

Last week's winners: Monday 16/2/04

Friday 20/2/04

1st John/Terry 68 %
 2nd Alex/Jeff 61 %

1st Paul (Ire)/Joe 69.4%
 2nd Jan/Hans 69.0%

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

Hand A	Hand B	With hand A RHO opens 1NT, what do you bid?
♠ J5	♠ AJ32	With Hand B you open 1NT and partner bids 2♣, Stayman. You respond 2♥ of course and partner then bids: - (a) 3NT, what do you do? (b) 2NT, what do you do?
♥ KQ10	♥ KQ105	
♦ AJ98	♦ AJ6	
♣ Q1084	♣ 76	
Hand C	Hand D	With Hand C partner opens 1♥, what is your bid?
♠ K764	♠ K32	What is your response with Hand D if partner opens with: (a) 1♣ (b) 1♦ (c) 1♥ or 1♠ (d) a weak NT (12-14)
♥ KJ76	♥ J63	
♦ AQ54	♦ 972	
♣ 6	♣ AK53	
Hand E	Hand F	With hand E partner opens 1♠, what is your bid?
♠ K764	♠ Q7	With hand F we open 1♦, what is your rebid if partner responds: (a) 1♥ (b) 1♠ (c) 1NT
♥ 72	♥ AQ54	
♦ AQJ762	♦ KJ762	
♣ 4	♣ 65	
Hand M	Hand N	With Hand M partner opens 1♥, what is your bid?
♠ 865	♠ AKJ	With Hand N partner opens 1♣, what is your bid?
♥ Q32	♥ AJ105	
♦ AKQJ	♦ A1083	
♣ AK6	♣ 64	
Hand P	Hand Q	With Hand P RHO opens 1♥, what is your bid?
♠ AQ987	♠ KJ9	With Hand Q RHO again opens 1♥, what is your bid?
♥ 102	♥ 43	
♦ A103	♦ K54	
♣ A54	♣ AK765	

The Beginner's Page

We have got to the stage where we open and partner responds. Last week we studied when responder had made a limit bid. This time we will look at when partner's bid is a new suit (and thus unlimited).

Hand 1	Hand 2	With Hand 1 we opened 1♥ and partner responded 1♠. We cannot support with just a doubleton. 1NT shows 12-14 points and is a possibility, but with a 2 nd suit it's best to bid it, so 2♦.
♠ Q7	♠ K7	Now the 2♦ rebid with hand 1 showed a minimal hand (about
♥ KJ763	♥ AQJ63	12-16 pts). With more we have to jump and so 3♦ is correct
♦ AQ54	♦ AKJ8	with Hand 2. This is game forcing.
♣ 65	♣ J6	

So that's easy when we have a second suit to bid. A simple bid of a lower ranking suit shows a minimum or average hand and a jump in a new suit is forcing. But what if your 2nd suit is higher ranking than your first?

Hand 3	With hand 3 we opened 1♦ and partner responded 1♠. Again we cannot support with just a doubleton. 1NT shows 12-14 points and is a possibility, but with a
♠ Q7	2 nd suit it's usually best to bid it. But if we bid 2♥ and partner has a weak
♥ AQ54	hand and prefers ♦'s then we are up at the 3 level. Also, of course, partner
♦ KJ762	responded 1♠ and not 1♥, so probably does not have a ♥ suit. So we don't
♣ 65	bid this ♥ suit and have to rebid 1NT. Fine. If partner does indeed have a ♥ suit then he
	will bid it now, so no problem.

Hand 4	With hand 4 we again opened 1♦ and partner responded 1♠. This hand is stronger and we don't mind forcing partner to give preference at the 3 level.
♠ K7	So we bid 2♥. Bidding a higher ranking suit than the one you opened is called
♥ AQ54	a reverse and shows 16+ points. A reverse always shows more cards in the 1 st
♦ KJ7632	bid suit than the 2 nd . A reverse is forcing when playing Standard American and
♣ A	partner cannot pass. Since this bid is forcing, there is no need to jump to 3♥. Indeed, a
	jump to 3♥ shows something completely different (short ♥'s!!).

Hand 5	With hand 5 we again opened 1♦ and partner responded 1♠. This hand is certainly strong enough to reverse, so 2♥?
♠ AJ6	No! A reverse promises 5+ cards in the first bid suit. This hand was too
♥ AQ54	strong for a 1NT opener and the correct bid over partner's 1♠ is a jump
♦ KJ76	to 2NT, showing 18-19 points. If partner had responded 2♣ then we jump to
♣ A5	3NT (a 2NT bid would be a non-jump and show 12-14 points)

Hand 6	A 1♦ opening again. What do you bid if partner responds (a) 1♠, (b) 2♣, (c) 2♦?
♠ AQ	(a) Over 1♠ you cannot bid 2♥ at that is a reverse. 1NT (12-14) is correct.
♥ Q1082	(b) Over 2♣ you again cannot bid 2♥ (it's still a reverse) 2NT is correct. It is
♦ Q976	a non-jump and shows 12-14 points.
♣ QJ5	(c) Pass. You are minimum; partner has denied ♥'s and prefers ♦'s to NT.
	Fine, so be it.

To be continued next week.....

Splinters

I have given examples of splinter bids on previous occasions and I have been asked if I can describe them in more detail. Always willing to oblige, so here goes: -

Splinters make use of bids that would otherwise rarely be used; they allow the responder to agree trumps and show a shortage (singleton or void) in an outside suit all in one go.

A splinter is always an *unnecessary* jump into the short suit and agrees partner's last bid suit as trumps. And what do I mean by unnecessary? – It is a jump to one level above what the forcing bid for that suit would be. One can splinter over partner's major or minor suit, but over a major is more common and is what I shall concentrate on.

A splinter raise is strong and is best played as game forcing and slam invitational. It normally promises 4 trumps although sometimes it is OK with just 3 card support if partner is known to hold a 5(+) card suit.

Hand C	With hand C, if partner opens 1♥ or 1♠ then a 2♣ bid would be natural. Most players would play a bid of 3♣ as a good hand with a good long ♣ suit, so the splinter bid is 4♣.
♠ K764	
♥ KJ76	Of course, if you play 4♣ here as asking for aces then you cannot play splinters - just one reason why most experienced players use 4NT. 4♣ as the ace ask inhibits the use of splinters and cue bids.
♦ AQ54	
♣ 6	

Note that with Hand C it would be unwise to splinter if partner had opened 1♦. To start with, you have gone past 3NT which may be the best spot when partner opens with a minor suit. But also partner may have only 3♦'s and he may well have a 4 card major.

Let's stick with this Hand C and suppose that partner does indeed open 1♦. The correct bid is 1♥ (always bid 4 card suits up the line). To support ♦'s is incorrect as it denies a 4 card major. So you bid 1♥ and partner bids 1♠, what now? Splinters are not just applicable at your first bid and may be made later in the auction (by either opener or responder). So over partner's 1♠ you again bid 4♣.

And another variation. Partner opens 1♦, you bid 1♥ and partner raises to 2♥. Partner has limited his hand (to about 14 or 15 points max) and you could simply bid 4♥. But with the right cards, there could well be a slam. Now in this sequence (1♦ - 1♥ - 2♥) you have agreed trumps and a 3♣ bid would be a game try. So 4♣ is again a splinter and is the best bid. Let's look at a possibility for both hands: -

West	East	West	East
♠ AJ	♠ K764	1♦	1♥
♥ AQ82	♥ KJ76	2♥	4♣ (1)
♦ K9762	♦ AQ54	4♠ (2)	4NT
♣ 75	♣ 6	5♥	6♥ (1) splinter
		pass	(2) cue bid

An excellent slam on a combined 27 count. East's splinter at (1) shows slam interest and a singleton/void ♣. West has a max for what he has shown so far and co-operates with a cue bid. East then simply checks on aces on the way to slam.

Of course West may not have the ideal hand. He may be minimum or have wasted values in the short suit. No problem, nothing is lost and he can simply sign off in game: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ 105	♠ K764	1♦	1♥	
♥ AQ82	♥ KJ76	2♥	4♣ (1)	
♦ KJ76	♦ AQ54	4♥ (2)	pass	(1) splinter
♣ KJ5	♣ 6			(2) not interested

West has the same point count as before, but with wasted values in East's short suit he signs off in game.

Now splinter bids are usually pretty obvious, but there are a couple of sequences that need to be agreed: -

Sequence A:	1♥ - 3♠?
Sequence B:	1♠ - 4♥?

These two bids are both one above the natural strong jump shift. However, some players prefer to play these as pre-emptive and you would have to agree if they are weak or a splinter.

Showing a Void

When you splinter you show a singleton/void, but it is unwise to splinter a singleton ace (partner will downgrade the king in the suit). If you have a void and partner is interested in slam, a subsequent cue bid of your splinter suit shows a void: -

West	East	West	East	(1) splinter
♠ A	♠ Q764	1♦	1♥	(2) cue bid
♥ AQ82	♥ KJ763	2♥	4♣ (1)	(3) void
♦ KJ762	♦ AQ54	4♠ (2)	5♣ (3)	
♣ 752	♣ -	5♦ (2)	6♦ (2)	
		7♥	pass	

Splinters later in the Auction

We have seen that a splinter always agrees the last bid suit, but it may not always be convenient to splinter immediately.

Hand E	If partner opens 1♠ then it is probably preferable to show your good ♦ suit rather than splintering with 4♣, so bid 2♦. If partner rebids 2♠ then 4♣ would be a splinter showing this type of hand with a good 5 or 6 card ♦ suit. If, however, opener rebids 2♥ then you cannot splinter as that would be in support of ♥'s.
♠ K764	
♥ 72	
♦ AQJ762	
♣ 4	

Splinters by Opener

Opener may also splinter in support of responder's major suit, and it is again an unnecessary jump: -

Hand J

♠ AQ64
♥ A72
♦ AKJ76
♣ 4

You are dealer and open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. 2♣ would be a normal weakish natural rebid, 3♣ would be natural and forcing and so 4♣ is a splinter agreeing ♠'s. Obviously as partner may have as little as 5 or 6 points, you need a hand this good to insist upon game.

Hand K

♠ AQ64
♥ 4
♦ AKJ76
♣ A72

You are dealer and again you open 1♦ and partner responds 1♠. This time you want to splinter in ♥'s. 2♥ would be a reverse and forcing (or virtually forcing – depending upon your methods) and so 3♥ is the splinter agreeing ♠'s.

Hand L

♠ A9642
♥ AK7
♦ AJ7
♣ 6

This time you open 1♠ and partner responds 2♥. The 2♥ response promises 5+ ♥'s and it is perhaps up to partnership understanding if you allow splinters with good 3 card support. It seems reasonable to me with this hand. 3♣ would be natural and forcing and so 4♣ is the splinter agreeing ♥'s.

Splinters after a strong opening?

East

♠ 7642
♥ K876
♦ K54
♣ 2

West

2♣
2♥

East

2♦
4♣?

West's 2♥ bid is game forcing. If East had a good ♣ suit then 3♣ is quite sufficient. So 4♣ here is a splinter agreeing ♥'s.

Splinters after Stayman?

East

♠ KQ42
♥ KJ76
♦ 4
♣ KQ32

West

1NT
2♥

East

2♣
4♦?

East's jump could well be used as a splinter agreeing ♥'s. Fine. But the problem is that there is no equivalent bid with ♣ shortage as 4♣ here asks for aces/key cards (4NT is quantitative). There is a scheme for splinters after Stayman, but it's a bit complex. I'll give you a few sheets if you really want to know.

An Easy Top

Board 19 from Monday 14th, E-W vul.

Sometimes you get a clear top by bidding an excellent slam on minimal values.

Sometimes you get a clear top when the opponents concede a huge penalty.

Sometimes it may be an end-play or a well executed squeeze that earns the top.

But sometimes you will get an equally clear top just by understanding the basics of hand evaluation and not bidding at the two level with insufficient values: -

North (D)	South	West	North (John)	East	South (me)
♠ K32	♠ QJ10				
♥ J63	♥ A7	-	-	-	1NT (1)
♦ 972	♦ KQ54	pass	pass (2)	pass	
♣ AK53	♣ J1097				

(1) 12-14

1NT made +1. It was the only + score in the N-S column! Why? Six (!) N-S pairs managed to end up in a miserable 3NT – ranging from 4 down to just one down. So why is 3NT such a poor contract and why did all the other pairs get too high? First, we look at the bidding at this table.

A weak 1NT is obvious at (1), but what should North bid at (2)? Normally a 2NT invitation is in order (11-12 pts), but as I keep on saying, deduct a point for totally flat shape. The good ♣'s are offset by the other 3 poor suits and lack of intermediates, this hand is not worth 11 points. John quite correctly passed (perhaps he also took my poor declarer play into account?).

Before we look at the bidding at the other tables, let's evaluate the South hand. If partner invites with 2NT (whatever you open) showing 11-12 points, should South accept with 3NT? This really is a good 13 count and accepting the invitation is certainly reasonable. So the culprit was North at all the other 6 tables.

And what happened at these other 6 tables? One N-S pair played a weak NT and the other five a strong NT. North raised the weak 1NT opening to 2NT and South quite reasonably went to game. I'm speculating here, but presumably the other five tables opened 1♣ or 1♦, what should North bid? 2NT is 11-12 and you need 11 points to bid 2♣ over a 1♦ opening. 2♣ is a very poor bid over 1♦ and it's even worse if you raise partner's expected 2NT rebid to 3NT! The correct response over either opening is 1NT.

Now East had a respectable 12 count with ♥KQ852 and would probably overcall 1NT with 2♥. In that case, both North and South should pass. Neither has any reason to bid on and defending 2♥ would get a good score.

The bottom lines.

- Deduct a point for a completely flat shape.
- You then need 11 points for a new suit at the two level or for 2NT.

I keep on saying these things, and I suppose I'll have to keep on playing the same old record as long as we have six (!) pairs overbidding like this?

Bad Bidding from Books?

Sometimes I wonder where people pick up their bad bidding habits – it certainly is not from the news-sheets, but now I know. It's from books! Alex was kind enough to lend me an advanced book on play. I say advanced, the very first example was how East should break up an impending (trick 9) squeeze on his partner at trick 3! A bit heavy going for me, but the topic that interests me most is the bidding. Indeed, the book did point out some of the bad bids, but they missed a number: -

Hand M	Hand N	Hand P	Hand Q
♠ 865	♠ AKJ	♠ AQ987	♠ KJ9
♥ Q32	♥ AJ105	♥ 102	♥ 43
♦ AKQJ	♦ A1083	♦ A103	♦ K54
♣ AK6	♣ 64	♣ A54	♣ AK765

Hand M: This hand responded 3♦ to partner's 1♥ opening.

Hand N: Partner opened 1♣ and this hand jumped to 2♦.

As I said in the beginner's page last week, the jump shift should be a good *long* suit. So two very bad bids when partner has opened; and what about when the opponents have opened? :-

Hand P: This hand doubled a 1♥ opening from RHO. What a silly bid, 1♠ is obvious.

Hand Q: Same again, it doubled a 1♥ opening. Equally silly.

I ask you, if both hands P and Q are both worthy of a double, then how on earth is partner to know if you have a 3, 4 or 5 card ♠ suit?

And what should the bids be?

Hand M: 2♦. Quite adequate with this hand. Make your move next round once you hear partner's rebid.

Hand N: 1♦. Again, you do not have a great suit, so take it slowly and make a forcing bid next turn.

Hand P: 1♠. If you double then partner will bid a 4 card minor in preference to a 3 card ♠ suit. Why on earth would you want to play in a 4-3 minor suit fit? If you double and then bid ♠'s this promises a much stronger hand.

Hand Q: 2♣. If you double then partner will bid a 4 card ♠ suit. You could easily have a 5-4 ♣ fit. You all know me by now, I like to play that a double of a 1♥ opening usually guarantees exactly 4 ♠'s, not 3 and not 5.

The bottom lines. A jump shift is a good, long suit. A double of a 1♥ opening should normally promise *exactly* 4 ♠'s unless it is strong enough to bid again. And don't pick up bidding habits from play books?

A Double of 1NT is penalties

Board 17 from Friday 20th, love all

Dealer:	♠ A9763	West	North	East	South (A)
North	♥ 75				
Love all	♦ 52	-	pass	1NT	dbl (1)
	♣ K965	pass (2)	pass	pass	
♠ 104	N	♠ KQ82			
♥ A9643	W E	♥ J85			
♦ 10743	S	♦ KQ6			
♣ 73		♣ AJ2			
	♠ J5				
	♥ KQ10				
	♦ AJ98				
	♣ Q1084				

East opened a strong NT and South doubled. A double of 1NT is for penalties and you most certainly need more than South has for a double at (1). Partner (North) has passed and West may well have enough for a redouble to teach you a lesson. As it happened West did not have that much but decided to let the double stay (removing to 2♥ is a very sensible alternative at (2)). And what happened? 1NT made +1, so -180 for N-S, exactly what South deserves.

The bottom line. You need 15 + points (or a good long suit) to double 1NT for penalties.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: Pass. Nowhere near good enough for double (penalties).

Hand B: This is a hand from last week's news sheet. I put it in this week's quiz just to check that you remembered that partner's 2♣ Stayman bid *guarantees* a 4 card major.

(a) 4♠. If partner wanted to play in 3NT then he would not have bid Stayman, he was looking for a 4-4 ♠ fit.

(b) 3♠. Partner has an invitational hand (+- 8 points) with a 4 card ♠ suit. You are minimum so you should correct to 3♠ as the 4-4 fit plays better than 2NT. Bidding 4♠ is an overbid, the hand is not quite good enough. Do not pass.

Hand C: 4♣, a splinter.

Hand D: (a) 1NT, (b) 1NT, (c) 2♥/♠, (d) pass.

The hand is not worth 2NT or a new suit at the 2 level.

Hand E: 2♦. You could splinter directly with 4♣, but it is probably best to show your good long ♦ suit and support ♠'s vigorously later.

Hand F: (a) 2♥. 3♥ would be an overbid.

(b) 1NT

(c) Pass or 2♦? You cannot bid 2♥ as that is a reverse showing a stronger hand. 2♦ may work out best, but I would pass.

Hands M,N,P Q are on the previous page.