

Monday 6/9/2004

Friday 10/9/2004

1st Per/Tomas 62%
 2nd Dave/Tonni 60%

1st Dave/Bob 55%
 2nd Kenneth/John 53%

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

Hand A	Hand B	With Hand A partner opens 1NT and you obviously raise to 3NT. But what would you bid if RHO hand overcalled 2♦? Surely 3NT would promise a ♦ stop, so what do you bid?
♠ 532	♠ J7	
♥ K94	♥ 1083	
♦ QJ	♦ AKQ98	What do you open with Hand B?
♣ AJ865	♣ A42	
Hand C	Hand D	(a) Do you open with Hand C as dealer? (b) Suppose that you pass and partner opens 1♣, what do you respond?
♠ AJ42	♠ J43	
♥ J4	♥ J542	
♦ Q10975	♦ K752	
♣ K3	♣ 63	With Hand D partner opens 1♣, what do you bid?

Responding up the line?

I have been asked about this a few times. Suppose that you hold Hand D and partner opens 1♣. I will not pass with a weak doubleton ♣, but do you respond 1♦ or 1♥?

Actually, the experts differ on this one. The traditional style is that you always bid 'up the line' and so it's 1♦. A rather more recent idea is 'Walsh'. Playing Walsh when partner opens 1♣ you bid up the line with a hand that is good enough to make two bids but with a very weak hand like Hand D you bid the 4 card major in preference to a 4 (or 5) card ♦ suit.

Which is best?

I like Walsh but there is more to it than that and I don't know anybody who plays it! For casual partnerships it's best to always bid up the line.

And there is another advantage in bidding 1♦ in preference to 1♥. Suppose that partner has a big hand (say 16 points) with 4♥'s. If you respond 1♥ then he will leap off to 3♥ where you will struggle. If you respond 1♦ then partner will bid 1♥ and you can happily let him play there. Remember, partner is much more likely to leap about with support of a major than with support for a minor.

Open 1NT and keep the opposition quiet

Board 15 from Friday 3rd

It's only a part-score deal, but I think that there are a few interesting points here: -

Dealer:	♠ J7		<u>Table A</u>			
South	♥ 1083		West	North (B)	East	South
N-S vul	♦ AKQ98		-	-	-	pass
	♣ A42		pass	1♦ (1)	1♥	1♠
			2NT (2)	pass	pass	pass
♠ AK106	N	♠ 53				
♥ Q52	W E	♥ AJ976	<u>Table B</u>			
♦ 42	S	♦ J63	West	North	East	South
♣ J1086		♣ KQ7	-	-	-	pass
	♠ Q9842		pass	1♦ (1)	1♥	1♠
	♥ K4		2♥ (2)	pass	pass	pass
	♦ 1075					
	♣ 953		<u>Table C</u>			
			West	North(me)	East	South
			-	-	-	pass
			pass	1NT (1)	pass (3)	2♥
			pass	2♠	all pass	

Table A: What did you open at (1) with Hand B in this week's quiz? I guess that most would say 1♦ and I'm not arguing... well, only a little. At (2) West has the ♠'s well stopped but I'm not really happy with 2NT (or 1NT) here either.

Table B: This West chose 2♥ at (2), quite right. With 3 card support and a weak doubleton in one of the opponent's suits, 2♥ is a better bid than 1NT or 2NT.

Table C: And here we come back to the opening bid. Did you think of opening 1NT? I did. It's only 14 HCP's but two aces are good, a 5 card suit to the AKQ is good and a 10 is good. I think that it's worth a strong NT.

Now East is too weak to come in at the two level at (3) over a strong NT and N-S bought the contract.

And what happened? 2♥ made exactly for the top to E-W. 2NT was somehow only one down and scored an average. Table C's North made 2♠ +1 for the top to N-S.

The bottom lines: -

- With a balanced hand within your opening NT range (after evaluation) open 1NT.
- Opening 1NT has many advantages (including no rebid problems). The big advantage on this deal is that it kept the opponents out of their ♥'s.
- I have said a few times to transfer with a weak hand with a 5 card major suit; it does not matter if partner only has a doubleton, the 5-2 fit usually plays better than NT. This deal is a perfect example. Even with the trumps apparently badly stacked, 2♠ still made – even going down in 2♠ would normally be an excellent score for N-S.

The play's the thing – part 1

Board 11 from Monday 6th

Dealer: ♠ A97
 South ♥ Q73
 Love all ♦ A108654
 ♣ 9

Table A
 West North East (A) South
 - - - pass
 1NT 2♦ ? (1)

♠ KQJ4 N ♠ 532
 ♥ A8 W E ♥ K94
 ♦ K72 S ♦ QJ
 ♣ Q1072 ♣ AJ865
 ♠ 1086
 ♥ J10652
 ♦ 93
 ♣ K43

(My) Recommended bidding
 West North East South
 - - - pass
 1NT 2♦ 3NT (1) pass
 pass (2) pass pass

It's about the play but the bidding is also interesting as only 2 tables out of 5 reached the 'cold' 3NT: -

Table A: So what did you bid with Hand A in this week's quiz? It's not easy. You have game going values but no ♦ stop. You could simply punt 3NT but give the overcaller just ♦ AK10xx (or lots of other holdings) and you will go down. You need help from partner in ♦'s for 3NT to make. What about a double? – that would be penalties and you need better trumps. So how about the cue bid of 3♦? Now some people do play this as asking for a stop but the most common use of the cue bid of the opponent's suit in this situation is Stayman. So it looks like the only option is 3♣ - but do you play that as forcing or not?

'Expert' Enter Lebensohl. I fully defined this yonks ago (it's in the 2003 yearbook). It is Table? perhaps a rather advanced convention in it's complete form but sometimes it's the only way. The theory is that if RHO overcalls your partner's 1NT then you do not need 2NT as a balanced raise with 8-9 points (double for penalties instead). So 2NT is a totally artificial bid at (1) and demands that opener bid 3♣ at (2). 3NT subsequently by responder then shows game values with a stop in the opponent's suit. In this actual example responder had no ♦ stop and this is shown by a direct 3NT bid at (1) when playing Lebensohl (in standard it promises a stop).

YOU ♠ A9
 ↓ ♥ Q73 DUMMY
 ↓ ♦ A10865 ↓
 ♣ 9
 ♠ KQ4 N ♠ 53
 ♥ A8 W E ♥ K94
 ♦ K7 S ♦ Q
 ♣ Q1072 ♣ AJ865
 ♠ 108
 ♥ J10652
 ♦ 9
 ♣ K43

Anyway, onto the play in 3NT. North leads a ♦ and you win in dummy. Which suit do you attack? You can be pretty sure from the bidding that North has 6 ♦'s and the ♠A for his overcall. Quite possibly the ♣K as well but that is not important. You count your tricks: 2♠'s, 2♥'s, 2♦'s & 3♣'s. It looks like a ♠ to the ♠J is obvious so that's what you do and it holds, but what now? You are in hand in this position, what do you lead? A ♣? NO. If a ♣ finesse loses now then a ♦ will come from South and you are down. You must play the ♠K. You are home now. There may be a better line, but you must get your 2nd ♠ trick before attacking ♣'s.

And what happened? 3NT was bid just twice and went down once.

The play's the thing – part 2

Board 3 from Monday 6th

Dealer: ♠ 92
 South ♥ 1094
 E-W vul ♦ K10964
 ♣ Q93

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

♠ K863	N	♠ AQ5
♥ AQ5	W E	♥ 76
♦ A3	S	♦ QJ75
♣ K876		♣ J1054
	♠ J1074	
	♥ KJ832	
	♦ 82	
	♣ A2	

Just a word on the bidding. There is no other bid but 3NT with this East hand at (1) – values for game and no 4 card major. Do not worry about a weak doubleton opposite a strong NT unless the opponents have bid the suit.

Now the play. North leads a ♦, how should West plan the play? First, as always, count the sure tricks. So 3 ♠'s, 1 ♥, 2 ♦'s and probably 2 ♣'s. One short, but there are good chances, (a) you may get 3 ♣ tricks, (b) you may have 3 ♦'s (if North has the ♦K), (c) the ♥ finesse may work or (d) you may get 4 ♠ tricks.

Suppose you play the ♦J at trick one and it holds. You then play the ♣J from table and this loses to the ♣Q. The ♦10 comes back which you win with the ♦A.

YOU		DUMMY
↓		↓
♠ K863	N	♠ AQ5
♥ AQ5	W E	♥ 76
♦ -	S	♦ Q7
♣ K87		♣ 1054

We now have this position. You have two tricks in the bag and the lead in hand. What now? I am no expert but I can see a very reasonable line. Play a ♣. South wins and returns a ♠. You then cash the last two ♣'s and 3 ♠ tricks, making sure that you win the 3rd ♠ in dummy.

YOU	♠ -	DUMMY
↓	♥ 10	↓
	♦ K96	
	♣	
♠ 6	N	♠ -
♥ AQ5	W E	♥ 76
♦ -	S	♦ Q7
♣ -		♣ -

You are then in this position with the lead in dummy. Things have not gone particularly well, The ♣Q was wrong so (a) failed. The ♠'s did not split and so (d) failed. But you still have an excellent chance with either (b) or (c). You arranged to be in dummy now and so can take the ♥ finesse. It works so you are home. Had it failed then you would have got a ♦ trick.

♠ J
 ♥ KJ8
 ♦ -
 ♣ -

That was just one possible line. There are quite possibly other better ones but I cannot see how 3NT goes down when the ♥ finesse works.

And what happened? 3NT went down once and two down (!) once. Two pairs played in a silly 4♠. 3NT was bid 3 times but made only once. A 1 in 5 success rate (2 pairs failing to bid 3NT and 2 pairs failing to make it) is not good on a deal like this. 4♠ was minus two.

The bottom lines. Try all your options. Play on your long suits first. In this example, play ♣'s, then ♠'s and keep the ♥ finesse to the end.

A Multi misunderstanding?

Board 2 from Monday 6th

Dealer: ♠ Q1076
North ♥ Q10
N-S vul ♦ AQ764
♣ 96

♠ 5	N	♠ AK8432
♥ A8	W E	♥ 754
♦ 10982	S	♦ J35
♣ KQ5432		♣ 107
	♠ J9	
	♥ KJ9632	
	♦ K5	
	♣ AJ8	

Table A

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

Table B

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

(My) Recommended Bidding

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

Table A: (1) A clear 2♠ opener.

(2) This South chose to double, I prefer 3♥.

(3) This is a trifle strong for just 3♦ (about 8-9). I would bid 3NT.

(4) This now shows a stronger hand than 3♥ at (2).

Table B: (1) This 2♦ was 'multi' – a weak two in either ♥'s or ♠'s (and a few other strong options).

(2) The lower level lets in South easier.

(3) But this 3♣ bid is wrong. When partner pre-empted then a new suit is forcing. This West does not have the values to bid and should pass.

(4) There's a golden rule to pre-empting – bid you hand just once. The opponent's action has indicated to everybody that this is a weak 2♠ hand and so he should pass. (5) Bidding the hand 3 times is inexcusable.

'Expert' I would only recommend playing the 'multi 2♦' to experienced partnerships. So
Table? playing Standard American we have a 2♠ opener. Now what did you bid with this South hand at (2) in this week's quiz? It's a respectable 6 card suit – so bid it. If you double then that implies just 4♥'s – unless you subsequently bid ♥'s after doubling when it shows a much better hand.

And what happened? 2♠ was passed out at one table (was South sleeping?). 3NT made, 4♠ doubled went for it's deserved -800. The other two tables played in 4♥ by South. It made once and went down once.

As it happens, I can't see that any game contract legitimately makes. 4♥ should lose two ♠'s, a ♣ and a ♥. 3NT fails spectacularly if East finds the switch to the ♣10. He probably should have at Table A where North bid ♦'s. An initial ♣10 lead would mean at least 3 off, unfortunately East woodenly led out the ♠A and ♠K but failed to find the ♣ switch and so 3NT made easily.

And now it's time for a signalling commercial. Suppose that you are East in the above Table A defending 3NT. Just suppose that you do lead out the ♠A,K. What should you lead to trick 3? Why, the ♣10 obviously! (if partner had signalled with the ♦2 – Lavinthal).

Another Multi misunderstanding?

Board 8 from Friday 10th

Dealer: ♠ 9
West ♥ K98
Love all ♦ KQ732
♣ AQJ8

Table A

West	North	East	South
2♠ (1)	dbl (2)	4♠ (3)	pass
pass	pass		

♠ A107432	N	♠ QJ865
♥ J	W E	♥ AQ532
♦ 54	S	♦ J
♣ K652		♣ 103
	♠ K	
	♥ 10764	
	♦ A10986	
	♣ 974	

Table B

West	North	East	South
2♦ (1)	dbl (2)	2♥ (3)	3♦ (4)
pass (5)	3NT (6)	pass (7)	pass
pass			

Table A: (1) A clear 2♠ opener. Double at (2) is reasonable. It would be nice to have 4♥'s but I think that double is the best choice with these good 15 points but no ♠ stop.
(3) Nothing could be easier than raising partner to game.

So, pretty straightforward bidding at Table A, but what was this fiasco at Table B?

Table B: (1) The dreaded Multi 2♦. I don't know the exact variant that this pair play (and it appears neither do they?). Anyway, one of the options in the multi 2♦ opening is a traditional weak 2♠ and so West opened 2♦.
(2) I don't want to go into the defence to the multi, but standard is that you double on the first round with 15+ (with less you pass as you get another go). So North doubled, fine.
(3) This is where it started to go wrong for E-W. I believe that 2♥ here showed some sort of point range? It's all nonsense of course. East should simply bid 4♥ (pass or correct). East's bid was so much easier at Table A
(4) North has doubled for take-out and South has enough to bid his suit here.
(5) West would have bid 2♠ if South had not bid. This is the big problem with the multi. When the opponents interfere nobody has any idea who has what. Anyway, for what it's worth I think that West is correct here.
(6) As I said, nobody had much idea what was going on. North (me!) figured that if E-W had ♠'s then somebody would have bid them by now? Partner had made a free bid (but was it really ♦'s?). Anyway, in these days of uncertainty, 'if 3NT looks like a remotely sensible option – then bid it!'.
(7) And quite why East passed here baffles me. Since N-S have 'freely' bid to 3NT then obviously West has a weak two in a major. If you cannot find 4♥ here (pass or correct) then don't play the multi.

And what happened? One would have thought that if anybody at the table knew what was going on it was East. Apparently not – he led the ♦J! (I believe that a strong ♦ hand was one of East's options for the 2♦ opener). Declarer took the repeating ♣ finesse for his contract. I note that four down (or even eight down – so 400 away) would still have been a complete top for N-S. Is this bridge? And at other tables? 4♠ made exactly at Table A (420) and at the third table N-S bid to 6♦ (!) doubled and minus three (500).

The bottom line. The multi 2♦ is an amusing gadget that is best left to experienced pairs.

The power of the weak two opener

Board 2 from Monday 30th

And I don't see the point is making life difficult for everybody with the multi when the weak 2♥ or 2♠ works very well: -

Dealer:	♠ KJ9	West	North	East	South
East	♥ 10963				
N-S vul	♦ Q4	-	-	2♥	pass (1)
	♣ AK73	pass	pass (2)		

♠ A8653	N	♠ 72
♥ 7	W E	♥ AQJ842
♦ 532	S	♦ J876
♣ 9842		♣ J
	♠ Q104	
	♥ K5	
	♦ AK109	
	♣ Q1065	

An easy 3NT was missed by N-S, anyone to blame?

The 'norm' for bidding 2NT over the weak two is a decent 16-18 points. This South hand is borderline and I certainly would not argue with the pass at (1). So should North do something at (2)? This situation is completely different from the balancing seat if the opening was a 1 level bid; here East is limited and West may have a quite respectable hand (perhaps a mis-fit) for his pass. I think that it's very dangerous to venture forth with this North hand, especially vulnerable, when you are flat and have length in the opponent's suit.

And what happened? This bidding was repeated at one other table. Two tables bid to 3NT by South (so I guess that South tried 2NT?).

The bottom line:- The weak two can sometimes be a very powerful tool, especially if the opponent's points are distributed 13-13 or similar!

Bidding Quiz Answers

- Hand A: 3♣ - provided that you play it as forcing! If there was no intervention then you would not have bothered to mention a ♣ suit and would simply have bid 3NT. Under standard methods a 3NT bid here would show a ♦ stop. You cannot double (penalties) with just two ♦'s; it's too good for a natural 2NT; both 2NT and 3NT would promise a ♦ stop under normal methods; and 3♦ is Stayman. The best solution is to play Lebensohl (I discussed it a few pages back). But luckily you have a ♣ suit. If you play 3♣ as forcing here then that's your bid (hopefully partner will bid 3NT with a ♦ stop).
- Hand B: 1NT. I suspect that nearly everybody would open 1♦? I think that it's worth a strong NT. But then not everybody agrees with me all the time.
- Hand C: (a) Pass or 1♦? It's very borderline and I won't argue with either.
(b) 1♦. This is not denying a 4-card major, but simply bidding up the line. With a 5 card ♦ suit (as opposed to a 4-carder) it's definitely best. If you bid 1♠ and partner rebids 1NT what will you do? 2♦ would show 5 ♠'s and 4 ♦'s.
- Hand D: 1♦. Up the line.