



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	
pass	pass	1♣	1♥	(1) Support Double (3♠'s)
1♠	2♥	dbl (1)	pass	(2) E-W may have a 5-3♠ fit, you have a 5-3♥ fit. At (2) you are in the balancing seat and may venture 3♥.
2♠	pass	pass	? (2)	

East	South	West	North	
pass	pass	1♣	1♥	(1) Negative Double (4♠'s)
dbl (1)	pass	1♠	pass	(2) As South knows all about the 'Law', this bid is presumably just two card support (South would have bid 2♥ at the previous turn with 3♥'s).
pass	2♥ (2)	pass	pass	(3) Only a 5-2 fit, so pass. Who knows, maybe E-W only have a 4-3♠ fit?
2♠	pass	pass	? (3)	

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
 2 ♠ 4 ♣ last natural bid was 1NT.

1NT 2 ♣ Gerber (RKC?)
 2 ♥ 4 ♣

1NT 2 ♥ Quantitative (5 ♠'s)

1NT 2 ♣ Quantitative.

2 ♠ 4NT 2 ♥ 4NT (4 ♠'s)

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	Hand D	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.
♠ K86	♠ K103	
♥ J42	♥ Q42	
♦ Q9532	♦ QJ932	
♣ 95	♣ 95	

That Interesting Big Hand Again

from News-sheet 29.

North	South	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:
♠ AKQJ54	♠ 1093	
♥ AKQ	♥ J10985	
♦ -	♦ Q63	
♣ AQ32	♣ 95	

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	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
♠ J109864	2♦ and RHO bids 4♠! What now? I held this hand and managed not to
♥ KQ5	fall off of my chair. Obviously you have 4♠ set 2, probably 3 tricks in
♦ A	your own hand, so double? 500 is not to be sneezed at, more if partner can
♣ J64	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 worth game now, but what is the bid? 2 ♠ and 3 ♠ are non-forcing,
♥ A94	as are 3 ♦ or 4 ♦. Seem to have run out of bids? Gerry chose 4 ♠,
♦ K1054	certainly a very reasonable bid, but is there anything better? Remember,
♣ 5	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	