

Monday 24/5/04

Friday 28/5/04

1st Dave/Bob 58%
 2nd Don/Sid 56%

1st Alex/Kenneth 63%
 2nd Richard (UK)/Terry 60%

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

Hand A

Hand B

♠ J82
 ♥ A103
 ♦ Q865
 ♣ KQ2

♠ Q105
 ♥ A63
 ♦ Q9
 ♣ A10874

- (a) What do you open with Hand A?
 (b) What do you open with Hand A if you play a weak NT?
 (a) What do you open with Hand B?
 (b) What do you open with Hand B if you play a weak NT?

Hand C

Hand D

♠ 732
 ♥ A83
 ♦ AQJ
 ♣ K872

♠ J98
 ♥ J864
 ♦ AK5
 ♣ KJ5

With Hand C you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♠, what is your rebid?

With Hand D partner opens 2♥, what do you bid?

Hand E

Hand F

♠ KJ9862
 ♥ K6
 ♦ 93
 ♣ 984

♠ Q10952
 ♥ AK87
 ♦ -
 ♣ K965

With Hand E partner opens 1♣ and you bid 1♠. LHO doubles and partner redoubles (showing a good hand in his style). What do you do?

With Hand F partner passes and you open 1♠. Partner bids 2♦, you bid 2♥ and good old partner obviously bids 3♦. What now?

Hand G

Hand H

♠ J986
 ♥ AQJ1082
 ♦ KJ10
 ♣ -

♠ AK83
 ♥ QJ853
 ♦ 74
 ♣ 94

With Hand G you open 1♥ and partner bids 1NT, what now?

With Hand H partner opens 1NT. Obviously you want to be in game (either 3NT, 4♥ or 4♠) but how do you show partner that you are 4-5 in the majors? Stayman or transfer?

Play Quiz

N	♠ 93	West	North	East	South
W	♥ Q103	-	-	-	pass
S	♦ KJ86	pass	1♥	pass	2♥
	♣ J765	pass	4♥	all pass	

♠ 875

♥ J95

♦ A743

♣ A103

You are East and lead the ♦6 which runs round to declarer's (North) ♦Q. Declarer then leads ♥A to the 3♥, ♥5 and ♥7. Next he leads the ♥2; which card do you play? Who has the ♥K? (if partner has it, it's now bare).

Too high after opening 1NT

Board 9 from Monday 17th, E-W vul.

North South

♠ A106 ♠ 752
♥ A732 ♥ QJ
♦ A2 ♦ QJ1087
♣ K865 ♣ Q97

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	2♠	3♦ (1)
pass	3NT	all pass	

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	pass	2NT (2)
pass	3NT (3)	all pass	

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	pass	pass (2)
pass			

3NT was hopeless, let's look at what went wrong at tables A & B: -

Table A: At this table there was an overcall, so what do you bid at (1)? You have a few points, but with nothing in ♠'s it would be unwise to bid 2NT (if you think it's worth 2NT). RHO's bid has warned you and 2NT would be a poor bid. But 3♦? Surely that's the best spot, so bid it? Unfortunately you have to agree if the bid is forcing or not and North took it as forcing. The solution? Play Lebensohl! In this situation a natural invitational 2NT is rarely needed – if you have invitational values with good ♠'s then double for penalties. So, given that 2NT is a 'spare' bid, it is used in the Lebensohl convention to show a weak hand with a long suit. Opener must respond 3♣ and then responder either passes with long ♣'s or corrects into his long suit. The convention is completely explained in the 2003 yearbook.

Table B: No intervention this time, East has 8 points and so an invitational raise to 2NT? Quack, quack. With no ace or king, communication may prove difficult. The East hand has good intermediates and a reasonable 5-card suit, but with no top honour anywhere I think it's not quite worth a bid but very close; I would pass but not argue with 2NT. But I would argue with North's raise to 3NT at (3), it's terrible. This North hand is definitely minimum and should pass.

Table C: They got it right.

And what happened? 3 tables bid to 3NT and just one stopped in 1NT. 7 tricks were made on every occasion.

The bottom line? Quacks are bad cards, 5 quacks are 5 bad cards.

Be Polite

Rudeness at our club will no be tolerated. Any future first occurrence will get a warning, any repeat and you will be requested to leave. I find it amazing that a 'grown-up' should behave in this childish, arrogant manner.

An Opener? - part 1

Board 25 from Monday 24th, E-W vul.

West (B) East

♠ Q105	♠ A4
♥ A63	♥ 1092
♦ Q9	♦ K754
♣ A10874	♣ K952

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	pass
1 ♣	pass	1NT	all pass

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	pass
1 ♣	pass	2 ♣	all pass

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	pass
pass			

Not a particularly exciting board, but I always look at pass-outs. 1NT was bid at two tables making +1 and at two other tables the ♣ partial made 9 or 10 tricks. E-W scored a complete bottom at table C; why on earth did West not open? This board illustrates perfectly why *shapely* 12 counts are worth an opener. The rule of 20 is an excellent guide for borderline openers; add up the points (12 here) together with the lengths of the two longest suits (so 5 + 3) here and if the addition comes to 20 or more then open.

This West hand is actually 4th seat and some players have a different rule for 4th seat openers (rule of 15 – points + ♠ length). This hand also passes that test.

An Opener? - part 2

Board 4 from Monday 24th, both vul.

North (A)

♠ J82
♥ A103
♦ Q865
♣ KQ2

West	North	East	South
pass	1NT (1)	dbl	pass
pass	pass		
(1)	12-14		

Minus 4, so 1100 away on a partscore (!) deal (2NT was making +1 at other tables for 150). So, is it just unlucky and simply one of those things that happen when you play a weak NT? I don't think so. This hand is a totally flat 12 count; it does not conform with the rule of 20 and so does not qualify for any sort of opening. To open a weak NT when vulnerable with this heap when LHO is not a passed hand is just asking for, well, -1100!

So what's the difference between hands A and B? That decent 5 card suit makes all the difference! 5332 is a decent shape, 4333 is not.

The bottom line. Deduct a point for 4333 type shape. It is a miserable shape for both NT and suit contracts. How many times do I have to keep on saying this? Perhaps it takes a few 1100 penalties to learn? Only open *shapely* 12 counts.

Raising Partner's Weak Two

Board 12 from Monday 24th

Dealer: ♠ A6542
West ♥ Q
N-S vul ♦ 1032
♣ 10742

♠ Q103 N ♠ J98
♥ K109753 W E ♥ J864
♦ 874 S ♦ AK5
♣ A ♣ KJ5
♠ K7
♥ A2
♦ QJ96
♣ Q9863

Table A

West	North	East (D)	South
2♥	pass	pass (1)	pass

Table B

West	North	East	South
2♥	pass	3♥ (1)	pass
4♥	all pass		

Table C

West	North	East	South
2♥	pass	3♥ (1)	4♣ (2)
pass	pass (3)	4♥ (4)	pass
pass	5♣ (5)	pass (6)	pass
pass			

A few strange bids here, let's have a look: -

Table A: Pass at (1) is a bit too feeble for me. Other options are 3♥ (pre-emptive), 2NT (invitational) or 4♥ that could be anything. I would bid 4♥ (The Law) and leave opponents guessing.

Table B: This East chose 3♥ at (1). West was not sure if his partner was inviting or not and so bid game with his maximum.

Table C: What can I say about this 4♣ bid at (2), vulnerable! Reckless is an understatement. And East's 4♥ bid at (4)? This defies logic. If the hand is worth 4♥ then bid it at (1). And 5♣ at (5)? Quite reasonable if you have a sensible partner, I would have bid 5♣ at (3). Now East has got away with his poor bidding and all he has to do is double at (6) for a landslide. If you push them up, then double with this good defensive hand.

And what happened? 4♥ was bid 3 times and made just once. 5♣ was minus two.

The bottom lines.

- One generally needs about 28-29 points to make a 5 level contract. If you have a balanced 13 and partner 6-9 then it is unlikely that the opponents will make a 5♣ contract which they have hesitantly bid and been pushed into, so double!
- A mediocre 12 count is nowhere near enough to come in at the 4 level, especially vulnerable.
- Remember RONF (Raise Only Non-Forcing). When partner opens a weak two all bids are forcing except a raise of his suit, and 2NT is the invitational bid (however you play it).

How high should you go?

Board 19 from Friday 28th

Dealer: ♠ K5
South ♥ K
E-W vul ♦ AQ1096
♣ KJ875

♠ A632 N ♠ Q109
♥ AQ9542 W E ♥ J103
♦ K2 S ♦ 87
♣ 6 ♣ AQ1032
♠ J874
♥ 876
♦ J543
♣ 94

Table A

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♥	2♦ (1)	2♥	pass
3♥	4♣ (2)	dbl	4♦
4♥	5♦ (3)	all pass	

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♥	2♦	pass (4)	pass
2♥	3♣	3♥	pass (5)
pass	pass (6)		

North has a nice hand, but how high should he go?

Table A: What do you bid with the North hand at (1)? Double is unwise with just two ♠'s; the hand is a bit strong for an unusual NT and so I think 2♦ is fine (with a view to bidding ♣'s later if you get a chance). 4♣ at (2) is OK but I don't like the 5♦ bid. The opponents have been pushed into 4♥ and I would defend, mainly because I would expect to make the ♥K if defending but not if declaring.

Table B: Quite why East did not bid 2♥ at (4) I don't know. With 4 card support, 4♦ would be quite reasonable at (5) (but not if partner is likely to bid 5♦!). I was North and decided to pass at (6) (for the reason I said above about the ♥K).

And what happened? Two tables reached 5♦ doubled and shared the bottom scores. 3♥ made exactly and one table reached 4♥ which went one down.

The bottom line. You need a good hand for the 5-level. Obey The Law (11 trumps for the 5 level).

Stop ASAP with a mis-fit

Board 11 from Friday 28th, love all.

North (F)	South	West	North	East	South
♠ Q10952	♠ A	-	-	-	pass
♥ AK87	♥ 32	pass	1♠	pass	2♦
♦ -	♦ KQJ532	pass	2♥	pass	3♦
♣ K965	♣ 8432	pass	pass (1)		

So what did you bid with Hand F in this week's quiz? You should pass, anything above 3♦ will go down and even 3♦ is dicey. And what happened? Two pairs managed to stop sensibly in 3♦. At the two other tables they ignored my continual advice about stopping quickly with mis-fits. One bid 3♠ and the other 3NT; both went two down, deservedly so.

I overheard Alex/Kenneth talking about this board. Kenneth said 'Terry always says to *stop ASAP with mis-fits* so I passed 3♦'. Looks like those who heed my advice win competitions? I also heard another player ask North why he did not bid 3NT at (1) – *Do not bid NT with mis-fits, do not bid NT with a void in partner's suit*.

The bottom line. Stop ASAP with mis-fits.

Don't let the opponents bully you into a silly contractBoard 10 from Friday 28th**... You never know, maybe they are in a silly contract?**

Dealer:	♠ K6	Table A				
East	♥ A52	West	North	East	South	
Both vul	♦ 93	-	-	1NT	pass	
	♣ A109762	pass (1)	2♣ (2)	pass	pass	
		2♦ (3)	all pass			
♠ A3	N	♠ Q1097				
♥ J98	W E	♥ KQ76	Table B			
♦ 8765	S	♦ AQ	West	North	East	South
♣ K543		♣ QJ8	-	-	1NT	pass
	♠ J8542		pass (1)	pass (2)		
	♥ 1043					
	♦ KJ1042					
	♣ -					

Table A: This was a massacre, 2♦ went three down. What went wrong?

(1) I agree with this pass, the hand is not good enough for 2NT, mainly because of the manky 4 card ♦ suit.

(2) Natural, and obvious to me.

(3) Now here's where it went wrong. If his ♦ suit is so poor that it inhibits a raise to 2NT then it's certainly not worth bidding! West should pass (or double?).

Table B: West again judged well and did not bid at (1). Quite why North passed I don't know.

Maybe 2♣ was conventional in their system and North quite sensibly did not want to compete at the 3 level (I would also pass if 2♣ was conventional).

And what happened? 1NT made +1 but 2NT and 3NT (!) bid at other tables both went down. I would not invite with the West hand and I certainly would not accept with the East hand - AQ doubleton is bad and 5 quacks are

The bottom lines? You need a good 8 or 9 points to invite partner's 1NT opening. Honours belong in long suits. If partner opens 1NT and you have Kxxx in the opponent's suit, then think about defending (maybe even a double?).

Two Pairs Too HighBoard 2 from Friday 28th, N-S vul, dealer East.

North	South (G)	<u>Table A</u>		<u>Table B</u>	
		North	South	North	South
♠ Q54	♠ J986	-	1♥	-	1♥
♥ K5	♥ AQJ1082	2♣ (1)	2♥	1NT (1)	3♥ (2)
♦ 82	♦ KJ10	pass		4♥	pass
♣ A109765	♣ -				

4♥ was too high, what went wrong at Table B?

Table A: They were playing Acol and so 2♣ at (1) only promised 8 points. South did not like North's suit and so bid just 2♥ which North very sensibly passed.

Table B: It was Standard American here and so 1NT at (1). But South's 3♥ at (2) is an overbid, 2♥ is quite sufficient.

Six-Five come alive, so what about Six-Six?

Board 14 from Friday 28th

Dealer:	♠ -				
East	♥ A98743	West (E)	North (me)	East	South
Love all	♦ A108752	-	-	1♣	pass
	♣ 2	1♠	dbl (1)	redbl (2)	pass
		pass (3)	4♥ (4)	dbl (5)	pass
		pass	pass		
♠ KJ9862	N	♠ AQ			
♥ K6	W E	♥ J52			
♦ 93	S	♦ QJ6			
♣ 984		♣ AKJ105			
	♠ 107543				
	♥ Q10				
	♦ K4				
	♣ Q763				

This was not a success for E-W (it made), can they do any better?

- (1) We had no agreement about showing two-suited hands and so I chose a double. I prefer this to leaping off in ♥'s straight away as partner may just have ♦'s.
- (2) I believe that this redouble showed a non-minimum hand and so is a reasonable bid.
- (3) Now this pass, I believe, is the problem. West knows that North has both of the red suits - I was North and everybody knows that when I make a take-out double then I am short in the enemy suit(s). With a good 6 card ♠ suit I would most certainly bid 2♠ here. I can see no reason for passing, it makes life easier for North and difficult for East.
- (4) I believe in making life difficult for the opponents (yes, I know, some say I make life difficult for everybody). A paltry 2♥, 3♥ or even 2♠ is not enough with this hand. Bid 4♥ like you mean it!
- (5) Here we see the problem that East has. He has shown a good hand, but partner does not know that it's this good. If West had bid 2♠ at (3) then 4♠ would be the bid now. But he has no idea that partner has such a good ♠ suit and double is certainly very reasonable.

And what happened? North set up the ♦'s by ruffing the third round with the ♥Q. This was over-ruffed but it did not matter as the only losers were the ♣A and two trumps. Note that if North does not ruff a ♦ but draws trumps then he loses the ♣A, a ♦ and maybe two trumps. At other tables 3NT by East went one down; 4♠ by West made (!) despite the 5-0 split and the top losers; 5♥ by North doubled went two down.

The bottom lines. If you have a good 6 card major then bid it twice, especially if partner has shown a big hand. The next time you pick up a hand with two 6 card suits both headed by the ace, bid up! Six-Six makes tricks, South has a very mediocre hand but 4♥ is cold. Sometimes intermediates are very important in long suits; this contract would not have made if the ♥ 98 in North's hand were smaller cards.

And what should redouble at (2) show? If you have no agreement then obviously showing a non-minimum hand is excellent. A popular treatment in the States is Support Doubles and Redoubles (I play these with Chuck). In this situation the redouble by East would show exactly 3 ♠'s, a ♠ raise would promise 4 ♠'s and any other bid would deny 3 ♠'s.

If you pause it's best to bidBoard 12 from Friday 28th

Dealer: ♠ A84

West ♥ 4

N-S vul ♦ AKJ853

♣ 742

West North (me) East South

1♣ 1♦ 2♠ (1) pass (2)

pass pass (3)

♠ Q62 N ♠ J109753

♥ KQ103 W E ♥ 765

♦ Q104 S ♦ 96

♣ KJ8 ♣ 93

♠ K

♥ AJ982

♦ 72

♣ AQ1065

This was not a success for N-S, what went wrong?

- (1) Alerted as a weak jump shift.
- (2) South had a good long think and then decided to pass. Double, 3♥ or 3♠ (asking for a ♠ stop) are all reasonable bids. With 14 points you must say something.
- (3) Is this North hand worth another bid? Probably, but after partner's long pause North had no option but to pass (North is a player of the highest integrity!).

And what happened? 2♠ went one down, but that was little compensation for N-S as 600 was scored at every other table (3NT or 5♦ making).

The bottom lines?

- The weak jump shift can be a very useful bid. Some play it only after a double, others play it even without interference (strong is standard).
- If you make a long pause it's usually best to bid. A long pause followed by a pass bans partner from bidding if he does not have a very clear-cut bid.

5-4 (or 4-5) in the Majors opposite 1NTBoard 5 (rotated) from Friday 28th, N-S vul.

Partner opens 1NT and you have 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s (or 4 ♠'s and 5 ♥'s) with game going values. How do you bid it? Stayman or transfer?

West	East (H)	<u>Sequence A</u>		<u>Sequence B</u>	
		West	East	West	East
♠ Q109	♠ AK83	1NT	2♦	1NT	2♣
♥ K4	♥ QJ853	2♥	2♠	2♦	3♥ (1)
♦ A108	♦ 74	3NT	pass	3NT	pass
♣ AK652	♣ 94				

In sequence B one jumps in the 5 card major at (1) and it's forcing. Both sequences work, so which one should you use? It's up to you (and what you use the other sequence for). Expert recommended practice is to use sequence B when 4-5 (and jump to 3♠ when 5-4) and to use Sequence A when 5-5 in the majors and invitational. A game forcing 5-5 is then bid

1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 3♥. There is, however, a far better method that shows all invitational and forcing 5-4's and 5-5's; I have a few pages on it if anybody's interested.

Nice one, Dave.

Board 23 from Monday 24th, both vul.

Hans brought this board to my attention, Dave had made a fine play against him!

Dealer:	♠ AK6			Board 5 from Monday 26 th			
North	♥ AK642			West	North	East	South
N-S vul	♦ Q92				(Dave)	(Hans)	
	♣ K2			-	-	-	pass
♠ QJ1042	N	♠ 93		pass	1♥	pass	2♥
♥ 87	W E	♥ Q103		pass	4♥	pass	pass
♦ 105	S	♦ KJ86		pass			
♣ Q984		♣ J765					
	♠ 875						
	♥ J95						
	♦ A743						
	♣ A103	← DUMMY					

A very respectable contract, but certainly not solid. However, East led the ♦6 and now North's prospects are looking rosey. The fortunate lead has given him a trick and so he now only needs 4 ♥ tricks to ensure the contract. Dave played the ♥A and both followed; which card should he play next? The answer is a low ♥ towards dummy's ♥J9. This is a safety play and ensures 4 trump tricks even if East held all of the outstanding trumps (♥Q108).

Which card did you play in this week's 'play quiz'? Presumably the ♥10 – if declarer has the ♥K then why did he not play it? After all, your ♥Q might have been singleton by now.

East really does not know what to do! North would play the same if he held ♥A8642 to start with and then West would now have the bare ♥K, so East should play low?

And what happened? Hans played low (I suspect that everybody would) and so Dave's trump loser disappeared. To add insult to injury, Dave then went on to execute a squeeze for two overtricks.

And at other tables? 4♥ made exactly once and went down twice. I note that one pair reached 3NT making +1 for a 2nd, I guess that this is an example of a deal where NT plays better than a 5-3 fit (unless you play like Dave)?

The bottom line. A safety play usually concedes a trick in order to make the contract safer. In this example it actually gained a trick!

With a long minor, think 3NT

Board 9 from Monday 24th

Dealer: ♠ K8
North ♥ 8752
E-W vul ♦ AJ64
♣ 872

♠ A763 N ♠ Q9542
♥ AQ109643 W E ♥ -
♦ 10 S ♦ 98732
♣ 4 ♣ 1095
♠ J10
♥ KJ
♦ KQ5
♣ AKQJ63

Table A

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	2NT
pass	3♣	pass	3♦
pass	3NT	all pass	

Table B

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	1♣
1♥ (1)	1NT	pass	3NT
all pass			

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	1♣
3♥ (1)	pass (2)	pass	pass (3)

3NT by North is cold (because East has a ♥ void), but how do you get there?

Table A: This South elected to open 2NT, a reasonable option. West kept quiet and North tried Stayman and then bid 3NT. Looks fine, but unfortunately West found the best lead of a low ♠, declarer mis-guessed and that was minus one.

Table B: A 1♣ opening this time, also fine. West decided to overcall just 1♥ as there might be a ♠ fit. North now has a bit of a problem; he has 8 points and would normally have responded 1NT, but after the overcall most players insist upon having a stop. Anyway, he ignored this usually sound advice and was very grateful not to receive a ♥ lead!

Table C: This West decided to overcall 3♥ and North has to pass now at (2). But if I were South I would try 3NT at (3).

What should West bid at (1)? I would jump to 3♥ with this West hand. Even if there is a 4-4 ♠ fit, ♥'s should play just a well with this good suit and weakish ♠'s. I think that the pre-emptive effect of 3♥ is a bigger + factor than a possible bad result if you have a ♠ fit and ♠'s happens to be a better contract.

And what happened? A mixed bag. 3♥ made +2 but 2♥ at another table made just +1. 3NT was bid at just tables A & B but 5♣ (minus 1) was the contract at the 5th table.

The bottom lines.

- I've said it a few times; with a long minor, think 3NT. In this example 3NT by South only fails if West finds a low ♠ lead and you mis-guess. 5♣ stands no chance.

The best slam?

Board 27 from Monday 17th, love all.

West (C)	East
♠ 732	♠ AKQ64
♥ A83	♥ Q2
♦ AQJ	♦ 10
♣ K872	♣ AQ1095

Table D:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
2♠ (1)	pass	4♣ (2)	pass
4♠	pass	5♣	pass
5♥	pass	7♠	all pass

Table A:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
1NT (1)	pass	4♠ (2)	all pass

Table B:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
1NT (1)	pass	6♣ (2)	all pass

Table C:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	pass
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
1NT (1)	pass	4NT (2)	pass
5♥	pass	6♠	all pass

So 4 different contracts, which is best? And what do you think the very best contract is? Answer below. Let's look at the bidding first: -

Table A: So what did you rebid with Hand C at (1) in this week's quiz? 1NT I hope. And what should East do at (2)? 17 points opposite 12-14 does not guarantee slam, but this East Hand is not 17 points! With two great 5 carders (and guaranteed support for both) it's worth far more and 4♠ is not good enough.

Table B: This East chose a 'sensible' 6♣. It's a known fit and it is the slam most likely to succeed. So is it the best contract? Unfortunately the vagaries of pairs scoring are such that 6♠ scores a lot more than 6♣. It is mathematically correct to bid a 75% ♠ slam rather than a 99% ♣ slam at pairs scoring. 6♣ is, of course, a far superior contract at teams or rubber bridge.

Table C: This pair got to a better contract (at pairs scoring). It's up to you if you use 4♣ or 4NT at (2) to ask for aces (I would use 4♣ as partner's last bid was NT).

Table D: This West chose to support ♠'s with this miserable holding and East naturally got carried away – I suspect that he expected a shapelier hand and/or better trumps (I would). This pair always use 4♣ as the ace ask (I would use 4NT here), 5♣ asked for kings and East bid the very optimistic ♠ grand.

And what happened? 6♣ made +1 but only scored an average. ♠'s split and the ♦K was onside so the ♠ contracts also made 13 tricks. Two pairs made 3 overtricks in 4♠.

And what is the best contract with these cards? 7♣ looks excellent to me! :-

A 3-2 ♠ split and ♣'s not 4-0 will suffice. (5 ♠'s, 1 ♥, 1 ♦, 4 ♣'s and 2 ♦ ruffs). There are also extra chances if the ♠'s don't behave (a ♦ lead, a ♥ lead away from the ♥K, trumps 2-2 or, if all else fails, the ♦ finesse).

The bottom lines. 5-4 fits play better than 5-3 fits. Do not support a bid showing only 4 cards when holding 3 rags. When you support partner's possible 4 card suit with just 3 cards, you need shortage somewhere. Unfortunately, at pairs scoring, you do better bidding dodgy major suit slams than solid minor suit slams. Grand slams need to be well over 75% to make them worth bidding at any kind of scoring; this 7♠ is less than 50% but 7♣ is way over 75%.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A: (a) pass.

(b) pass.

This is a miserable hand that does not warrant any sort of opener. Deduct a point for 4333 type shape.

Hand B: (a) 1♣. This hand conforms to the rule of 20 (and rule of 15 for 4th seat). With a decent 5 card suit, two aces and two 10's it is a clear opener.

(b) 1NT (12-14)

Hand C: 1NT. It is often correct to support partner (2♠) with just 3 card support, but not with a hand like this. With miserable ♠'s, no doubleton and honours in all the other suits 2♠ is a poor bid.

Hand D: I would bid 4♥. Not because it's necessarily going to make but because we have 10 combined trumps – so compete to the 4 level (and do it as quickly as possible). I guess that for those of you who are not firm believers in The Law then you can invite game (via 2NT - Ogust). Note that a 3♥ bid here is not invitational but merely raising the pre-empt. Pass is a bit feeble.

Hand E: 2♠. You have a good 6 card suit, so tell partner. If you pass then LHO may make a high level bid so that you can no longer show your good suit.

Hand F: Pass. It's a mis-fit and 3♦ is the best spot, partner has a 6 card suit. Do *not* bid 3NT!

Hand G: 2♥. Not good enough for 3♥ or 2♠.

Hand H: You can start off with either Stayman or a transfer – it depends upon what your partner plays! I prefer Stayman with game forcing 5-4's.

Play Quiz Answer

It's a guess! Opener has 5 ♥'s and your partner has just one left. Is it the ♥K (in which case you must play low) or is it a low ♥ (in which case you must put up the ♥Q)? In the actual deal East played low, the ♥J won and the ♥Q failed to score a trick. Tough luck! But full marks to North for giving East such a nightmare guess.