

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 7 ½ - 8 ½ 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 7 ½).

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	