



Last week's winners: Monday 2/2/04

Friday 6/2/04

N-S 1 st John/Dave	60 %	E-W 1 st Øystein/Bjarne	59 %	1 st Mike/Angela	62%
N-S 2 nd Norman/Dave	59 %	E-W 2 nd Chris/Niels	58 %	2 nd Lis/Finn	59%

The Dave who won N-S on Monday is a different Dave to the one who came second (obviously). The Dave who came second is the one who used to play with John but now doesn't (obviously). Anyway, the N-S field on Monday was very strong, with pairs such as Paul(Ire)/Joe, Alex/Jeff and Hans/Michael (3rd, 4th and 5th resp.) all close behind. It looks like the Brits and their weak NT Acol system won in the day though (1st and 2nd).

The Chris who came 2nd E-W is also a Brit – not the chess playing Chris from England but a new member (a friend of the 2nd Dave). The Mike who won on Friday is married to Angela (both Brits), he is not the Canadian Batchelor Mike. All very confusing. Do I need surnames? At least names like Øystein and Bjarne are unambiguous (they're not Brits).

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠. What is your bid?
♠ Q5	♠ KQ5	
♥ K764	♥ AJ109	With Hand B partner opens 1NT. Do you bid Stayman or 3NT?
♦ J985	♦ Q76	
♣ 1073	♣ 963	
Hand C	Hand D	What do you open with Hand C?
♠ A974	♠ A10632	
♥ J73	♥ Q8	What do you open with Hand D?
♦ 3	♦ Q53	
♣ K9832	♣ QJ9	
Hand E	Hand F	With Hand E you open 1♠ and partner responds 1NT, what now?
♠ K10732	♠ 862	
♥ Q3	♥ 983	With Hand F RHO opens 1♥ which is passed round to partner who doubles. RHO passes, what do you bid?
♦ AK54	♦ KQJ3	
♣ K10	♣ 1072	
Hand G	Hand H	With hand G partner opens 1♠ and RHO doubles. What is your bid?
♠ K8	♠ K9743	
♥ AK104	♥ A	With hand H partner opens 1♥ and you bid 1♠. Partner then bids 2♣, what do you do?
♦ 1084	♦ 10975	
♣ K865	♣ QJ2	

The Beginner's Page

This week we consider what responder must do when partner opens and you cannot support his suit. As I said last week, a bid of a new suit is forcing and could be any strength (6+ points). However, if the new suit is at the two level you need considerably more (11+).

The Jump Shift

But what if you have a very strong hand and a good suit? You can show this by jumping. This is game forcing and always promises a very good suit (5+ cards). If a major suit, then it strongly suggests that that suit be trumps. If a minor suit, then it is often angling for 3NT (or a slam).

Let's have a few examples, partner has opened 1♥, what do you respond?

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ A864	♠ A8764	♠ AKJ962	♠ 864	♠ 762	♠ A7
♥ K8	♥ K8	♥ K8	♥ K8	♥ K84	♥ J8
♦ 986	♦ K86	♦ AJ7	♦ AJ864	♦ AQ86	♦ AKQ987
♣ J752	♣ KJ2	♣ 87	♣ J75	♣ Q84	♣ Q74

Hand 1: 1♠. You have the correct point count for 1NT, but do not deny a 4 card major. If partner also has 4 ♠'s then a ♠ contract will play better. If partner does not have 4 ♠'s then he will bid 1NT with a balanced hand (12-14) and that is fine.

Hand 2: 1♠. You have sufficient points to insist upon game but do not jump to 2♠ with a suit that is this poor.

Hand 3: 2♠. This suit is good enough for a jump shift response.

Hand 4: 1NT. The hand is not strong enough for a 2 level response.

Hand 5: 2♦. Enough for a 2 level response.

Hand 6: 3♦. Game forcing. Tell partner about your excellent suit.

Note. What I have said about jump shifts is basic Standard American. Some more advanced players may choose the jump shift to mean something different – they prefer to take it slowly with strong hands.

The 2♥ bid when partner opens 1♠

Hand 7	Hand 8	
♠ 86	♠ 86	We see from the above (Hand 5) that a new suit only promises 4 cards. There is, however, one exception. When partner opens 1♠ then a response of 2♥ by us takes up a lot of bidding space.
♥ KQJ86	♥ KQJ8	For that reason one needs a 5 card suit (in addition to the mandatory 11+ pts) to respond 2♥. With Hands 7 & 8 partner has opened 1♠. With Hand 7 we respond 2♥ but with hand 8 we bid 2♣. A ♥ fit is never lost, as if opener has a 4 card ♥ suit in addition to his 5 card ♠ opener, then he will rebid 2♥.
♦ Q62	♦ Q62	
♣ KJ5	♣ KJ52	

Stayman or not?

Board 27 from Monday 2nd, love all.

North (B)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ KQ5	♠ A1032	-	-	-	1NT
♥ AJ109	♥ K872	pass	3NT	pass	pass
♦ Q76	♦ AJ10	pass			
♣ 963	♣ K5				

Looking at both hands it is clear that 4♥ is normally a far better contract. Never deny a 4 card major, especially when you have a very weak suit. I've been all through this before (news-sheet 28), the only time that you should not bid Stayman opposite a strong NT opener is when you have 13+ points (so 28+ in total) and all other suits well covered (i.e. weak 'trumps').

How many points for a Stayman?

I gave an example last week of a very weak hand that should bid Stayman. One pair asked me about this as they had always thought that you need invitational values or more to bid Stayman. In principle, that is correct, and there are just two exceptions where you can bid Stayman with a very weak hand: -

Hand J	Hand K	Hand L	
♠ K9864	♠ K984	♠ K984	With Hand J you can bid 2♣. You pass a 2♥/♥ response and convert 2♦ to 2♠. It's the same when you have 5♥'s and 4♠'s (convert 2♦ to 2♥).
♥ J762	♥ J762	♥ J762	With Hand K you can bid 2♣ and pass any response.
♦ 76	♦ 87642	♦ -	But with Hand L you will be fixed over a 2♦ reply and so it is best to pass 1NT. You do not want to play in a possible 4-2 fit.
♣ Q5	♣ -	♣ 87643	

How many points for a negative double?

Board 4 from Friday 6th, both vul.

West (A)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ Q5	♠ AJ76	pass	pass	1♦	1♠
♥ K764	♥ 83	dbl (1)	2♠	dbl (2)	pass
♦ J985	♦ Q1042	pass	pass		
♣ 1073	♣ AJ2				

2♠ made +1 for a complete bottom to E-W, anyone to blame? East later confirmed that his double at (2) was for penalties (regular partnerships may wish to discuss this) but said that West should have more for his negative double. I disagree. If there was no intervention then West would respond 1♥. After the intervention that is not possible but a negative double here promises no more than a 1♥ bid would – values to compete to 2♥ if there is a fit. With no fit then West bids 2♦ over any response. To bid 2♦ at (1) is incorrect as it denies 4♥'s. It is safe to negative double in this situation with minimal values as you have a ♦ fit. East's double on a minimal hand is a very poor bid – he should simply pass.

The bottom line. A negative double is unlimited, but at the one level it only promises values to compete to 2 of the major, so could be just 6 points.

When not to play in the 4-4 fit

Board 17 from Monday 2nd, love all.

North	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 1094	♠ AKJ7	-	1♣	pass	1♠ (1)
♥ Q6	♥ A94	pass	1NT (2)	pass	3♦ (3)
♦ 8642	♦ AK95	pass	4♦ (4)	pass	4NT
♣ AKQJ	♣ 65	pass	5♦	pass	6♦ (5)
		pass	6♠ (6)	pass	6NT (7)
		pass	pass	pass	

This was the bidding from Joe/Paul on Monday. It may look like a case of passing the buck, but in fact it is all quite logical.

- (1) This hand is strong enough to bid 2♦ and then reverse into ♠'s, but it is the wrong shape (that would promise 5♦'s). So 1♠ is best here.
- (2) 2♠ is an alternative here (support with support) but South only promises 4♠'s and so 1NT is best. If the ♥'s were xx then I would bid 2♠.
- (3) 2♦ would not be forcing in their system, so 3♦ is fine but this generally promises 5♠'s. However, with this very strong hand that's not really a problem.
- (4) What would you bid here? 3NT? Or perhaps 3♥ (4th suit forcing – checking for a stop)? Maybe, but I prefer Joe's choice of 4♦ - support with support.
- (5) With an established fit and an excellent suit, this is the best slam to bid – the 4-4 fit is usually best and safer than 6NT.
- (6) North, however, knows that his ♦ support is not really slam quality. If there is an unavoidable loser outside the ♦ suit then it's probably curtains as there is probably a ♦ loser. North's sequence (1♠ followed by 3♦) usually promises 5♠'s and it looks like the ♠ slam is better.
- (7) South, of course, knows exactly why North pulled 6♦, and he also knows that North has exactly 3♠'s (he did not support at (1)). So he bids 6NT.

6NT is an excellent contract – played from the correct hand (you don't mind a ♥ lead – quite likely on the bidding). Excellent bidding judgment all round. 6NT made and scored a 2nd top. It was only beaten by the pair making 6NT +1. It looks impossible, how did you manage it John? Boards like that help to win competitions, eh?

The bottom line. I am always harping on about the 4-4 fit, and even 8642 is usually fine. You normally get an extra trick in one hand or the other. An exception, however, is when you have bundles of points. With a weak suit like this you normally have a trump loser, if you have ample points it may be best not to have this suit as trumps. 8642 is fine in a part-score or game contract but is too weak to be trumps in a slam.

A Word about Qx.

As I said, I like the 1NT rebid with the West hand. Qx is an interesting holding; if partner has Axx (as in this case) then the suit is immune to the opening lead without conceding two tricks to you. Qx holdings usually belong in declarer's hand, not dummy. John, of course, opened a weak NT with the North hand – nothing to think about.

1960, The Year of My Birth?Board 5 from Monday 2nd, N-S vul.

North (C)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ 105	♠ K86	-	3♦	pass	3NT (1)
♥ -	♥ AQ5	pass	pass	pass	
♦ J98632	♦ AK75				
♣ AK532	♣ Q76				

3NT made a comfortable 13 tricks on a ♥ lead, anything wrong with the bidding? Yes! In my view this is a terrible pre-empt. Pre-empts are 7 card suits and it is best to have points in the pre-empt suit. Also, a huge second suit like this is unwise for a pre-empt – the hand has too much playing strength. And the 3NT bid? Fine in my view. Opposite a normal pre-empt you would not expect to make slam.

And how should the bidding go? North should pass and South opens 1♦. It's easy then if you play inverted minors (2♦ would be forcing) but with traditional methods you would respond 2♣. South then rebids 3NT (18-19 or a long solid ♦ suit (unlikely)) and 6♦ is easily reached. If South had the ♠A then 7♦ is a good bid but it is difficult to reach unless you play Exclusion Blackwood. If your partner/bidding style is that the 2♣ bid by a passed hand may be passed then it's not so easy. I won't go into that as the solution is to play inverted minors.

The bottom line. Pre-empts take up bidding space and make reaching games and slams difficult. This is fine if it is the opponent's hand, but not when it's yours. Pre-empts are 7 card suits, best with just as many points in the suit as outside. J98632 certainly does not qualify.

And what is 1960? It's not really the year of my birth, but apparently the score for 7♦ redoubled, making. Don't ask me how they bid it, but if you double Jeff then expect a redouble. He's not renowned for holding back.

Another Slam with a VoidBoard 18 from Monday 2nd, N-S vul.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 62	♠ AJ	-	-	2♣	pass
♥ A9854	♥ KQJ3	2♦ (1)	pass	3♦ (2)	pass
♦ 872	♦ AKQJ1043	3♥	pass	5♣ (3)	pass
♣ J65	♣ -	5♥ (4)	pass	7♥	pass
		pass	pass		

A small slam was bid 4 times on Monday (the other 5 times it was just 5♦) but nobody bid the grand (this bidding is my concoction). 13 tricks were made on every occasion and I was asked how to bid the grand. I've mentioned it a few times, the answer is Exclusion Blackwood. In a situation where 4NT would be Blackwood, then a jump to the 5 level in a suit (not trumps) is Exclusion Blackwood – it asks for aces (or key cards if you play RKCB) not including the suit bid. Responses are the obvious steps.

- (1) negative or waiting
- (2) game forcing
- (3) exclusion Blackwood (or Exclusion RKCB)
- (4) 1 ace (or key card) outside the ♣ suit.

Redouble?Board 10 from Friday 30th, both vul.

North (G)	South (D)	West	North	East	South
♠ K8	♠ A10632	-	-	pass	1♠ (1)
♥ AK104	♥ Q8	dbl (2)	2♥ (3)	pass	2♠ (4)
♦ 1084	♦ Q53	pass	3♣	pass	3NT
♣ K865	♣ QJ9	pass	pass		

3NT is a poor contract, with 4 ♦'s and ♣A to lose, yet 3NT was the final contract at 4 of the 6 tables on Friday. Let's look at the bidding at this table: -

- (1) 11 points and a 5 card suit, do you open? No. This is a poor 11 count, the ♠ suit has no 'body', quacks in outside suits are very poor cards and the hand does not conform to the rule of 20. Opening here was the root cause of the problem.
- (2) Take-out. Usually short in ♠'s and promising 4 ♥'s – certainly by this player (me).
- (3) Obviously this is a very good hand and has game values (but not opposite this poor opener!). Anyway, what should North bid? With no interference then 2♣, a 2♥ bid promises 5 ♥'s as I explained recently in detail in news-sheets 62 and 64. But it's different after West's double at (2). The correct bid is redouble. With these ♥'s sitting over West's 4 card suit E-W are heading for a hiding. Wouldn't it be nice to see Terry go for 800?
- (4) N-S play 4 card majors, so 2♠ is fine here.

The bottom lines. Apply the rule of 20 to borderline openers and deduct for poor cards – queens and jacks (quacks) in short suits. After an intervening double, redouble with 9 or more points and a mis-fit for partner.

Responding to partner's take-out doubleBoard 6 from Friday 30th, E-W vul.

West (F)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 862	♠ AK95	-	-	pass	1♥
♥ 983	♥ K4	pass	pass	dbl (1)	pass
♦ KQJ3	♦ 1054	1♠ (2)	pass	pass	2♥
♣ 1072	♣ 8654	pass	pass	2♠ (3)	pass
		pass	pass		

2♠ went minus 3, so -300, anyone to blame?

East's double at (1) is in the balancing seat and is fine. But what should West bid at (2)? Partner passed originally so can't have much and you don't want to encourage him, so West chose 1♠. Unfortunately this backfired. East presumably has 4 ♠'s for his double and he was then able to compete at (3) (The Law). West should bid 2♦ at (2), this does not promise values (it is still 0-9 pts) but it is the cheapest 4 card suit. If West had bid 2♦ then East would pass at (3) and defending 2♥ is the best spot for E-W.

The bottom line. A non-jump in response to partner's take-out double does not promise any values. Bid your cheapest 4 card suit.

Rebid or pass 1NT?Board 5 from Friday 30th, N-S vul.

West (E)	East	West	North	East	South
♠ K10732	♠ 5	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ Q3	♥ J1098	1♠	pass	1NT (1)	pass
♦ AK54	♦ Q973	pass (2)	pass		
♣ K10	♣ Q542				

First of all, East has just 5 points, so should he bid at (1) or pass? I would never pass, it is very likely that 1♠ will play badly and that there is a better spot. Just one pair passed 1♠ on Friday and it went -3 for a clear bottom.

So, 1NT is 'obvious' at (1). But should West pass? I would bid 2♦, with two doubletons it is usually best to play in a suit contract and even a 5-2 ♠ fit is fine. As it happens, 2♦ is the best contract and 1NT is just reasonable. What happened? 1NT made for an above average score and 2♦ made +1 at another table for a top.

The bottom lines? It is rarely correct to pass partner's opening with a singleton in his suit if you can scrape up a bid.

With a 5 card suit and a lower ranking 4 carder, it's usually best to bid them both.

Rebid a 5 card suit?Board 9 from Friday 30th, E-W vul.

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ 764	♠ KQ53	-	pass	pass	pass
♥ A73	♥ K10642	1♣	pass	1♥	pass
♦ AK6	♦ 984	1NT (1)	pass	pass (2)	pass
♣ QJ109	♣ 4				

This was the bidding at one table; 1NT made +1 but scored a cool bottom. Why? The contract was 1♥ or 2♥ at other tables (making 9,10 or even 11 tricks). Whose fault?

At two tables the contract was 1♥ by East, so presumably West passed at (1). A reasonable bid which worked on this occasion as East had 5 ♥'s. I would pass with just 3 card support if I had a doubleton elsewhere, but with this totally flat hand I prefer 1NT.

So should East bid 2♥ at (2)? He knows that West has at least 4 ♣'s, but he also has 2 or 3 ♥'s (I was West and I will not bid NT with a singleton or void in partner's suit). Unlike the example above, East cannot bid out his shape because the 4 carder is higher ranking. I would bid 2♥; there may be a 5-3 fit, but even a 5-2 usually plays better than a mis-fitting NT contract.

Incidentally, suppose that East had a similar hand with ♥'s and ♠'s interchanged. The bidding would then go 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♥ - pass. The 2♥ bid in this situation is played as weak (even if not a passed hand), showing a 5♠-4♥ hand.

The bottom lines (for both of the above hands). Do not pass 1NT with an unsuitable shape.

A tricky 2nd bid

Board 12 from Friday 6th, N-S vul.

Dealer:	♠ K9743	West	North (H)	East	South
West	♥ A				
N-S vul	♦ 10975	pass (1)	pass	pass	1♥
	♣ QJ2	pass	1♠	pass	2♣
		pass	2NT (2)	pass	3NT (3)
		pass	pass	pass	
♠ AQ106	N	♠ 85			
♥ K82	W E	♥ 10973			
♦ K32	S	♦ AJ86			
♣ 1084		♣ 963			
	♠ J2		(1) 12 points, but with the totally flat shape		
	♥ QJ654		it is not worth an opener.		
	♦ Q4				
	♣ AK75				

3NT went down two for a bottom, anyone to blame? The main problem was North's 2NT bid at (2). When it is a mis-fit and partner bids both of your short suits it is rarely correct to bid NT with (sub)minimal values. 2NT shows 11-12 points here and North cannot bid this. The alternatives, however, are none too palatable. With a doubleton ♥ I would bid 2♥, but not with a singleton. That only leaves pass or 2♠; either could work out well (indeed, either would work with this lay-out). However, partner could still have as much as 15 or 16 points, perhaps with 3 card ♠ support – there could even be a ♠ game. I would be loath to pass and would try 2♠. Difficult. 3NT at (3) was also an overbid, of course.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: Double. A negative double. If you do not play negative doubles (why not?) then you cannot bid the hand properly and 2♦ is probably best. Tough if you miss a ♥ fit.
- Hand B: 2♣, Stayman.
- Hand C: Pass. Although 1♦ is not totally unreasonable. 3♦, however, is. (totally unreasonable). The hand is too good and the wrong shape for a pre-empt.
- Hand D: Pass. Not good enough for an opener.
- Hand E: 2♦. Bid out your shape.
- Hand F: 2♦. Your cheapest 4 card suit.
- Hand G: Redouble.
- Hand H: A tricky one to finish with. I would bid 2♠ although I suspect that many would pass – reasonable. What you should not do is bid 2NT. You are a point or two light – don't bid NT with mis-fits without full values (plus).