

Last week's winners: Monday 29/12/03

Friday 2/1/04

1 st	Larse/Arne	64%	1 st	Hans/Gary	63%
2 nd	Hans/Chuck	61%	2 nd =	Mike/Angela & Dave/Norman	53%

The hi-tech pest – mobile phones. I've never had one (who wants to phone me anyway). Would it be too much to ask if people could turn them off during our Bridge session? I know it's Christmas, but a loud rendering of Jinglebells just as you're about to execute a progressive squeeze without the count really is distracting.

I received a number of inputs as to which movement is preferred with 7 tables (thanks Martin, Gary and Hans). All said that they did not mind moving a lot and the Howell (two boards a round) is to be preferred. Hans also pointed out that it is fairer (every pair plays every other pair) and everybody has to come up against Chuck for two boards – there's no avoiding it now. Fine. I have to lose some weight and I guess that the rushing around will do me good? But will everybody please check that they have the correct boards. I also have a Howell movement for 8 tables which I will try. With 9+ tables we must have a Mitchell (N-S stationary), but with 9+ tables then I always give separate results for the N-S and E-W pairs.

Bidding Quiz**Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.**

Hand A	Hand B	What do you open with Hand A? 1 st seat, love all.
♠ 106	♠ AKQ9	
♥ 98	♥ 72	With Hand B you are dealer, vulnerable. Do you open?
♦ 6	♦ J2	
♣ AKJ108643	♣ J7643	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C partner opens 1♠, what is your response?
♠ J102	♠ K84	
♥ KJ107	♥ Q764	With Hand D it's three passes to you. Do you open in 4 th seat?
♦ 832	♦ J83	
♣ A72	♣ AQ2	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you open 1♦, partner responds 1♠ and you rebid 2♣. What is your bid after partner replies 2♠?
♠ 83	♠ QJ4	
♥ KJ	♥ AJ	
♦ AQ1062	♦ KJ864	With Hand F partner opens 1NT (15-17), what is your response?
♣ KQ73	♣ K109	

Sequence G

- Is it Forcing?

W	N	E	S	East's double is negative. It promises 4(+) ♥'s and at least the values to compete to 2♥. Is 3♥ invitational or (game) forcing?
1♠	2♦	dbl(1)	pass	
3♥				

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Responding to Partner's Negative Double

It looks like this is a topic that needs covering as one of our leading players (Chuck!!) was apparently confused over a hand I covered last week? :-

West	North	East	South	
-	-	pass	pass	
pass	1♠	2♦	dbl (1)	(1) Negative, promising 4♥'s
pass	3♥ (2)		(2) game invitational

A quite straightforward bidding sequence, what's more there are no if's, but's or maybe's about it. The double at (1) guarantees 4+ ♥'s, it shows the values to (at least) compete to 2♥. North should respond in a similar way to what he would if South had responded 1♥ to a 1♣/♦ opening. So 2♥ is weak support, 3♥ is invitational and 4♥ is a raise to game. Easy.

At least I think it's easy. Let's start at the beginning and explain the responses to negative doubles ... what is a Negative Double? It is a *specific* type of take-out double and there is only one scenario – partner opens, RHO overcalls and a double by you is called a negative (or Sputnik) double. Doubles in similar scenarios may well be for take-out, but they are not called negative doubles.

Negative doubles can be played in various different ways, and I shall differentiate between what is common and what is mandatory. In principle, a negative double promises the two unbid suits. What is most commonly played (and the style I prefer) is that a negative double only promises the (unbid) major(s). If there is just one unbid major then a negative double guarantees 4+ cards in that major (mandatory) and says nothing about the other suits (common). If both majors are unbid (e.g. 1♣ - 1♦ - dbl, 1♦ - 2♣ - dbl) then the negative double shows both majors (but one of them 3 card is commonly allowed). If both majors have been bid (e.g. 1♥ - 1♠ - dbl, 1♠ - 2♥ - dbl) then the negative double shows both minors.

OK, but how does opener reply? Let's take the sequence 1♣ - 1♠ - dbl for our example. Dbl is a negative double, promising 4♥'s and is unlimited in strength (commonly played) – exactly the same as if there had been no overcall and responder had bid 1♥. Opener responds to the negative double in exactly the same way as he would to a 1♥ bid: -

2♥ = min 3♥ = invitational 4♥ = to play.

The only difference is that 4♥ may have pre-emptive overtones (it is a sound 18-19 points with no intervention). The reason for this is that if opener has a big hand with slam interest then he can cue bid the opponent's suit.

It may look like it, but 1♣ - 1♠ - dbl - pass - 2♥ is not a reverse, it is simply supporting partner at the lowest level. And 3♥ is not a jump reverse, it is invitational support for partner's suit.

Double for Penalties?

Board 15 from Friday 26th, N-S vul

Dealer:	♠ A94	West	North	East	South
South	♥ AJ7				
N-S vul	♦ 54	-	-	-	pass
	♣ 97632	pass	pass	1♠	pass (1)
		1NT	pass	pass (2)	2♦ (3)
♠ Q	N	pass (4)	pass	2♠ (5)	all pass
♥ 10832	W E				
♦ AJ72	S				
♣ 10854					
	♠ K72				
	♥ 965				
	♦ 109863				
	♣ AQ				

1NT made +1 at another table, 2♠ went minus 1 here for a bottom score to E-W. Could anything be done after South decided to stick his oar in? Let's analyse the bidding: -

Everything is obvious up to East's pass at (2). Normally it is best to correct to 2 of your major with a 6 card suit, but with so many points outside pass was an excellent choice. Well bid Gary. And what about South's 2♦ at (3)? This is a balancing bid, he knows that North must have some values and bidding a 5 card suit is normally a good bet – don't give the opposition an easy ride in just 1NT at pairs scoring.

Now we come to the crunch, what should West do at (4)? He has heard South pass initially and also fail to overcall at (1), South must be balancing with a miserable hand with a 5 card ♦ suit, partner (East) must have at least 2 ♦'s (or he would not have passed 1NT). Thus N-S probably have just a 5-2 (possibly 5-1 or even 5-0!) ♦ fit. With AJxx sitting over the bidder, double! What's more, if you don't double then you 'know' that partner will bid 2♠ - your hand is miserable in ♠'s; with a mis-fit, defend! And if they are doubled, even the better! It is virtually impossible to construct a hand for East where he can pass 1NT but 2♦ by South will make (please don't bother to invent one for me). And what about East's 2♠ bid at (5)? I think it's automatic. East's bidding was perfect.

2♦ probably goes 2 off, so +500 for E-W on a partscore hand, not to be sneezed at? Even 1 off gets the magic +200. You really have to aim for this at pairs scoring.

Nice bid again, Gary

Board 11 from Friday 2nd, love all.

North	South (E)	North (me)	South
♠ AQ10972	♠ 83	-	1♦
♥ 9832	♥ KJ	1♠	2♣ (1)
♦ K	♦ AQ1062	2♠ (2)	4♠ (3)
♣ 84	♣ KQ73	pass	

I bid this one with Gary (South). 2♣ at (1) is correct, the hand is not good enough for a forcing 3♣. I prefer 2♠ at (2) to 2♥ as the ♥ suit is miserable and the ♠ suit is excellent. 2♥ would, in any case, be 4th suit forcing. 4♠ at (3) is an excellent bid. North has shown values and a decent 6 card ♠ suit.

When playing a strong NT you need 11 points (or a very good 10) to respond in a new suit at the two level. I say this week after week, but we still get the occasional transgression: -

North (C)	South	<u>Table A</u>		<u>Table B</u>	
		North	South	North	South
♠ J102	♠ AQ974				
♥ KJ107	♥ 86				
♦ 832	♦ AK9	-	1 ♠	-	1 ♠
♣ A72	♣ J63	2 ♠ (1)	pass	2 ♣ (1) ... and on to 3NT	

The board was played 6 times on Monday, the bidding was as Table A 4 times, 2 ♠ usually made +1 for a score of +140. At another table North responded 1NT at (1), it made scoring +90. At Table B they got too high (3NT was -1), 3NT (or 4 ♠) is a very poor contract and 3NT scored the deserved bottom, anyone to blame?

It is, of course, North's bid at (1) that is the deciding factor. 9 points and two tens, what are the possibilities? 1NT, 2 ♥, 2 ♣, or 2 ♠? Let's see: -

- (a) 1NT 6-9(10) points, balanced. A reasonable option, but see (d).
- (b) 2 ♥ a decent ♥ suit, so bid it? No, unfortunately 2 ♥ guarantees a 5 card suit (and this hand is too weak in any case).
- (c) 2 ♣ so bid 2 ♣ then? With a bit more power and/ or better shape, that would be fine. A new suit is a good 10+ points, this is totally flat (deduct 1 point). It is nowhere near good enough for a new suit two level response.
- (d) 2 ♠ got there at last, the correct bid. With respectable 3 card support and a weak suit (♦'s), 2 ♠ is to be preferred to 1NT. Support with support. Well bid the four North's who got it right. You see, 4 correct bids (and one – 1NT – that's not too bad) out of six times is pretty good; perhaps some people do take note of what I say in the news sheets? It makes it all worthwhile.

It's easy to see why 2 ♣ is a poor bid. If South proceeds with 2NT (seems right to me) what does North do? He simply has losing options, would 3 ♠ be forcing then? Do not respond with a new suit at the 2 level if you cannot cope with a 2NT rebid, this North hand certainly cannot even though South is absolutely max for his 2NT bid.

Once North has overbid with 2 ♣ then game is inevitable unless he passes 2NT, South has a good 14 points and decent cards in partner's 'suit'. I don't know how the bidding proceeded at table B, it's irrelevant anyway, the mistake was made at (1).

Responding 2 ♥

I touched on this above, let's discuss it in more detail. If partner opens 1 ♠ and you have values for a two level bid (11+ playing a strong NT, 8+ playing a weak NT), then you can bid a new suit. However, a 2 ♥ bid takes up a lot of bidding space and so is reserved specifically for when you have 5 or more ♥'s (then opener knows that he can support with just 3 ♥'s). If you have only 4 ♥'s, then bid a minor suit. If there is a ♥ fit, then partner will always bid his 4 card ♥ suit.

A Pre-emptive opener?

North 17 from Friday 2nd, love all, dealer North

Hand A

♠ 106
♥ 98
♦ 6
♣ AKJ108643

So what do you open as dealer? I guess that the options are pass 1♣, 3♣ or 4♣? Now if this was a major suit then a 4-level opening would be correct. However I do not like opening 4♣ or 4♦ with this type of hand – you have by-passed 3NT which may well be the best contract (I like to play 4♣/♦ as Texas transfers). So pass, 1♣ or 3♣? I don't really like 1♣ and pass is probably technically correct. I opened 3♣ and partner bid a pushy 3NT which made (this underlines what I said about opening 4♣).

An Opening Bid?

Board 21 from Friday 2nd, N-S vul.

North (B)	South	North	South
♠ AKQ9	♠ J	1♣	1♦
♥ 72	♥ A963	1♠	4NT
♦ J2	♦ AKQ7	5♦	6NT (1)
♣ J7643	♣ AQ85	pass	

This was the bidding at one table on Friday. 6NT made comfortably, although South could bid 6♣ at (1). All three other tables settled for 3NT(+3 or 4), I guess that North did not open? Once North opens with 1♣ the South hand improves and should certainly look for slam. I would certainly open the North hand, it conforms with the rule of 20 and has 10 points concentrated in the two long suits, a sound opener in any position.

An Opening Bid in 4th seat?

Board 12 from Friday 2nd, N-S vul.

Dealer:	♠ Q932	West	North	East	South (D)
West	♥ 953				
N-S vul	♦ AQ105 ♣ 54	pass	pass	pass	pass (1)

♠ J107	N	♠ A65
♥ A2	W E	♥ KJ108
♦ K972	S	♦ 62
♣ J1063		♣ K987
	♠ K84	
	♥ Q764	
	♦ J83	
	♣ AQ2	

This hand was passed out just once on Friday. The other two times N-S landed in 1NT and 2♦, both just making.

I always look at the board when it has been passed out, I usually find one hand that I would have opened; but not on this occasion: - Obviously the first three hands pass, but should South open in 4th seat? It has 12 points and conforms to the rules of

20 and 15. However, only the rule of 15 (points + ♠ length) is really relevant for 4th seat openers, I would deduct a point for the poor shape (and lack of intermediates and poor ♠ suit and only 2 points in the 'long' suit and pathetic ♦'s) and pass. The contracts both made because of the fortunate lie of both minor suit kings (in fact just about everything lies well for South). Swap the E-W hand and South loses a few 100 on the deal. Unlucky (Mike/Angela), I agree with your decision to pass it out. A dubious opener, especially vulnerable.

A Bad Hand for the Weak NT?

Board 19 from Friday 2nd, E-W vul.

North	South	North	South		
♠ A753	♠ KQ2	-	1NT (1)	(1) 12-14	
♥ 3	♥ 107	2♣ (2)	2♦ (3)	(2) Stayman	
♦ AK92	♦ J10654	2NT	3NT	(3) no 4 card major	
♣ 9754	♣ AKJ	pass			

This was the bidding at one table on Friday. 3NT lost the first 5 ♥ tricks, luckily(?) they split 5-5. Anyone to blame? I don't think so, I can't see that anyone can bid anything else? Playing a strong NT the bidding goes 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♠ etc and sensible contracts of 4♠ and 5♦ were reached at two other tables.

Incidentally, how would you play the hand in 4♠ after a ♥ lead and continuation? You should discard (a ♣) from the North hand on the second ♥! If you ruff then you will be in difficulties later if trumps are not 3-3. The defence cannot now continue with a 3rd round of ♥'s as you can ruff in the South hand. This is called keeping control (the opposite of losing control!). I note that the one pair playing in 4♠ made +2, I guess that they ignored this safety play? Luckily ♠'s were 3-3.

At one table the bidding was 1♦ - 3♦ - pass. South later asked me how he could have investigated the best game. Actually, North should respond 1♠ of course, but after 3♦ South should press on. Best is to look for 3NT and a 3♠ bid here shows a stopper and asks partner to bid 3NT with a ♥ stopper. North would then bid 4♦ (no ♥ stopper) and South can then bid a fairly confident 5♦ as he knows that there are not wasted ♥ values opposite.

A Poor 6NT

Board 10 from Friday 2nd, both vul.

West (F)	East	West	East		
♠ QJ4	♠ AK5	-	1NT (1)	(1) 15-17	
♥ AJ	♥ 765	4NT (2)	5♠	(2) aces?	
♦ KJ864	♦ A1053	6NT	pass		
♣ K109	♣ A75				

Minus two, with no realistic chances of making. 4NT was asking for aces (I prefer 4NT as quantitative here, with 4♣ as the ace ask). So who overbid? Actually I think that they both did. I would not open 1NT (although I suspect that most people would). A totally flat 15 count with poor intermediates and only 4 points in the long suit, I would call this a 14 count. Anyway, 1NT is not too bad and would be the choice of many (most?). The real problem is West's push to slam. To make 6NT you generally need about 33 points (and 37 points for 7NT) unless you have a good long suit. Even a quantitative 4NT is an overbid with this West hand.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A:	I prefer pass or 3♣. I guess that some may open 1♣. I do not like 4♣.	Hand E:	4♠
Hand B:	1♣	Hand F:	3NT
Hand C:	2♠	Sequence G:	Invitational.
Hand D:	I would pass.		