should be ♣'s or NT. 6♣ is then easily reached if North asks for aces. Note that it's best to use 4♦ (Kickback) as the ace ask when ♣'s are trumps as otherwise you may get too high. I don't know anybody who plays Kickback, I'll mention it when I (eventually) bring out something on RKCB.

Incidentally, do you know what a 3♥ bid at (1) means? Obviously something you cannot bid unless you have discussed it. In traditional Acol it shows a good hand with a good ♥ suit, a bid that will hardly ever come up (unless West has psyched). The best use of this jump cue bid is to ask partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stop, indicating that you have a long running minor. This North hand (perhaps a little stronger) would be a typical example, useful if you don't play strong jump overcalls.

A Strong Opening

Board 14 from Friday 22nd Nov, E-W vul

Another deal playing traditional Acol: -

North	South (C)	West	North(me)	East	South
♠ -	♠ AKQ985	-	-	pass	2♠ (1)
♥ 983	♥ A4	pass	2NT (2)	pass	3♦ (3)
♦ A9862	♦ KQJ104	pass	5♦ (4)	pass	pass (5)
♣ J6543	♣ -	pass	pass		

- (1) strong. 8 or 9 playing tricks.
- (2) negative
- (3) 2nd suit
- (4) what North thinks may possibly make
- (5) feeble? With 11 tricks in view, North must surely contribute one for his raise to game?

So, an easy slam missed. 13 tricks are there and it would have been nice to bid even the small slam. So anything wrong with the bidding?

Yes! Let's start at the beginning. This South hand has 11 playing tricks and just two losers. It is a monster. It is *far* too strong for a strong two. The correct opening is 2♣, 2♠ is not game forcing. And what about this 3♦ bid at (3), a 2nd suit but it is *not* forcing after a negative response, North would have passed with the same hand missing the ♦A. North had no idea that South had a rock crusher and so 5♦ at (4) is fine. And South's final pass? Perhaps he did not realize that he had grossly underbid his hand so far?

Well then how should the bidding have gone playing traditional Acol? How about: -

	West	North	East	South
(1) strong and artificial				
(2) negative (some play waiting)				
(3) game forcing	-	-	pass	2♣ (1)
(4) natural	pass	2♦ (2)	pass	2♠ (3)
(5) 2 nd suit, still game forcing	pass	3♣ (4)	pass	3♦ (5)
(6) ♦ support, still game forcing	pass	4♦ (6)	pass	4NT (7)
(7) Blackwood	pass	5♦ (8)	pass	6♦
(8) one ace	pass	pass	pass	

Here we see the advantage of establishing the game force early. Since the auction is game forcing, North can happily bid 4♦ at (6). This is mildly encouraging, with a similar hand without the ♦A North would jump to 5♦ (fast arrival). The extra room enables South to ask for aces and 6♦ is cold when partner has one (and South is still able to play in a safe 5♦ if North has no ace). I cannot see an easy way for North to establish that it is the ♦A (when 7♦ makes) or the ♣A (when only 6♦ is there) unless you play Exclusion Blackwood. Then 5♣ (instead of 4NT) would ask for aces (keycards) outside ♣'s, but Chuck & myself are the only players I know who play this.

The bottom line. If you have game in your own hand then open with your strongest bid, 2♣ (or 2♦ if you play Benjamin twos). A strong two opening (2♦, 2♥ or 2♠, or via 2♣ if you play Benjamin) is not game forcing.

p.s. If you think that you need more high card points for a 2♣ opening, then refer to Crowhurst Vol 1, page 53. This hand easily qualifies.

At another table North bid 5♦ at (6). Wrong! 4♦ is forcing and best holding the ♦A.

A Play Problem – Solution

Dealer:	♠ 93		West	North	East	South
East	♥ A82					
E-W vul	♦ K109874		-	-	pass	1♣
	♣ K10		pass	1♦	pass	1♥
			pass	3♦	pass	3NT
			pass	pass	pass	
♠ Q7652	N	♠ 108				
♥ K1093	W E	♥ J5				
♦ 52	S	♦ AJ63				
♣ 83		♣ J9754				
	♠ AKJ4					
	♥ Q764					
	♦ Q					
	♣ AQ62					

South has 7 solid tricks and can easily develop one more in ♦'s. The ninth trick needs to come from a long ♦ unless you want to try the ♣ finesse or leading up to the ♥Q. So play the ♦Q? If this wins the trick then you are short of entries to the North hand to establish the ♦'s and have to fall back on the ♣ finesse. Unlucky? (that East defended well?).

Perhaps, but the safe play for a certain 9 tricks is to overtake the ♦Q with the ♦K. You then lose ♦AJ and a maximum of two ♥ tricks if East finds the ♥ switch. If East plays a ♥ higher than the ♥8 (so the ♥J on this actual lay-out), South covers and has a 2nd ♥ stop, if East plays a low ♥ then South ducks so that West is on lead and South again has two ♥ stops.

A Solid Overcall!

Board 5 from Friday 19th, N-S vul

Back to the question I posed earlier; what does one do if you have a genuine 2♣ rockcrusher but RHO opens in front of you?

East (F)	West	North	East	South
♠ AKQJ6	-	-	-	pass
♥ AKQ53	pass	1♦	1♠ (1)	pass
♦ KQ	pass	pass		
♣ 3				

Two (!) pairs overcalled just 1♠ with this East hand on Friday. So what is the correct bid? If you do not play Michaels Cue Bids then 2♦ is the bid at (1). This is traditionally a very strong bid (too strong for a double). If you play Michaels, then you have to double (unless you play that Michaels is either weak or very strong); I have frequently said that a double should be playable in the other three suits – but that is not necessary if the hand is strong enough to bid again after partner's response.

And what should you do after you double (or bid 2♦) and partner bids his inevitable ♣ suit? Bid ♦'s, partner will hopefully get the message and bid his best major. You then raise him to game.

What happened? 1♠ made the obvious +4. 4♥ was bid and made (+1) twice.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: 1♥ (and reverse into 2♠ next go).

Hand B: 4♠.

Hand C: 2♣.

Hand D: 2♣.

Hand E: Sorry about this one, I have no idea (I would open 2♣). Obviously you now need to force (to game), 3♦ is descriptive but the hand is too good (3♦ is non-forcing). I cannot find a sensible bid after any of these responses. A reverse into a non-existent major is very dangerous. So a jump into a non-existent ♣ suit? Or perhaps just Blackwood – but then how do you subsequently find out if partner has the all important ♦K? No, this really is getting all too silly. If you have to even think about your rebid when partner responds with a non-jump then you have probably made the wrong opening bid.

If you want an answer for (a) → (e) then ask Hans or Chuck?

One player on Friday opened 1♦ and rebid 5♦ over partner's 1♠. Silly. Isn't it so much simpler if you open 2♣?

Hand F: Playing traditional methods you cuebid the opponent's suit to show the equivalent of a 2♣ opener, so 2♦ here – game forcing. If you play Michaels cue bids then you have to double unless you play them as either weak or *very* strong.

Hand G: 2♥. Not good enough for 3♥.

Hand H: 3NT, a ♥ stop is all you need to bid 3NT after partner's strong jump overcall.

3♦ (a cuebid looking for a ♣ slam) is equally good (perhaps better).

Sequence J: A reverse is definitely (game) forcing after a two level response.

Sequence K: Usually played as game forcing. Most people play that the only sequence that is not forcing to game after a 2♣ opener is 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT (22-24), when responder may pass or pass after transferring.

Sequence L: Non-forcing. When playing strong twos, a new suit is not forcing after a negative response.