

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.