

Monday 26/4/04

Friday 30/4/04

1st Chuck/Terry 60%
 2nd Dave/Bob 57%

1st Ian/Jeff 58%
 2nd Dave/Sheila 54%

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

Hand A

Hand B

♠ QJ53
 ♥ A5
 ♦ AQJ9854
 ♣ -

♠ AJ64
 ♥ 97
 ♦ Q6
 ♣ AK864

With Hand A RHO opens 1♣, (a) what is your bid?
 (b) If partner had dealt and passed would it be different?

With Hand B partner opens 1♦, what is your response?

Hand C

Hand D

♠ A104
 ♥ AKQ1074
 ♦ 6
 ♣ Q94

♠ QJ7
 ♥ K9
 ♦ AK2
 ♣ K9543

With Hand C partner opens 1♦.

(a) what do you respond?

(b) what would you bid if RHO overcalled 1♠?

With Hand D RHO opens 2♠ (weak). What is your bid?

Hand E

Hand F

♠ KQ53
 ♥ Q632
 ♦ A105
 ♣ Q7

♠ A9
 ♥ J72
 ♦ A
 ♣ AKJ7642

With Hand E you open 1♦ and partner responds 2♣, what is your rebid?

With hand F you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♥, what do you bid?

Is it a reverse?

Sequence G: 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♠

Sequence H: 1♦ - 2♣ - 2♥

The Beginner's Page

Responding to partner's big balanced hand

Last week we saw that big balanced hands of 20 or more points open 2NT (or open 2♣ and rebid 2NT with 22-24), but how does responder then bid? There are various different schemes, but in Standard American we simply use transfers and Stayman, just the same as if partner had opened 1NT but we are necessarily one level higher.

It makes no difference if partner opens 2NT or if it has gone 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT, so I'll just assume a 2NT opening: -

- 3♣ = Stayman – it asks partner to bid his cheapest 4 card major, otherwise 3♦.
- 3♦ = Transfer to ♥'s
- 3♥ = Transfer to ♠'s
- 3NT = to play (no 4 card major).
- 4♣ = Gerber, asking for aces.

Now since we are up at the 3 level we do not have the luxury of being able to transfer and then bid another suit as that will normally take us past 3NT, so we can generally only do that with hands that are looking for slam. With today's Hands 1,2,3 partner has opened 2NT (20-21 points): -

| Hand 1 | Hand 2 | Hand 3 | |
|----------|-----------|---------|--|
| ♠ A10932 | ♠ A109732 | ♠ Q7432 | With Hand 1 we probably want to play in 4♠ (but not if partner has Hand 5 below). So we offer him the choice by transferring and then bidding 3NT. |
| ♥ 762 | ♥ 762 | ♥ 762 | |
| ♦ 1097 | ♦ 1097 | ♦ 1097 | With Hand 2 we want to play in 4♠, so we transfer and then bid 4♠. |
| ♣ 96 | ♣ 6 | ♣ 96 | With Hand 3 there probably is no game. But 3♠ will play better than 2NT and so we transfer and then pass 3♠. |

Now let's see what opener should do. With the following hands you open 2NT and partner bids 3♥, a transfer to ♠'s.

| Hand 4 | Hand 5 | Hand 6 | |
|--------|---------|--------|---|
| ♠ KJ5 | ♠ 65 | ♠ AK85 | With Hand 4 we complete the transfer and if partner then bids 3NT we convert to 4♠. This hand (opposite Hand 1) is from the club two weeks ago, 3 pairs got it wrong and played in 3NT. |
| ♥ AKQ3 | ♥ KQ3 | ♥ AKQ3 | |
| ♦ KQ2 | ♦ AKQ82 | ♦ J2 | With Hand 5 we complete the transfer and pass a subsequent 3NT from partner. |
| ♣ A108 | ♣ AK8 | ♣ A108 | With Hand 6 we have a lovely fit and will probably make game even if partner is virtually bust (say Hand 3). We cannot afford to lazily complete the transfer as partner may pass. So with this superb fit, we do not bid 3♠, but 4♠. |

No idea about pre-empts? – part 1

Board 1 from Friday 30th

Dealer: ♠ K10852
North ♥ J104
Love all ♦ J64
♣ 72

| | | |
|---------|----------|---------|
| ♠ 9643 | N | ♠ QJ7 |
| ♥ 65 | W E | ♥ K9 |
| ♦ 987 | S | ♦ AK2 |
| ♣ AJ106 | | ♣ K9543 |
| | ♠ A | |
| | ♥ AQ8732 | |
| | ♦ Q1053 | |
| | ♣ Q8 | |

Table A:

| West | North | East | South |
|------|----------|---------|-------|
| - | pass | 1♣ (1) | 1♥ |
| 1♠ | pass (2) | 1NT (3) | pass |
| pass | pass (4) | | |

Table B:

| West | North | East (D) | South |
|--------|--------|----------|----------|
| - | 2♠ (5) | dbl (6) | pass (7) |
| 3♣ (8) | pass | 3NT (9) | dbl (10) |
| pass | pass | 4♣ | dbl (11) |
| pass | pass | pass | |

At the two other table E-W played in the sensible 3♣, making for an average. These two tables were the top and bottom: -

Table A: (1) 1NT is the obvious opening with this East hand, but this E-W play a weak NT and so it's 1♣. The 1NT rebid at (3) then shows 15-16 points. South decided that he had said enough and so 1NT was the final contract. I would bid 2♥ with the North hand at (2) or (4), but then I was not North at this table.

Table B: But I was North at this table and I decided to take a leaf out of Marty Bergen's books (he is renowned for his outrageous pre-empts) and so I opened 2♠ at (5). So what did you do in this week's quiz at (6) with Hand D? It is easy to see why a take-out double is a very poor bid – what do you do after partner responds at the minimal level in any suit? There's no sensible answer of course – that's why you have to bid 2NT at (6). Pass at (7) is very sensible and very restrained for this player (Jeff). With no ♠ stop and less than 6 points, 3♣ at (8) is correct. At (9) we see East's problem (it would have been worse if partner had replies 3♦ or 3♥ - he should pass 3♣ here). He suddenly (?) realised that he has a ♠ stop and so bid 3NT. Unfortunately this is one level too high. Now Jeff (South) was very restrained at (7) but a team of wild horses would not stop him from doubling at (10) and (11) ad infinitum.

And what happened? 4♣ doubled was 2 down (3NT would have been one down).

The bottom lines? You generally need 4♥'s to double a ♠ bid for take-out. If you have a stop, think about NT rather than double unless you are extremely strong. Only double a major if you have the other one or a very strong hand.

No idea about pre-empts? – part 2

- The Big Guns Disagree

Dealer: ♠ A
North ♥ K1076
N-S vul ♦ K62
♣ KJ854

Board 5 from Monday 26th

| | West (Hans) | North (Chuck) | East (A) (Jeff) | South (me) | | |
|----------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------|----------|
| ♠ K1086 | N | ♠ QJ53 | - | 1♣ | 4♦ (1) | pass (2) |
| ♥ QJ2 | W E | ♥ A5 | pass | dbl (3) | pass | pass |
| ♦ 3 | S | ♦ AQJ9854 | pass | | | |
| ♣ Q10973 | | ♣ - | | | | |
| | ♠ 9742 | | | | | |
| | ♥ 9843 | | | | | |
| | ♦ 107 | | | | | |
| | ♣ A62 | | | | | |

4♦ made +1 for a complete ‘top’. But, as you can imagine, there was a heated discussion after the event about East’s 4♦ bid at (1): -

Now I was South and know just about everybody’s bidding habits. In particular I recall that just two weeks ago this East overcalled a 1♠ opening with 4♣ holding ♠ A ♥ A10 ♦ KJ87 ♣ AK6532, and this was with the same partner. So at (2) I asked West what the 4♦ bid here was and he answered, with a wry smile, that it was pre-emptive. Now both he and I knew that this was probably not the case, unfortunately Chuck did not know the extent of the eccentricities of this East’s bidding and accepted the explanation.

Chuck said that there should be a procedural penalty applied to E-W. The East hand is *far* too good for a pre-empt and West knew of East’s bidding style and did not inform the opponents. If North knew that the bid could be strong, then he would not have doubled.

Hans countered that this was not so. He said that East’s bid was strong for this particular sequence but that it would be the bid he would make if West was a passed hand. He added that North’s double at (3) was his decision and that any resulting bad score was his own doing and that a director would not uphold North’s objections. Simply passing 4♦ would have given N-S a good score.

Well, what can I say (and do)? Two of our two top players at odds with each other. First of all, this 4♦ bid is **pre-emptive**, something like ♠ 8 ♥ 65 ♦ KQ1087652 ♣ Q5. You may wish to play it as a strong bid but then partner must alert (or most definitely give a more accurate description when asked). I agree with Chuck. And as for Hans’ opinion that this hand should bid 4♦ if partner had initially passed – well I won’t even bother to comment about that observation with a 4 loser hand containing a respectable 4 card major.

So what’s my decision? As usual, I’ll sit on the fence and make both sides unhappy! I simply scrubbed the board for these pairs and gave both sides their average. E-W were probably let off lightly. Of course Hans may not see it that way; he could always appeal! Who knows, perhaps my decision was swayed by the unnecessary gloating by E-W at the result?

And next time? Now Chuck (and me, and other club members) are getting pretty peeved with this East. This is the 2nd time that he has made this silly jump to 4 of a minor - along with other infractions like rebidding a 2(!) card suit and it’s the last time that this East will be let off lightly. Chuck says that these are psyches and should be treated as such. Up till now I have tried to defend the culprit by saying that he simply has no idea what he was doing. However, enough is enough. Any more bids like this by him will get an adjusted (unfavourable) score. Saying that he has no clue will no longer be accepted as an excuse for an experienced player.

No idea about pre-empts? – part 3

Board 9 from Monday 26th.

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|----------|--------|--------|
| Dealer: | ♠ 1076542 | West | North | East | South |
| North | ♥ 5 | | | | |
| E-W vul | ♦ 10987 | - | pass (1) | 3♥ (2) | 3♠ (3) |
| | ♣ Q5 | 4♥ | pass (4) | pass | dbl |
| | | pass | pass (5) | pass | |
| ♠ J | N | ♠ 98 | | | |
| ♥ KQ2 | W E | ♥ J1098763 | | | |
| ♦ K63 | S | ♦ Q5 | | | |
| ♣ KJ10862 | | ♣ A3 | | | |
| | ♠ AKQ3 | | | | |
| | ♥ A4 | | | | |
| | ♦ AJ42 | | | | |
| | ♣ 974 | | | | |

4♥ made and scored 790. At another table it made +1 for 990. So what went wrong for N-S when 4♠ made easily at two other tables? Let's evaluate the bidding: -

First of all, the pass at (1); it is lovely shape for a weak 2♠ opener but a 2♠ opening really would be pushing it with just 2 points, even with favourable vulnerability.

So, do you pre-empt at (2), vulnerable against not? The 'rule of 2' at this vulnerability is that you should be within two tricks of your contract; so East should have 7 playing tricks. The East hand is 5-6 tricks plus the ♦Q, well short. So pass? I can name a few at our club who would certainly pass, but not me. With this solidity of the trump suit I would open 3♥ at any vulnerability. Sure, you may go for a number, but more often than not you will get a good score.

'Obey all the rules and miss all the fun' – Catherine Hepburn

At another table East opened a weak 2♥. I guess that this is fine – if it's not really good enough for 3♥ then bid 2♥. This is some people's style but I don't do it too often. It is much kinder on partner if he knows that a 3 level pre-empt is normally 7 cards and a 2 level pre-empt is normally 6 cards. Of course I have been known to open a weak 2 with just a 5 card suit (part 1 of this series about pre-empts) and so the possibility of a 7 carder is out of the question with me.

And at (3), what does South do over 3♥? 3♠ is not a good bid with just a 4 card suit. With just 4♠'s I would double (take-out). If South had doubled then North would bid 3♠ which South would raise to 4♠. It is perhaps not so obvious for North to raise 3♠ to 4♠, but I most certainly would (The Law). And also at (4) where he had a 2nd chance.

The bottom lines. *'The ideal pre-empt is topless with a good body'* – Marty Bergen.

When you have 6 card support for partner, pass really is a bit feeble. Don't overcall at the 2 level or higher with a 4 card suit.

Just one final point, remember 'The Law'. The sides are evenly matched in HCP's and both have 10 trumps. Low and behold, both sides can make 10 tricks.

No idea about pre-empts? – part 4

Board 5 from Monday 26th, N-S vul

| West (C) | West | North | East | South |
|-----------|--------|-------|------|-------|
| ♠ A104 | - | pass | 1♦ | 1♠ |
| ♥ AKQ1074 | 4♥ (1) | pass | pass | |
| ♦ 6 | | | | |
| ♣ Q94 | | | | |

What did you bid with Hand C at (1) for question (b) of this week's quiz? If you play standard sensible methods then 2♥ is forcing and that's the bid unless you choose 3♥ (best played as a good suit and forcing). If you play negative free bids (I do not, and do not recommend them) then you have to make a distorted negative double at (1) unless you bid 3♥. A game forcing 2♠ is another alternative if you think that partner may pass 2♥ or 3♥. Either way, 4♥ is one of the worst that I have seen in a long time from a very experienced player. **It is pre-emptive**. I guess that these bad habits are catching? I believe that I can quote this player (Hans) as saying '*some people have no idea about pre-empts*'. Agreed.

Jumping to 4♥ would be a reasonable bid if partner had not opened; opposite an opener there is a very real possibility of a slam. Now it may just be that as this West was playing with a less experienced East he thought that he would keep it simple and so just bid game? I don't see it that way; if you have a *regular* partnership with a less experienced player then it is a waste of time if you simply come down to his level? Surely the whole idea is to improve his game?

Anyway, what happened? 13 tricks if you play it sensibly, otherwise just 12.

The bottom line. Don't make a pre-emptive bid (or simply jump to game) with a very strong hand. With a strong hand make a strong bid!

I've drawn the line. Enough of these silly pre-empts with very strong hands, let's have an example of somebody who knows how to bid strong hands: -

That 3NT rebid yet again

Board 20 from Monday 26th, both vul

| West | East (F) | West | North | East | South |
|--------|-----------|------|-------|---------|-------|
| ♠ K432 | ♠ A9 | pass | pass | 1♣ | pass |
| ♥ 84 | ♥ J72 | 1♠ | pass | 3NT (1) | pass |
| ♦ Q753 | ♦ A | pass | pass | | |
| ♣ Q53 | ♣ AKJ7642 | | | | |

What did you bid at (1) in this week's quiz with hand F (so I lied a little and said that partner bid 1♥)? 3NT is the bid over any response from partner, it's better than a non-forcing 3♣. As it happens the ♥ suit is wide open and the opponents may take the first 5♥ tricks. But will they? Or maybe the ♥'s are 4-4.

So what happened? ♥'s were 5-3 but opening leader had just three (the AQ10) and obviously did not fancy that suit for a lead. And at other tables? 3NT was bid and also made +1 at one other table, but at the other 3 tables the final contract was 3♣ or 4♣.

The bottom line. The 3NT rebid is a good hand with a long (semi) solid suit.

Is 4NT over partner's 3NT natural or Blackwood? Board 12 from Monday 26th, N-S vul

| North (E) | South (B) | West | North | East | South |
|-----------|-----------|------|---------|------|----------|
| ♠ KQ53 | ♠ AJ64 | pass | 1♦ (1) | pass | 2♣ (2) |
| ♥ Q632 | ♥ 97 | pass | 2♥ (3) | pass | 2♠ (4) |
| ♦ A105 | ♦ Q6 | pass | 3NT (5) | pass | 4NT (6) |
| ♣ Q7 | ♣ AK864 | pass | 5♥ (7) | pass | 6♦ (8) |
| | | pass | pass | dbl | 6NT |
| | | pass | pass | dbl | all pass |

This is one of the silliest auctions that I have witnessed from perhaps (?) our leading pair. But no names! (*editor's note: North was Chuck, South was Terry*). Let's study the auction:-

- (1) A 1♦ opening is standard playing 5 card majors and better minor.
- (2) Some players would (incorrectly) bid 1♠ here. 2♣ is the correct bid and then bid ♠'s next go (a reverse by responder and game forcing, showing 5+ ♣'s and 4 ♠'s).
- (3) So then, what's this? Is this a reverse? If you read the last couple of news sheets you will accept that it certainly is. Playing 2/1 (a 2 level response over a major suit opening it is best played as not showing extras). But after a 1♦ opening? I certainly would not argue with this not showing extras, but it has to be agreed! Anyway, it's a *reverse* and though perhaps not showing extra values, it *guarantees* more ♦'s than ♥'s! There is absolutely no point in bidding a major suit with this hand here, it simply clouds the issue. 2NT is the obvious rebid, if partner has a major suit then he will bid it over 2NT.
- (4) Anyway, whether 2♥ showed extra values is largely irrelevant and the pair should have been able to recover. 2♠ here is the 4th suit forcing, but could well be natural.
- (5) 3NT is OK whatever the previous bids may or may not have meant. But here we see the problem with rebidding 2♥ at (3). The ♠ suit is lost in the quagmire of 4th suit forcing and it is now very difficult to find the ♠ fit and a 4♠ contract.
- (6) Crunch time! Lunch time, whatever. What is 4NT here? Now I have been all through this before (news sheet 36). And in this situation it is even more obvious! No trump suit has been even remotely agreed. I can quote all the people (Marty Bergen, Easley Blackwood, and a few more dead people) again but there is no point. After a natural 3NT bid from partner 4NT is **never** Blackwood. 4NT is a natural (invitational) raise of partner's last bid. As it happens, South thought that North had reversing values, hence the invitational NT raise. Guess these guys have to talk about their system?
- (7) Anyway, presumably North thought that this was Blackwood? This pair play RKCB and so if it was Blackwood (it most definitely is not) then as no trump suit is agreed then the last bid suit (so ♠'s) is trumps. Thus 5♥ showed two key cards *without* the queen of 'trumps'. This is obviously silly as the ♠ bid was 4th suit and perhaps not even natural. I have no idea what North thought he was doing. Maybe he thought that 4NT was asking for aces but not RKCB? The Gerber bid after partner's 3NT is 5♣, as I explained in detail in news-sheet 36.
- (8) Obviously South had no idea what was going on (he certainly thought that North had 5+ ♦'s) and the rest of the auction is meaningless.

The bottom lines. In the last two issues I have gone into some detail as to what constitutes a reverse. After 1♦ - 2♣ you could agree that 2♥/♠ does not show extras but this is *by no means standard*. Normally this guarantees extras. It is fairly standard in the 2/1 system that it does not show extras after a 2 level response, but that is with a major suit opening. Whether it shows extras or not, a reverse **always guarantees** more cards in the first bid suit.

When partner bids a natural 3NT, 4NT is **not** asking for aces!! It is a quantitative raise. The ace ask is 5♣ - Gerber is **always** a **jump** in ♣'s. Refer to news-sheet 36. Please take this for granted and do not ask me to quote the dead poet's society again.

And how should the bidding have gone? 1♦ - 2♣ - 2NT - 3♠ - 4♠ - pass. simple, eh?

A Moysian Fit

Board 3 from Monday 26th, E-W vul

| West | East | West | North | East | South |
|--------|---------|--------|-------|--------|----------|
| ♠ K985 | ♠ A72 | - | - | - | 2♥ (1) |
| ♥ 932 | ♥ A | pass | pass | dbl | pass |
| ♦ 94 | ♦ AKQ75 | 2♠ | pass | 3♥ (2) | pass |
| ♣ A973 | ♣ K1042 | 4♣ (3) | pass | 4♠ (4) | pass |
| | | pass | pass | | (1) Weak |

A better auction this time from perhaps (?) our leading pair.

Everything is simple up to (2). You could simply blast 4♠ but if partner has just 4♠'s and values in ♥'s then 3NT could be a better contract. The way to ask if partner has values in ♥'s is to bid 3♥ at (2). Partner's 4♣ bid at (3) denied a ♥ stop and showed a 2nd suit. Now at (4) East knew that it was a Moysian (4-3) ♠ fit, but when partner has shown no 'wasted' values in ♥'s then this East hand is perfect for 4♠. ♥ ruffs can be taken in the short trump hand and any points that partner has will be in the suits that matter (not ♥'s).

And what happened? East got two ♥ ruffs and the contract made +1 for a complete top.

The bottom line? A 4-3 fit is sometimes OK if you can ruff the danger suit in the hand with short trumps.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: (a) Double. The hand is too strong for a 1♦, 2♦, 3♦ (or 4♦!) overcall.
 (b) Double, exactly the same. I don't see that a passed partner is at all relevant.
- Hand B: 2♣. This is not denying a 4 card major as the hand is strong enough bid ♠'s next go. Without game forcing values 1♠ would be correct.
- Hand C: (a) 1♥ or 2♥, 2♥ is a strong jump shift. 1♥ is acceptable if you don't play strong jump shifts.
 (b) 2♥ or 3♥. 2♥ is forcing using standard methods. 3♥ in 'standard' shows this sort of hand – similar to a 2♥ response with no intervention – game forcing. Bidding the opponent's suit (so 2♠) is also an alternative with this strong hand. But the one bid that you cannot make is 4♥! That shows a pre-emptive hand, something like ♠86 ♥KQJ9754 ♦86 ♣K5.
- Hand D: 2NT. Do not double a 2♠ opener without ♥'s unless you have a *very* big hand.
- Hand E: 2NT. 2♥ is incorrect as it is a reverse. It matters not whether you play a reverse into 2♥ after a 2 level response as showing extras or not, such a reverse *always* guarantees at least 5♦'s.
- Hand F: 3NT. It's too good for a non-forcing 2NT (18-19) or 3♣ rebid.

Sequence G, 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♠ and Sequence H, 1♦ - 2♣ - 2♥ are both reverses.

I was asked about sequence G on Friday and Sequence H appears in this news-sheet. They both guarantee greater length in the first bid suit. They also show 17+ points (or whatever you agree for a reverse) unless you specifically agree that they show less after partner's 2 level response. After a 2 level response I think it's very sensible to say that these bids are forcing but do not show 17+, but they still most certainly have the shape requirements of a reverse.