

Mon 17 th	1 st Bob Short/Gene	59%	2 nd David/Kenneth	55%
Wed 19 th	1 st Dave/Hans	56%	2 nd Bjorn/Ian	55%
Fri 21 st N-S	1 st Dave/Bob	66%	2 nd Bill/Mike	53%
	21 st E-W 1 st Chuck/Tomas	59%	2 nd Bob Short/Gene	55%

I had too many interesting boards last week, so some of them appear in this issue.

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated

Hand A	Hand B	(a) What do you open with Hand A. Suppose you choose 2♣, the what do you bid after partner bids (b) 2♦ (negative or waiting), or (c) 2NT (8-10 balanced)?
♠ AKQJ	♠ Q754	
♥ KQ42	♥ 10632	
♦ 6	♦ K75	With Hand B LHO opens 1♣ and partner doubles. You choose to bid 1♥ and partner bids 3♥, what do you do?
♣ AQJ5	♣ 96	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C you open 1♠ and partner raises to 4♠, what do you do?
♠ AJ	♠ Q853	
♥ AJ1094	♥ AQ62	With Hand D LHO opens 2♠, passed to you. (a) what do you do? Suppose you choose to double – partner bids 3♣ and RHO bids 3♠, (b) what do you do now?
♦ KQ3	♦ K73	
♣ 1062	♣ A10	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E RHO opens 1♣ and you double. Partner bids 1♥ (what an obliging partner!). What do you bid?
♠ K8	♠ KQJ9732	
♥ KQJ98	♥ A9	
♦ AQ4	♦ 3	What do you open with hand F?
♣ K43	♣ AQ9	

Editorial – About our clubs

Dave and I were asked about the Wednesday funds, so here's the complete picture.

I run the Monday and Friday clubs; I look after the money and also membership fees and that goes towards the running of the club - the web-site (very expensive), cards, bidding boxes, boards, news-sheets etc etc.

The Wednesday club is run by Dave (although I do help out occasionally) and these funds are used for what Dave (and I) think fit. Currently they have paid for trophies and the Jack computer program. Members are invited to borrow Jack.

Club membership is 1000 bht per year (cheaper if you join later in the year). Membership entitles you to play at all 3 venues for just 50 bht a time; non-members pay 100 bht.

A comedy of errors?

Board 12 from Wednesday 12th

A few strange bids here! As at least two players had no idea what they were doing, I'd better clarify bidding after a 1NT opening has been overcalled: -

Dealer:	♠ KQ103				
West	♥ A1074	West	North	East	South
N-S vul	♦ 5	1NT (1)	2♣ (2)	3♦ (3)	pass
	♣ QJ96	pass (4)	dbl (5)	pass	3♥
		all pass			
♠ 764	N	♠ J52			
♥ KJ52	W E	♥ 84			
♦ A83	S	♦ KQ1064			
♣ AK10		♣ 742			
	♠ A98				
	♥ Q93				
	♦ J972				
	♣ 853				

- (1) You all know me by now, I would not open 1NT with this hand (knock off a point for the 4333 type shape and treat it as a 14 point hand). Anyway, perhaps West had sized up the opposition?
- (2) Showing at least 5-4 in the majors (Multi Landy). With this nice shape I won't argue with it being a major card short.
- (3) What is this?? Standard is that it's game forcing. There 'obviously' is no such thing as a pre-emptive bid after partner has opened with a strong NT!?
- (4) Obviously I would have bid here (a 'natural' 3♥ - showing a stopper there) as I would take 3♦ as strong and forcing.
- (5) Equally obviously North should pass here – West has passed a presumed forcing 3♦ bid, South has promised zero and North has no more than (one could say not as much as) he has already shown. It appears that North intended this as penalties! Apparently his 'thoughts' went along these lines – partner did not bid a major after my Multi Landy so he must have ♦'s! No further comment by me.

And what happened? 3♥ went 3 down for a deserved bottom to N-S, well, North anyway.

The bottom lines: -

- Sort out what you play after partner's 1NT opening is overcalled. I recommend Lebensohl.
- Playing Lebensohl or not, 3♦ is forcing here as a natural 2♦ is available with a weak ♦ hand. (and, actually, you can show an invitational ♦ hand by going via 2NT, Lebensohl).

Who's the dick-head?

Board 25 from Wednesday 12th

Dealer: ♠ Q103
East ♥ KQ4
Both vul ♦ Q10964
♣ Q10

West	North	East	South
-	-	1NT	pass
2♦	pass	2♥	all pass

♠ 75	N	♠ KJ96
♥ J7652	W E	♥ A108
♦ KJ52	S	♦ 87
♣ 97		♣ AK53
	♠ A842	
↑	♥ 93	
DUMMY	♦ A3	
	♣ J8642	

I was dummy (West) and when the ♦A was led I (humorously?) commented that South obviously has the ♦K if he led the ♦A.

Anyway, South then continued with the ♦3 and declarer finessed!!

And what happened? 2♥ thus went one down when South got his obvious ruff, with 2♥ making easily at other tables. East then call South a 'dick-head' for leading an ace without the king. Can you find a suitable word to describe East? The bottom lines: -

- Nobody in their right mind is going the lead an ace from AQ, especially if a strong NT was opened on their right!

Do not take a 'finesse' which is 100% certain to fail and give defenders a ruff!

A word about inverted Attitude

There are a number of different signalling techniques, but there are three distinct types that are **independent**. It appears that one of our top players got confused when his partner wanted to play 'inverted signals' – (what his partner meant was inverted attitude signals).

- Telling partner about your holding in a suit when he leads it (some give attitude, some give count).
- Telling partner about your holding in a suit when declarer leads it (give count if it's going to help partner and not help declarer.).
- Discard Signals. When you discard (say on a suit declarer is leading). Then your first discard should tell partner what suit you like and don't like – I recommend Lavinthal (McKenny) as the 'club standard'.

These 3 are largely independent of each other and a very large number of players in this club prefer 'inverted attitude' – i.e. low to encourage for (a) above. Indeed, I also prefer this scheme as it makes more sense than throwing a high card from a suit that you like. It is common in Europe but not in America.

Some players also play inverted count but I don't advice this and see no point.

Anyway, if someone wants to play inverted attitude for (a) that that does not affect discards – he still plays count at (b) and Lavinthal at (c) in the normal way and this is very common in this club.

And note that if you do decide to play inverted attitude and say partner leads ♦A against a ♠ contract, then holding ♦Q72 you play the two to encourage; holding ♦72 you still play the ♦2 to encourage (you want a ruff). Some people get confused here – this is not count, but attitude, and so in this situation you play low from a doubleton. Of course if you do find this confusing then you can also play inverted count!

The Trump promotion

Board 17 from Wednesday 12th

Now most of the articles in the news-sheets are about the bidding; so just for a change we'll have one on defensive play: -

Dealer: ♠ AK10543
North ♥ J
Love all ♦ Q53
♣ 1074

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	pass	2♥
pass	2♠	all pass	

♠ Q7	N	♠ J98
♥ K74	W E	♥ 10932
♦ A9876	S	♦ J10
♣ Q86		♣ AK92
	♠ 62	
→	♥ AQ865	
DUMMY	♦ K42	
	♣ J53	

East led the ♣A. Now West new that his partner held the ♣K – East was the same East as the previous deal when he called somebody a ‘dick-head’ for leading the ace without the king. Anyway, E-W had agreed to play inverted attitude signals (so low to encourage) and so West played the ♣6. North played the ♣4 I would have played the ♣7 in order to confuse the E-W signals.

Anyway, there was no need to try to confuse East as even with the ♣4 played to the first trick he could not work out that partner had encouraged and so switched to the ♦J.

Now normally West would have ducked this (retaining the ♦A over dummy's ♦K) but he knew exactly what was going on. West took the ♦A, led the ♣Q followed by the ♣8 and sat back waiting for partner to do the right thing in this position: -

Dealer:	♠ AK10543	
North	♥ J	
Love all	♦ Q5	
	♣ -	
♠ Q7	N	♠ J98
♥ K74	W E	♥ 10932
♦ 9876	S	♦ 10
♣ -		♣ 9
	♠ 62	
→	♥ AQ865	
DUMMY	♦ K4	
	♣ -	

What do you think that East should lead here, having just won the last trick with the ♣K?

The answer is that he should lead the ♣9.

It matters not if dummy ruffs, the important thing is that West knows that it's the 13th ♣ and he will ruff high – forcing declarer to ruff even higher and thus promoting East's trump holding.

And what happened?

East lamely led a ♥ and scored just one trump trick.

Every other N-S went down.

The bottom lines: -

- Understand trump promotion!
- Look at partner's signals
- As declarer, false-card if you want to disrupt the defender's signals.

Don't Pre-empt then bid again!

Board 27 from Wednesday 12th

I say the same things week after week, but who listens?

Dealer: ♠ J8753
South ♥ KQ6
Love all ♦ J53
♣ 86

West(me)	North	East	South
-	-	-	3♦ (1)
dbl (2)	4♦ (3)	4♥ (4)	5♦ (5)
dbl (6)	all pass		

♠ AKQ104	N	♠ 93
♥ J72	W E	♥ 108543
♦ 9	S	♦ A62
♣ AK102		♣ J93
	♠ 6	
	♥ A9	
	♦ KQ10874	
	♣ Q754	

- (1) A real top-of-the-range pre-empt, so South decided to 'upgrade' it to 3♦ (as opposed to 2♦). It's 21 (for the rule of 20) and a 1♦ opening is very reasonable. But I'm an easy goin' guy and won't argue too much with the 3♦ pre-empt.
- (2) And, indeed, the opening bid makes it awkward for West. He surely has to double and I happen to know what his plan was (it was I!). If partner responded 3♥ then I was planning 3♠ (showing a good hand). If partner responded 4♥ then I would have left him there.
- (3) I totally agree with this bid. When partner makes a 3-level pre-empt then raise to 4 with 3-card support, virtually regardless of strength (The Law).
- (4) Perhaps a bit pushy as a free bid shows values, but with 5♥'s I think that it's justified and I certainly won't argue with my partner's decision to bid 4♥.
- (5) But I will, of course, argue with this. South decided to open with a pre-empt. Full stop. If you open with a pre-empt then do not bid again unless invited. Full stop. Partner's raising of the anti is **not** an invitation for you to bid again. South's 'excuse' was that he had a good hand and that 5♦ may well work out – it's falling on deaf ears here. 'Everybody' knows my views – if you pre-empt, then that's it!
- (6) West, of course, was more than happy to double with his top cards for defence and only 3 poor♥'s.

And what happened? 5♦ doubled went two down for 300 away and a deserved bottom to N-S. Whether 4♥ would have made or not nobody knows, as nobody else bid game with the E-W cards. It's certainly not a straightforward contract for East as he has entry problems to hand on the presumed ♦K lead and he may well lose the obvious 3♥'s and another trick - a ♦ or something else, depending upon his line of play.

The bottom lines: -

- Don't change horses in mid-stream. If you have decided to open with a pre-empt then there's nothing you can do about it later – just hope it works out!
- Do not bid again having pre-empted. Said that before?

The 2♣ Opener and responses

There has been a lot of discussion about this (and a 'waiting' 2♦ response) at the club recently. So I'll give a couple of hands from the club and then give the 'definitive' solution.

♠ AQJ6	N	♠ K982	West	East
♥ A5	W E	♥ K74	2♣ (1)	2NT (2)
♦ KQJ86	S	♦ 1072	3♣ (3)	3♠ (4)
♣ A10		♣ KJ3	4♠ (5)	pass (6)

First of all, remember this hand from last week's news-sheet (who should bid Blackwood)? I gave a couple of auctions but this was apparently that from one table. Last week I suggested that it should be East asking bidding Blackwood but one member disagreed:

- (1) This is a nice hand. With the KQJ sequence in a 5 card suit I'm happy with a 2♣ opener, with the intention of rebidding 2NT (22-24).
- (2) But unfortunately partner got in the 2NT bid – more of responses to 2♣ later.
- (3) Apparently this was Stayman. Now this is a new one on me, but I guess reasonable. The main problem (apart from the fact that I don't like the 2NT response) is that the wrong guy is going to play the hand and it's also going to be difficult to find a minor suit fit. After a 2♣ opening one should be thinking slam – and it's quite likely to be in a minor. Baron (initiating a sequence where both players bid 4-card suits up the line) is probably better but I give a completely different scheme later anyway.
- (4) The 4-4 ♠ fit is located.
- (5) And West confirms this.

Now this East came up to me about my comment last week that East should bid Blackwood in this sort of situation - I said that the only 'problem' was the weak ♦ suit but that's probably OK opposite a 2♣ opener.

He said that East cannot bid Blackwood as a Blackwood bidder promises an ace and he said that West should bid Blackwood at (5). My reaction: -

- Poppycock. A Blackwood bidder does not promise an ace, especially if partner has shown a huge hand (there is another excellent example of this in news-sheet 85). Of course it's nice to have the security of one ace and if partner starts with a lowly one-level bid then Baby Blackwood that I mentioned last week is a solution.
- Anyway, in this situation West should not be the asker as when he gets a zero ace response it's far to dangerous to ask for kings with an ace missing. Indeed, it's generally accepted that all the aces are present when one asks for kings.
- In this situation, with 3 kings, it should be East asking (he also knows that there are values for slam (West does not) and should bid 4NT at (6) and go on to slam with just one ace missing.

Before I get onto the 'real solution. Let's have another problem hand from this Monday: -

A 2♣ opener?

Board 2 from Monday 17th

This hand also caused lots of problems: -

Dealer:	♠ 1074		
East	♥ 108763		
N-S vul	♦ A54		
	♣ 106		
♠ AKQJ	N	♠ 82	
♥ KQ42	W E	♥ AJ5	
♦ 6	S	♦ QJ10	
♣ AQJ5		♣ K8742	
	♠ 9653		
	♥ 9		
	♦ K98732		
	♣ 93		

Table A

West(A)	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
2♣ (1)	pass	2NT (2)	pass
3♣ (3)	pass	3♦	pass
3♠ (4)	pass	3NT	pass
4NT (5)	pass	5♦	pass
5♥ (6)	pass	5NT	all pass

Table B

West(A)	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
2♣ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)	pass
2♠ (7)	pass	3♣ (8)	pass
3♥ (9)	pass	5♠ (10)	pass
pass (11)	pass		

Table D

West(A)	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
1♣ (1)	1♥ (13)	2♣	pass
6♣ (14)	all pass		

Table C

West(A)	North	East	South
-	-	pass	pass
2♣ (1)	pass	2♦ (2)	pass
3♣ (12)	etc to 6♣?		

- Table A: (1) What did you open with this West hand A(a) in this week's quiz. Now 2♣ seems 'obvious' – but you will have a problem next bid!
 (2) 8-10, balanced. I don't like this response and go into it all next page.
 (3) It appears that this pair also play this as Stayman. Perhaps reasonable, but how do you find a ♣ fit?
 (4) And West again has a problem – I would take this as 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s.
 (5) Apparently both players understood this to be Blackwood. No comment from me as I don't like the sequence anyway.

- Table B: (2) Presumably 'waiting'
 (7) And West also has a problem here. 2♠ should be a 5+ card suit
 (8) Natural
 (9) I have no idea why West did not bid 6♣ (via Blackwood if you like).
 (10) Up to you pard.
 (11) I have no idea why West did not bid 6♣.

- Table C: (12) I would want (at least) 5 ♣'s for this bid.

- Table D: (1) Now this West knows all about the rebid problems if you open 2♣ on a 4441 type shape hand – and so he (I) opened 1♣. Simple! (as long as it's not passed out). But you know me – I rarely pass partner's 1♣ opening and expect the same from partner.
 (13) A shade(?) light for a vulnerable overcall.
 (14) Since the opponent's were still gloating about the good 6♥ that they had bid on the previous board, I simply plonked the 6♣ card on the table.

And what happened? 6♣ is obviously the contract. Everybody else was all over the place.

Responses to the 2♣ opening

2♦ negative or 2♦ waiting? What is 2NT? How much for a +ve response? How good a suit? It's about time I covered this once and for all.

First of all, I'll put in my usual plug for Benjamin twos. My preferred system is both a strong 2♣ and 2♦ with responder always relaying (or 'waiting' – with the next bid up). I have covered Benjamin twos numerous times before so now I'll go into the best scheme for responding to 2♣ if that is your only strong bid. I play this with Chuck or Lewis, and I believe that Bob and Allan also play it.

Now as I mentioned previously, responder bidding a natural 2NT (or 3NT!) is terrible – it takes up space, has the wrong man as declarer and makes finding minor suit fits very difficult.

The solution? 2NT is not natural! And the modern way of thinking is that you should only give a +ve if you have something very positive to say (i.e. a **good** suit). The 'modern' scheme opposite a 2♣ opener is: -

2♦ = Waiting. Could be a very good hand but one that does not qualify for one of the +ve bids. This 2♦ waiting bid is game forcing because 2♥ is the negative.

2♥ = Negative. No ace or 5 points or less. This requirements for a +ve vary according to partnership understanding. Typical is this, with say 8+ points in total: -

2♠ = A ♠ positive. 5+ card ♠ suit and two honours in the suit.

2NT = A ♥ positive. 5+ card ♥ suit and two honours in the suit.

3♣ = A ♣ positive. 5+ card ♣ suit and two honours in the suit.

3♦ = A ♦ positive. 5+ card ♦ suit and two honours in the suit.

Let's see how this would work with the 'problem' hand from last week:

♠ AQJ6	N	♠ K982	West	East
♥ A5	W E	♥ K74	2♣	2♦ (1)
♦ KQJ86	S	♦ 1072	2NT (2)	3♣ (3)
♣ A10		♣ KJ3	3♠	4NT etc to 6♠.

- (1) Waiting. Game forcing.
- (2) 22-24 balanced
- (3) Stayman

Of course none of this would help declarer with the previous 4414 hand and I would still open 1♣ unless I had a specific scheme for showing a strong 4441 type hand. Now there is such a scheme (the mini-maxi multi), but I'll leave that for a much later date!

Partner may be bust!

Board 16 from Monday 17th

The bidding at Table A was that of at least two tables. The right contract, but the wrong route! :

Dealer:	♠ K8	<u>Table A</u>				
West	♥ KQJ98	West	North(E)	East	South(B)	
E-W vul	♦ AQ4	1♣	dbl	pass	1♥ (1)	
	♣ K43	pass	4♥ (2)	all pass		
♠ A1063	N	♠ J92	<u>Table B</u>			
♥ A	W E	♥ 754	West	North(E)	East	South(B)
♦ 1083	S	♦ J962	1♣	dbl	pass	1♥ (1)
♣ AJ1087		♣ Q52	pass	3♥ (2)	pass	pass (3)
	♠ Q754		pass			
	♥ 10632					
	♦ K75					
	♣ 96					

- Table A: (1) Fine, showing 0-8 points. Some players will prefer 1♠ here, this is one exception to the general rule of bidding 4 card suits up the line – if partner does not like ♠'s (and bids 2♦ or 2NT – showing a very strong hand) you have enough values to bid ♥'s without raising the level.
- (2) What did you bid with this North hand E in this week's quiz? 4♥ is an overbid here, I have covered this in previous news-sheets. Remember, partner may have zero points! Both 2♥ and 3♥ show good hands here.
- Table B: (2) This North bid correctly. 3♥ shows a very strong hand (2♥ would be just a strong hand) and asks partner to bid game if he is not totally bust (i.e. has about 3 or more points)
- (3) And what did you bid with this South hand B in this week's quiz? It's a clear 4♥ opposite partner's very strong bid.

And what happened? ½ of the field reached 4♥ (I suspect like Table A). The other ½ played in ♥ partscores – presumably South did not bid game when asked?

The bottom lines: -

- There is a well know saying that I have often read. Inexperienced bidders tend to overbid good hand and underbid poor ones. It is very true.
- Understand bidding after a double: -
- A double followed by a raise of partner's minimal bid suit shows a good hand (say 15-16).
- A double followed by a jump raise of partner's minimal bid suit shows a very good hand (say 17-19).
- A double followed by a jump to game in partner's minimal bid suit shows a very very good hand (say 21+, i.e. game values in your hand).
- When you make a minimal response to partner's double and he raises, then take the above into account. So raise 2♥ to 4♥ with 6-8 points and 3♥ to 4♥ with 3-8 points.

The 2nd double is also take-out

Board 12 from Wednesday 19th

Dealer: ♠ -
West ♥ J74
N-S vul ♦ AJ108
♣ Q76532

West	North	East	South(D)
2♠	pass	pass (1)	dbl (2)
pass	3♣	3♠ (3)	dbl (4)
pass	4♣ (5)	dbl	all pass

♠ KJ9764	N	♠ A105
♥ K53	W E	♥ 1098
♦ Q62	S	♦ 954
♣ 4		♣ KJ98
	♠ Q853	
	♥ AQ62	
	♦ K73	
	♣ A10	

- (1) I would raise to 3♠ immediately here – make it difficult for South.
- (2) What did you bid with this South hand D(a) in this week's quiz. With 4 ♠'s it may be more prudent to pass, but with 4 ♥'s it's very tempting to double! I don't like 2NT as this may well not even be a ♠ stop.
- (3) What I would have done last go.
- (4) What did you bid with this South hand D(b) in this week's quiz? I would pass. South intended this double as penalties – unfortunately it is not. It shows a big red two-suiter.
- (5) North's last bid promised zero points. And if you accept what I say about South's 2nd double I would jump to 4♥ here; but perhaps North knew his partner?

And what happened? 4♣ doubled went one down, but scored an average as other South's also overbid (a hopeless 3NT twice). 4♠ by West went 4 down at another table, so presumably 3♠ would have gone down for a good score to N-S.

The bottom lines: -

- With 3-card support for partner's pre-empt, it's usually best to raise immediately.
- If partner has not shown any values, then the 2nd double is also take-out, showing a big hand with the other two suits.

3rd hand plays high – part 1

Board 2 from Wednesday 19th

Dealer: ♠ A6
East ♥ 10874
N-S vul ♦ 1072
♣ K954

♠ 872	N	♠ K1054
♥ J632	W E	♥ Q95
♦ KJ53	S	♦ AQ984
♣ J8		♣ 2
	♠ QJ93	
	♥ AK	
DUMMY	♦ 6	
→	♣ AQ10763	

West	North	East	South(C)
-	-	pass (1)	1♣
pass	1♥	pass (2)	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	pass (3)
pass			

- (1) I would open 1♦
- (2) And double (so showing ♦'s and ♠'s) looks ideal now
- (3) With no ♦ cover I would bid ♣'s, and with this powerful hand 3♣ looks about right.

Anyway, it's about the play. East led the ♦8 (as would I) and West contributed the ♦3! His 'excuse' was that he thought that the ♦8 was top of nothing. That would leave North with ♦AQ109 – just about possible I suppose? But West should play high anyway – it cannot cost.

And what happened? N-S got a good board, but not as good as the pair who bid and made 5♣.

The bottom lines: -

- 3rd hand plays high (except if there is a finessable honour in dummy).

3rd hand plays high – part 2

Board 20 from Wednesday 19th

Dealer: ♠ Q5
 West ♥ K543
 Both vul ♦ 97
 ♣ Q5

♠ 9732	N	♠ AKJ10
♥ 72	W E	♥ Q8
♦ J5432	S	♦ AKQ
♣ 32		♣ AK107
	♠ 864	
↑	♥ AJ1096	
DUMMY	♦ 1086	
	♣ 864	

Table A

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	2♣	pass
2♦	pass	3NT (1)	pass
pass (2)	pass		

Benjamin twos Table

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	2♦ (3)	pass
2♥ (4)	pass	2NT (5)	pass
3♣ (6)	pass	3♠	pass
4♠	all pass		

- Table A: (1) A typical Standard American or ancient Acoll auction. 3NT here is 25+ balanced.
 (2) And West has no idea if he should pass or try Stayman.
 ‘Benji’ (3) Game forcing
 Table (4) Automatic relay
 (5) 25+ balanced.
 (6) Stayman

And what happened? An enormous mixed bag of results. One West passed the game forcing Standard American 2♣ bid (2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ - pass), one West even passed the opening 2♣ bid!

Now 3NT is obviously a silly contract. South led the ♥9 (4th highest) – I would lead the ♥J (top of an interior sequence) and I’m sure that others would lead a different ♥ – but that’s not really the issue:- North played low!!

The bottom lines: -

- 3rd hand plays high (except if there is a finessable honour in dummy).
- When partner leads an honour (promising the lower cards in a sequence) then overtake and return the suit.
- Play Benjamin twos.

3rd hand plays high – part 3

Board 26 from Friday 21st

Dealer: ♠ J1064
East ♥ Q8765
Both vul ♦ 53 DUMMY
♣ KQ ↓
♠ AKQ N ♠ 3
♥ A92 W E ♥ J10
♦ AK8 S ♦ QJ9764
♣ 9632 ♣ J1085
♠ 98752
♥ K43
♦ 102
♣ A74

Table A
West North East South
- - pass pass
2NT pass 3♦ (1) pass
3♥ (2) pass 4♦ pass
5♦ all pass

Table B
West North East South
- - pass pass
2NT pass 3NT (1) all pass

Table A: (1) Meant as natural; I prefer the bid at Table B.
(2) He thought partner's bid was a transfer.

Table B: (1) This is a superb 5 points and well worth a shot at game opposite partner's 20-21 (or 20-22 – depending how you play it). And you all know me, I prefer to go for 3NT rather than 5 of a minor (and you get the lead up to partner).

And what happened? 5♦ went minus one at the two tables it was bid, and 3NT was bid at 3 tables and generally made +1.

Now I say generally – but at one table it made +3! How?

North led a standard 4th highest ♥6 and South ducked! What's more, he even tried to justify this appalling play in the post-mortem – saying that he thought North's lead could be 'top of nothing'. As this post-mortem could be heard all over the room I feel justified in adding my tuppence worth: -

And what can I say? Well actually quite a lot but I'll just keep it simple and polite: -

- One sometimes leads 'top of nothing' – but rarely against a NT contract! 4th best is 'standard' and that's what most sensible players would assume North's lead here to be.
- If it was indeed a rather obscure 'top of nothing' then that would give declarer ♥AQ987 in the suit and South's ♥K is a gonner anyway.
- North is marked with 5-6 points on the bidding and so would normally be expected to lead (4th best) from a suit with some values.
- There is absolutely no possible combination of cards where ducking here is remotely sensible. The only time it works is when West has a rather unlikely singleton ♥A, and then partner holds ♥Q987652 and would lead the ♥7.

The bottom lines: -

- 3rd hand plays high.
- When partner leads a lowish card against a NT contract, assume it's 4th best unless there is convincing evidence to the contrary.
- When you have made a foolish play, own up to it, rather than trying to justify it to the whole room!
- 'Sorry partner' would be the correct (but uncharacteristic) comment from (this) South.

Benjamin is the way

Board 27 from Friday 21st

There have been a few hands in recent week were playing Benjamin twos has worked very well (balanced 25+ hands). But that is by no means the most important feature of Benjamin twos – a more important feature is the ability to show a strong hand that's not good enough for 2♣ and not get passed out in 1♥/♠ when game makes: -.

Dealer: ♠ 1065
South ♥ Q864
Love all ♦ Q972
♣ 72

Table A (Standard American)

West	North	East	South(F)
-	-	-	1♠ (1)
pass (2)	pass	pass	

♠ 84 N ♠ A
♥ K105 W E ♥ J732
♦ AKJ1085 S ♦ 64
♣ 108 ♣ KJ6543
 ♠ KQJ9732
 ♥ A9
 ♦ 3
 ♣ AQ9

Table B (Standard American)

West	North	East	South(F)
-	-	-	1♠ (1)
2♦ (2)	pass	3♣ (3)	4♠ (4)
all pass			

Table C (Ancient Acol)

West	North	East	South(F)
-	-	-	2♠ (1)
pass	pass (5)	pass	

The 'Benji' Table

West	North	East	South(F)
-	-	-	2♣ (1)
2♦ (6)	pass (7)	pass	2♠ (8)
pass	3♠ (9)	pass	4♠ (10)
all pass			

Table A: (1) What did you open with this South hand F in this week's quiz? It's about 8½ playing tricks and not quite good enough for 2♣, so 1♠ and cross your fingers in Standard American

(2) And yes, somebody did actually pass with this West hand! Turned out well!

Table B: (1) I was South here and also opened 1♠.

(2) What most would do.

(3) I would pass

(4) My hand's improved with an expected ♣ lead.

Table C: (1) A strong two, forcing for one round in Acol.

(5) But this West did not realise this. Now Ancient Acol is slightly different from Benjamin as the 2♠ opener is forcing. 2NT is the negative, so bid 2NT (negative) and then 4♠ over partner's expected 3♠ as this hand is worth a trick and partner may be non-min. Note that, unlike Benji, responder cannot invite game and has to simply gamble.

'Benji'
Table (1) 8-9 playing tricks in this instance.

(6) Let's assume that West bids

(7) Then North passes

(8) 8-8½ playing tricks in ♠'s, I don't play this sequence as strictly forcing.

(9) But this North hand expects to be worth a trick and so should bid. This is simply invitational (not slow arrival as 2♠ is not forcing) and invites 4♠ if partner is not just a bare 8 playing tricks.

(10) With more than a minimum, South bids the game.

And what happened? 4♠ was bid twice and made exactly. ♠ partscores scored 170 or 200 at other tables.

The bottom lines :-

- Play Benjamin twos.
- I have explained responding to a strong Benjamin 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ in earlier news sheets (it's up on the web in the Benjamin two section). In particular, I wrote an article called 'the problem with playing tricks' (news-sheet 72). If you read that, you will understand why North should raise to 3♠ and not pass.

Walking the dog?

Board 21 from Friday 21st

Some say that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. Chuck tried this one on me on Friday:

Dealer:	♠ K84				
North	♥ AKJ98	West	North	East	South
N-S vul	♦ 75			(Chuck)	(me)
	♣ 1093	-	1♥	pass (1)	1NT
		pass	2♥ (2)	3♣ (3)	pass (4)
♠ Q1032	N	pass	pass		
♥ 107432	W E				
♦ QJ103	S				
♣ -					
	♠ 965				
	♥ 65				
	♦ AK962				
	♣ 854				

- (1) Now what would you bid here? 2♣? 3♥? 3NT? It's not obvious and I guess that anything could work. Chuck passed!
- (2) Pass is reasonable.
- (3) Now Chuck tried his trick.
- (4) South has two top tricks opposite an opener, but this dog was too wily to double!

And what happened? 3♣ made exactly for an average.

The bottom lines :-

- I know and respect Chuck's bridge abilities. In particular I know that an overcall by him at the two level is sound. So I smelled a rat here, why did he not overcall 1st time?
- The answer is that he was hoping to get doubled! Apparently this trick has a name: walking the dog!

The jump to four is weak

Board 15 from Wednesday 19th

Dealer: ♠ 1062
South ♥ K6532
N-S vul ♦ A63
♣ Q9

♠ 9853 N ♠ KQ74
♥ 87 W E ♥ Q
♦ 752 S ♦ J1084
♣ AK87 ♣ J543

♠ AJ
♥ AJ1094
♦ KQ3
♣ 1062

West	North	East	South(C)
-	-	-	1♥
pass	4♥ (1)	pass	4NT (2)
pass	5♦	pass	5♥
all pass			

- (1) This would also be my choice – it's a weak bid, promising (usually) 5 ♥'s and little else. This hand is about top of the range for the bid.
- (2) What did you do with this South hand C in this week's quiz? This hand is nowhere near good enough opposite a weak jump and should pass. You really need at least 19 points to make a move here, and with that much I would not bid Blackwood if the ♣'s were wide open - I would cue bid 4 ♠.

And what happened? 5♥ lost the obvious 3 tricks. 4♥ was bid and made at most other tables.

The bottom lines: -

- Raising partner's 1♥/♠ opening to 4♥/♠ is weak.
- Avoid Blackwood when holding a wide-open suit unless you have reason to believe that partner has a top card in that suit.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: (a) I opened 1♣ because: -

(b) There is no sensible answer. Any bid now shows a 5+ card suit.

(c) There is no sensible answer. It appears that some play 3♣ as Stayman here (that's a new one on me), but how do you find a minor suit fit for slam?

Hand B: 4♥. Partner has a very strong hand. You have shown 0-8 and he's inviting you to bid game if you are not totally bust. Easily enough here.

Hand C: Pass. Partner raise to 4♠ is a weak pre-emptive bid.

Hand D: (a) Pass (or double). I prefer pass but will not argue with double as it's very tempting holding values and 4 ♥'s. 2NT is a poor bid with these ♠'s as it may not even be one stop.
(b) Pass. A 2nd double here is also take-out; showing a big red two-suiter in this situation.

Hand E: 3♥. Partner may be bust. 3♥ shows a very strong hand here and partner should bid game with about 3+ points. 4♥ is an overbid which you should only make if partner is likely to pass 3♥ with 3+ points because he does not read the news-sheets.

Hand F: 1♠, it's not quite good enough for 2♣. Playing Benji open 2♣ (2♣-2♦-2♠).