



Club News Sheet – No. 93

13/8/2004



Monday 9/8/04

Friday 13/8/2004

1st Chuck/Terry 65%
 2nd Mike/Joe 55%

1st = Joe/Jan 42 IMPs
 2nd = Dave/Bob 42 IMPs

Bidding Quiz

Standard American is assumed unless otherwise stated.

Hand A Hand B With Hand A LHO opens 1♦, partner overcalls 1♥ and RHO bids 2♥. What do you bid?

♠ KJ863 ♠ -
 ♥ 7 ♥ A982
 ♦ 73 ♦ AQ62
 ♣ K9532 ♣ AQ984

With Hand B partner opens 2♠ (weak), what do you bid?

Hand C Hand D At favourable vulnerability, what do you open with Hand C?

♠ K87642 ♠ AQJ1093
 ♥ K1054 ♥ Q6
 ♦ 73 ♦ J98
 ♣ 5 ♣ 73

At unfavourable vulnerability, what do you open with Hand D?

Hand E Hand F With Hand E RHO opens 1♥, what do you do?

♠ - ♠ KQ1052
 ♥ Q854 ♥ AJ10
 ♦ Q9642 ♦ K3
 ♣ AJ42 ♣ K108

What do you open with Hand F?

How many ♣'s?

With silent opposition the bidding goes: -

Sequence G 1♦ - 2NT - 3♣ - 3NT - 6♣ - pass

2NT shows 11-12 points and 3♣ was natural and forcing. Opener obviously has a very strong shapely hand with at least 5♦'s, but how many ♣'s does his 6♣ bid guarantee?

What's Wrong?

With silent opposition the bidding goes: -

Sequence H 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ - 4♥ - pass

I was asked to comment upon this auction as apparently somebody bid like this recently. Which bid is incorrect in the auction? – you don't even need to see the hands.

The Devil's Advocate – Another point of view by Chuck.

I was most happy to hear Terry say that he would not respond with the last word on observations that I have made. Six paragraphs, count them six paragraphs of ping pong. I told Terry face to face that if the club ace and the diamond ace were switched Hans would have been end-played at trick one and would have to give him a trick since he could not have played from Kx in clubs. Not only making a king good but also probably a ruff.

What is a national champ? There are probably a thousand of them in the woodwork. Is it the player of the year? The highest rated player of the year? The person who won the most points in a year? No, it is none of these. It is a person who won a nationally rated event. A national lasts a couple of weeks and if you win one of the dozens of events at a national (there are 4 nationals a year) or any other venue that is nationally rated you are a National Champ. If you have the time and money you can go on the road as the top experts and professionals do. And so do others who do not play well. Take our club for example. Everyone has won some time or other. Even the weakest players win. Often it is a matter of how many boards the opponents throw at you. Forgive me if I disagree with our resident expert on occasion, but it is my point of view.

Now down to the real business, Hand D from news sheet 91: -

♠ K10842 Yes, I would open 1♠ and partner can bid anything he likes. Terry sez
♥ A6 2♦ or 2♥ would leave me without a bid. It is standard practice in
♦ Q8 America to bid 3NT with this hand. Your 15 HCP and partner's
♣ AQ54 promised 11+ becomes a closeout unless he has a big hand and searches
 for slam. I know the Master does not play this and considers 3NT a
huge hand. He will even quote from his extensive library. I bet if he looked hard enough he would find someone to agree with me.

REMEMBER THAT THE EXPERTS DO NOT AGREE. SO WHO AM I TO DIFFER WITH THE RESIDENT EXPERT "WHAT CAN I DO?" "UP TO YOU"



Chuck then photocopied a bidding competition between two expert American pairs where they reached different contracts on 6 out of the 8 boards. I note that on one board one pair bid to 2♦ while the other bid to 6♦; 5♦ was the spot to be in. Now one could say 'so much for American experts', but not me (Terry).....

His Master's Voice

Am I allowed to say anything? I hope so, so I'll start by explaining these bidding challenges. They are specially selected hands where it is difficult to reach the correct contract. Typical is 3NT makes on combined 20 counts, 3NT goes off on combined 29 counts etc etc. They are then given to two pairs to see who makes the biggest hash of it. They are pretty meaningless. What is much better is the bidding quiz (similar to mine) where a larger panel of experts are asked what to bid with a particular hand in a given sequence. And, indeed, the experts do not often all agree! Their views are very educational.

Onto the ping-pong. I have no idea what Chuck is talking about with these switched aces, end-play at trick one, probable ruff or whatever. Surely the issue is that 3NT goes down? I can't be bothered to look into it any deeper. Suffice it to say that I still think that the 3♣ bid is sound and that the 4♣ bid is not; and I have sent the hand off to a real panel of international experts. Before the results come back, who are these other 'top players' who agree with you? Are they prepared to stand up and be counted or is it just a certain somebody who will always disagree with me on anything as a matter of principle?

The last time Chuck challenged me in this way it was his pass of 2♦ doubled in news-sheet 64, 1NT - pass - 2♣ - pass - 2♦ - dbl - pass (1) - pass - pass (2), I also sent the hand off. It subsequently appeared in the UK's Bridge magazine and the conductor (a multiple *World* champion – that does mean something) agreed that my pass at (1) was absolutely correct and that Chuck cannot pass 2♦ doubled at (2). Chuck, who challenged me to write up the hand, simply said that the bidding/hand was not as he remembered it! Fortunately another player at the table (other than myself) had a better memory. So let's wait and see what the real experts say this time. And it will also be interesting to hear what they say about the 3♣ opening – I don't think that Marty Bergen is on this panel.

And a 'National Champ' is meaningless. I guess that we should have known that from a nation that holds a 'World Series' with just one nation participating?

Now down to the real business, let's have this auction as an example: - 1♠ - 2♦ - 3NT. I featured this in news-sheets 23 & 24 and will not bother to again print the quotes from three books. These three authors consider that 3NT here is 18-19 – but one of them was Marty Bergen so it's only two really? Chuck says that 'standard' is that 3NT is 15-17. This is clearly not so but Chuck is of course correct in saying that some more advanced players in America do play it as 15-17 (Yes, I did look hard and did find someone who agrees with Chuck). A 2NT rebid is then forcing and either 12-14 or 18-19. But this is most certainly something that you have to agree. Your two-over-one responses then need to be up to scratch, no crappy 10 counts as are popular in some low lying countries; and your opening bids with relatively balanced hands need to be top notch (no poor 12 counts) – as 2NT is forcing. Now the interesting thing is that I held the Hand D and opened 1NT rather than 1♠ when partnering Chuck. As he clearly stated, he knows that I play the 3NT rebid as a 'huge' (18-19) hand. So that's what we play and what some Americans play is surely irrelevant? I am quite prepared to play Chuck's method (I usually adapt to whatever my partner wants to play) – but it has to be agreed beforehand!

And just a couple of final points. I did say that it's a matter of personal style and that a 1♠ opening is fine if that's what you want to do and can find a sensible bid over 2♦/♥ (I believe that 3♣ is best, but I would prefer more in the black suits and less in the red suits). I am not arguing that 1NT is any better than 1♠; as I said, it's a matter of personal preference and style. I also note that, since Chuck brought up the hand, he is silent about my view that he should bid 4♠ as his final bid.

I do not consider myself an expert, as chuck says. Just call me the Master (of ping pong).

How many ♣'s?

Board 15 from Monday 9th, N-S vul

North	South	West	North	East	South .
♠ AK5	♠ Q72	-	-	-	1♦
♥ K105	♥ A	pass	2NT (1)	pass	3♣ (2)
♦ 1084	♦ A9765	pass	3NT (3)	pass	6♣ (4)
♣ Q875	♣ AKJ4	all pass			

An interesting bidding sequence to a poor contract, let's have a look: -

- (1) 11-12 points with no 4 card major.
- (2) natural and forcing.
- (3) 4♣ is an alternative here.
- (4) 18 points opposite partner's 11-12 is not enough for 6NT. Pass now is certainly a very reasonable option. But this is a good 18 points and with a known 4-4 ♣ fit and a partner with at least 7 cards in the minors I think that having a shot at 6♣ is also acceptable. In a more sophisticated partnership 4♣ (natural) is better.

Of course North had the worst hand possible for the slam, move a few points from the majors to ♦'s and slam is easy. The ♥K is waste paper here. North (Chuck) was very quick to criticise, stating categorically that South needs 5 ♣'s for his bid. This is incorrect. South has the values and shape for a slam and so bid it; very reasonable. How many times do I have to explain the power of the 4-4 fit?

♠ A95	Change the North hand slightly to this, doubtless North would then criticise
♥ 1075	South if he had passed 3NT when other tables are comfortably making 6♣
♦ KQ4	with an overtrick? (I too can construct dozens of hands to prove my point,
♣ Q875	but I won't bore you with any more).

Now I am not saying that 6♣ is or is not a better bid than passing 3NT – one could construct dozens of hands to support either view. That is not the issue here. What I am saying is that the 6♣ bid does not promise 5 ♣'s. Agreed?

And what happened? A defensive error meant that 6♣ made. Two tables were in a sensible 3NT and one table was in a non-sensible 6NT.

The bottom lines: -

- It's best to keep comments at the table to logically sensible ones.
- With a good 4-4 fit you need less points for the suit slam than for 6NT.

Obey the LAW

Board 17 from Monday 9th

Dealer: ♠ 5
North ♥ Q983
Love all ♦ AQ954
♣ QJ4

♠ KJ863	N	♠ AQ1094
♥ 7	W E	♥ J6
♦ 73	S	♦ KJ106
♣ K9532		♣ 87
	♠ 72	
	♥ AK10542	
	♦ 82	
	♣ A106	

Table A

West (A)	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	2♥ (1)
3♠ (2)	4♥	pass (3)	pass
pass (4)			

Table B

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

Table C

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	1♠	2♥ (1)
4♠ (2)	pass (7)	pass	pass (8)

N-S can make 10 tricks in ♥'s, E-W can make 10 tricks in ♠'s; there are 20 combined trumps. Low and behold, the LAW works. Let's see how it (the LAW) should have been applied in the bidding:

-

Table A: (1) Obviously forcing.

(2) This is inadequate; see commentary for Table C.

(3) This is fine as West has only promised 4 ♠'s

(4) West still has a chance to bid to 4♠ but it may be too late, see commentary for Table B (6) below.

Table B: (4) This time West did bid 4♠ at his second turn and he got away with it...

(5) ... because North should not bid above the LAW level here...

(6) ... but South should bid 5♥ here. This South hand has little defence to 4♠ and so should go one above the level of the law (he expects 4♠ to make and 5♥ to be minus one, that's OK. But if 4♠ goes down then there are still 20 total tricks and so 5♥ will then make. That is what the LAW is all about.

Table C: (2) This West got it right ...

(7) ... because North cannot venture to the 5 level with just four trumps. Partner may have only five ♥'s and that's two short of the 'safe' level of the LAW ...

(8) ... and South cannot bid 5♥ because he has no idea that North has support.

And what happened? Just one E-W pair were allowed to play in 4♥ making. At the other 3 tables 4♠ was making. The bottom lines: -

- obey the LAW.

- in competitive situations compete to the level of the LAW. And with a weak hand it's usually best to do so as quickly as possible (Table C at (2)).

- in competitive situations compete to one above the level of the LAW if you are in the pass-out seat and think that opponents may make (Table B at (6)).

- with 5 trumps opposite partner's 5 card major opening or overcall, it's best to jump to the 4 level if you also have a singleton or void.

That abused UNT again

Board 11 from Friday 13th

Dealer: ♠ 974
South ♥ K9
Love all ♦ AJ105
♣ Q975

Table A

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

♠ - N ♠ AJ863
♥ Q854 W E ♥ 7632
♦ Q9642 S ♦ 87
♣ AJ42 ♣ 63
♠ KQ1052
♥ AJ10
♦ K3
♣ K108

Table B

West (E)	North	East	South
-	pass	pass	1♠ (1)
2NT (2)	pass (3)	3♣	pass
pass	dbl (4)	all pass	

Table A: (1) So what did you open with Hand F in this week's quiz? If you allow 5 card majors in your 1NT opening then this hand looks perfect to me.

Table B: (1) this South opened 1♠. It's the same old story – what's your rebid over say 2♦? Now actually this N-S pair play 2/1 but that is simply moving the problem elsewhere. With 2/1 you have the problem over partner's forcing 1NT. This hand is not strong enough for 2NT (17-18 points) and so has to bid 2♣ when playing 2/1 – horrible. Presumably this player had the overbid of 2NT in mind? And if NT is to be the final contract, it's best played from this hand.

If you have a balanced hand within your 1NT opening range, then open 1NT!

(2) But if opponents bid like this then you don't need a rebid. 2NT here is the dreaded Unusual NT, promising 5-5 in the minors. You don't need me to explain why this is a really terrible bid. I can only assume that one of the ♥'s was mixed up with the ♣'s? But even then I do not like the UNT with a void and 3 ♥'s. Double is the obvious bid (if you do not wish to pass) with this actual hand.

(3) North could double here. That shows a decent hand that can penalize overcaller in one of his suits. I've never before met this situation where you can stomp all over both of them.

(4) stomp stomp.

And what happened? 3NT made for +400, but you still get a huge minus when team-mates are giving away 800 at the other table (3♣ doubled was -4).

The bottom lines: -

- If you have a balanced hand within your 1NT range, open 1NT. If you do not then you will always have a rebid problem. This is applicable to Standard American, 2/1, Acol, weak NT, strong NT or just about any system.
- The UNT is 5-5 in the minors
- The UNT denies a reasonable 3 card major, a 4 card major is impossible by definition.

A Weak two opener?

Board 11 from Friday 13th

Dealer: ♠ K87642
West ♥ K1054
E-W vul ♦ 73
♣ 5

♠ AQJ1093	N	♠ -
♥ Q6	W E	♥ A982
♦ J98	S	♦ AQ62
♣ 73		♣ AQ984

♠ 5
♥ J73
♦ K1054
♣ KJ1062

Table A

West (D)	North (C)	East (B)	South
-	(1)	-	-
2♠ (2)	pass	2NT (3)	pass
3♠	pass	3NT (4)	all pass

Table B

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

Some interesting bidding: -

Table A: (1) North put the stop card on the table and was just about to follow it with the 2♠ card when he was informed that it was not his bid. Did you open 2♠ with Hand C in this week's quiz? I hope not. Even at favourable vulnerability I would not open 2♠ because it has a 4 card ♥ suit.

(2) So West opened in turn with a much sounder 2♠. What did you open with Hand D in this week's quiz? I'm sure that 1♠, 2♠ and 3♠ would all receive some votes and I think that 2♠ is quite sensible. I would never pass.

(3) What did you bid with Hand B in this week's quiz? To me pass is clear-cut, you expect this hand to add 4 tricks to partner's total, but partner's weak two is not going to produce 6 tricks opposite a void, even if it is top of the range. Game is in your dreams. One player (Chuck) suggested 3♣, stating that he was not afraid of the 3 level – I would be. Opposite many average weak two openers you will go down – the hand is a horrible mis-fit.

(4) And this is very silly. Partner's 6 card ♠ suit will probably only be of use if they are trumps. Communication, that's the name of the game.

Table B: (2) This West chose to pass, I would not.

(5) And this North chose to pass. Correct, this is a very poor 2♠ opener.

(6) Not very scientific. Obviously West has a problem as a passed hand – that's another good reason for opening something.

And what happened? 3NT went minus three and 4♠ was minus one. Obviously passing 2♠ would have been an excellent result.

See what I mean about this East hand passing 2♠. Even with a whale of a 2♠ opener opposite it makes only 9 tricks in ♠'s. I did not follow the play but I think that the defence should have done better. And see what I mean about stopping early with mis-fits and never playing in NT - a combined 26 count with a double stopper in every suit went 3 down in 3NT. The bottom lines: -

- Bail out on a total mis-fit ASAP.
- Do not play total mis-fits in NT.
- Do not open a weak two with a decent outside 4 card major.

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 4♠. With a weak shapely hand, bid to the limit of the LAW.
- Hand B: Pass. This is an enormous mis-fit and even opposite the best weak two imaginable game is remote. Imagine partner with a decent suit like AQ10864, on a bad day it makes two or three tricks – he has to keep leading from it and not up to it. Trump management is difficult with a void.
- Hand C: Pass. This hand is good enough for a non-vul 2♠, but do not open a weak two with an outside 4 card major – you may have a fit there.
- Hand D: 1♠, 2♠ or 3♠. This one is close, I would not argue with any of these. When vul against not you need a good hand for a pre-empt and this hand is very good. It's close to an opener but does not conform to the rule of 20. Some players would consider this suit too good for a weak two. And me? I think that 2♠ is probably best, it's nice to be top of the range once in a while. I would not even consider passing.
- Hand E: Double.
- Hand F: 1NT. A balanced 15-17. Easy? I went all through this in previous weeks and also in HMV this week, with this hand 1NT is very clear-cut. There are two problems if you open 1♠. The obvious one is that you have no sensible rebid over 2♦ unless you agree that jumping to 3NT shows 15-17 – that is *not* standard. And the other problem is if partner responds 1NT. Then you are again fixed; you have to pass as 2NT should be 18-19. And if you play a forcing NT (I believe that this pair do) then you again have an uncomfortable bid (a horrible 2♣ as 2NT is still 18-19). With a balanced hand within your 1NT opening range, open 1NT – easy.
- Sequence G: Four. The 2NT bid denies a 4 card major (and if you play inverted minors it also denies 4♦'s). Opener has a big hand and simply wants to play slam in the 4-4♣ fit. He knows that responder has at least 4♣'s (and if he doesn't then he has 4♦'s and will correct). And this is not one of those cases where you can say that experts disagree, it is simple logic. There is no question of the bid guaranteeing 5♣'s as there is a known fit. Opener could easily be 0364, 1354, 0454 or any number of similar shapes (but obviously a big hand containing good top ♣'s).
And why did opener bid 3♣ at his 2nd turn? He was hoping for a 4♣ support bid as then key cards could then be established. Note that this is another case where DRKCB would be very useful. But that's another story.
- Sequence H: The 4♥ bid is 'not allowed'. When you open 1NT you have said it all, partner is the captain. The sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥ shows a weak hand with 5♥'s and 4♠'s. Responder bid Stayman so that he could pass either a 2♥ or 2♠ bid from opener and the bid of 2♥ over 2♦ is a weak correction to the final contract.